

**February 6, 2022**

Dear Friends,

The corona virus. Covid-19. We know these names now even though two years ago almost none of us had ever heard of this virus. I was talking with a friend recently about the virus and we went back and forth about whether a virus is even alive. Bacteria is a living organism. But a virus? Viruses are lacking in some of the very basic understandings of what we recognize as living things. And yet, once in contact with certain living things the virus has an amazing effect.

In reading an article recently from Scientific America a bunch of years ago, on this very question, the author asked a similar question. Is a seed a living thing? Able to exist, grow, reproduce from itself? Well, using those criteria, probably not. And yet once the seed comes into contact with soil and water something is activated in the seed and an amazing transformation, very much full of life, takes place.

Viruses appear to be structured along similar lines. They are not actually parasites but act like parasites once they find themselves in contact with an appropriate host, they inner reality is activated and influences both the host and the virus itself. The author says that most viruses are “persistent and innocuous not pathogenic.” Also that viruses activated are one of the chief sources of the development of new genes. Remember the AIDS epidemic? But most viruses are beneficial to humans and to life. The bad ones can have, as we know firsthand, devastating and even deadly consequences.

The Covid-19 has been around for more than two years and we have tried all manner of things to defend ourselves from the deleterious effects of this disease. Masking, social distancing, quarantining, the development of vaccines, and then booster shots on top of the vaccines. We rely on the members of the scientific community to provide reliable information based in the best science and good counsel flowing from a wise analysis on the scientific data. But there has not been a single voice there and there have been some contradictory advice and counsel given along the way. Much of that driven by the variations happening in the corona-virus itself and the way it interacts with its human hosts.

It is becoming clearer now that there really is not anything that can absolutely prevent a person from getting the Covid. The omicron variation is so contagious, but in most cases so mild, that despite prior contagion with covid itself or being vaccinated and boosted, anyone can still get contaminated. One of the things we are learning is that with viruses, things do not stay the same for long. Masking with the omicron does not always work. Nor does social distancing. Nor does vaccination and follow up boosters. We had hoped. But those hopes have not been met. It has been two long years and here we are now. Still at risk, albeit the getting of covid now is somewhat lessened in deadly effect (although the 2200 Americans who died of Covid on Thursday last would probably argue the contrary).

I wish I had more to give you but this is my reading of the state of covid presently. And so, I have been praying for these past two years for the Lord to lift the scourge that this disease has become (we are approaching one million covid deaths in this country in two years). Not only do I pray daily for this disease to end; I also pray that the lessons we are supposed to learn from this very contagious time, are learned. I believe the Lord bids us to return to the way he has shown us how to live—with each other and in our world. How many times did he sense fear and say: “Do not be afraid. Be not unbelieving but believe.” But there is a lot of fear. And many have resisted believing or returning to what they learned about how to live with others and in this world contaminated much more by sin and selfishness.

Are you praying like I am? Are you encouraging your family members and friends to be doing the same? Are you seeking reasons to be hopeful rather than pass on stories of fear and devastation and bad news? These are little things. But the virus is a little thing. Little bad things will always be defeated by little good things. Are you doing the little good things? Have you grown weary doing them? Well, me too. But do not give up. I will not give up. All is in the Lord’s hands. And we are to place our trust in Him. Let us renew our efforts and let us entrust this whole situation fully into his hands.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry