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Companions on the Journey

June 28, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ

Yearning for normalcy. I am beginning to sense that in many hearts there is this yearning for normalcy or for what passes for normal today. Often on the television we hear the expression the “New Normal” which actually serves as code for “I have no idea what the future is going to look like but let’s take a shot at this.” I have always been reluctant to use the word normal in any way that refers to my own family of origin. Normal was not what we ever were. Normal comes from norm. A norm is a standard of excellence or ordinariness by which others can be estimated or evaluated. So, when we speak of the “New Normal” I am real curious. Who is setting this norm? On the basis of what is this norm being set? Is it just consensus? Is it the loudest voice that prevails and thus sets this new norm? Is it the most politically astute and powerful that imposes a new norm (What I think everybody should be acting or thinking like.)? Is it just left to those who are forward thinking and like to be in control of outcomes while the rest of us are a little too busy living?

The new norm is being promulgated as a reliable measuring stick to be used in evaluating behavior and conformity to group expectations. But which group? And why should any particular group be the ones setting up standards for others to abide by? But don’t you get the feeling sometimes that this is what is going on? If I have the money or the influence, then I might be able to apply just the right amount of influence on people so that they see things my way. I will influence those who influence people. This is not new, not a new way of thinking. For many years, this codicil was what underlay much of the education in various Catholic Prep Schools and Catholic Universities. Let’s influence (with the message of Jesus Christ) those who will influence people. This is a reliable evangelization technique. However, it needs to be rooted in the full and complete message of the Lord. We cannot afford simply to claim to be spreading the message of Christ when we are actually substituting our preferred message of choice and naming it the message of the Lord. There is definitely some of that going on right around now.

I raise this for your attention because we have to be on our guard about these things. Otherwise we may end up in situations where our values are not respected or we will be expected to conform to societal standards that are not in harmony with our faith in Jesus Christ. This is important stuff and we have to be paying attention. This is especially true when new norms are being set and the New Normal is being erected for all to abide by.

Peace,

Monsignor McHenry