

**Companions on the Journey**

August 9, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ

I am a big advocate of science. I believe the scientific method has been well used to the benefit of the human race for centuries. The creativity and the intellectual breakthroughs are substantial and often timely. I don't see myself ever changing in my assessment of the scientific method and the way it pursues solutions. Having said that, it is not something that can give us the fulness of the truth or the ultimate truth. It really does work in the realm of the observable and the accessible.

Maybe fifteen years ago I remember reading the lead article in the Sunday New York Times Magazine. The article was written by the retired head of the Stanford School of Medicine. He was describing how science and also how medicine work. He said something which startled me. He said that at any given time fifty percent of what medicine knows is actually incorrect or false. That was stunning to me. But he went on to say that the whole situation is compounded by the fact that we do not know which fifty percent is accurate and which fifty percent is not.

Well then how can medicine and science proceed. Trial and error, of course. He used the example of the development of the steroids in the 1970's. They were wonder drugs. So helpful to so many people. Such pain relief to people with arthritis and other immune diseases. So doctors prescribed the steroids. It was only after time that there was this further realization that dosage really mattered. That too much of a steroid could have counter-productive effects instead of helpful. Also, the protocol needed to call for a gradual weaning of the medication rather than the simple stoppage of taking it. So doctors knew some things and did not know some things. That is the way it is with science.

The article went on to speak of all the dead ends, all the clinical trials that turned out to be non-productive. Failures. But they really aren't failures. They are necessary because now it is known that certain paths are not helpful to go down and should be avoided. There is no better way to learn this than to learn by doing.

I reference this because of the place we find ourselves in at the present time. With this pandemic. Science and medicine will find a way to deal effectively with it. I believe that. But it has not happened yet. There will be a lot of dead ends before there is the discovery of a vaccine or other preventive protocols that can be used to minimize the effect of the coronavirus. This particular virus is crafty. For some it effects the lungs. In others the heart. In others, the kidneys. In still others, they develop blood clots. In some the presence of the virus hyper-actualizes the body's own immune system which goes into overdrive and that can actually be fatal. Yes.

But the, there are those who contract the disease but show no symptoms. There are extremely mild cases. People have tested positive, right here in our parish, but who never displayed any observable symptoms. They may or may not have infected others. That too is still not fully known. It will be but it isn't. Not yet. We want to know though. We want science to have all the answers, to have everything figured out. We do not like being in the position of not knowing while we are also very At-risk. So let's remember that those in science and medicine need our support and our encouragement. They also need our prayers. So let us pray for them all. Let us pray to the Lord for ourselves and for those we love and for our local community and for our nation and of course for our world. The prayer piece of all this is, to me, as important as the science piece. It may not seem so but the Lord is not bound to work only in and through what we develop. The Lord can do anything. With God all things are possible. When the blind man was brought to Jesus, Jesus asked him: "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man had his answer ready. "Lord, that I might see." "Receive your sight." When the Lord asks us what we want him to do for us, let's have our answers ready. Let's trust in science but even more in Our Lord.

Peace,

Monsignor McHenry