

Q. Can anything good come from this Coronavirus pandemic?

A. Though it was asked in a different time and in a completely different context, your question is one that has echoed down through the centuries. It was Nathanael, (*better known as the Apostle, Bartholomew*) who first candidly posed a similar rhetorical question to his friend, Philip, regarding the reputation of Jesus' hometown. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

In rhetorical questions, the person who asks always expects an answer that coincides with his or her own opinion. So, when Nathanael asks this question in John's Gospel (1:46), he expects his friend, Philip to give an answer like, "Of course not. Everyone knows that nothing good could ever come from there."

Nathanael was simply expressing a common belief around Palestine that anything or anyone from Nazareth usually meant trouble. In fact, to Jews and Romans alike, Nazareth was known to be the site of insurrections and tax revolts. Philip gave no answer because, in this case, it was good and not evil that hailed from the town of Nazareth, Jesus, the Messiah!

The Coronavirus: Evil in nature

Evil, whether it be 'moral', 'social' or 'in nature itself', like this current virus, always causes chaos, the questioning of Faith, fear, mass destruction and often, even more evil. We see this happening in our world today. Since it is the calling and mission of all Christians and persons of Faith to vanquish evil in its many forms, it is our ultimate goal to support the destruction of this virus and to come to the aid of those who are victimized by it, both physically and emotionally.

Can anything good come from this pandemic? To answer your question, let me be clear. The virus itself is evil in our midst as it continues to leave a trail of devastation in its wake and has even generated other forms of evil. However, this unexpected pandemic which is being felt the world over, can also teach us some important lessons. How helpful can it be?

The positive aspects of our current experience may be better recognized retrospectively, once this crisis subsides. Though each of us will remember how useful these are in varying degrees of importance the following are a few that stand out:

- ◆ A realization that despite our hubris as human beings, we are definitely not invincible as we sometimes think. To simply rely on power, wealth, human accomplishments and even Artificial Intelligence, while excluding or neglecting our dependence on God and on our Faith is foolhardy;
- ◆ a greater appreciation of daily Mass celebrated in our churches and for personal prayer and reflection in our churches and homes;

- ◆ our appreciation of the sacredness of human life from the moment of conception until natural death, and for the joy of the freedom that we often take for granted;
- ◆ the acknowledgement that we need emotional connections and interactions with family and friends to be human and happy;
- ◆ a reminder that we belong to a world community and that differences which have militated against our common good must be resolved. As they now always say: "We're all in this together!"

