

In this piece, Herbie O’Flynn reflects on the question of the immediate and longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Catholic Church.

His observations are important because as a church community we need to analyse how we have reacted and draw out what is valuable for the future conduct of our operations.

The pandemic has not just delayed PC2020, but will surely also impact on its deliberations when it does occur.

The church will be doing what many other sectors of society, including business, the public sector, education, health and others, will be doing when we emerge from the pandemic.

A reflection on the impact of COVID-19

Herbie O’Flynn

In a nutshell my questions would be:

- is the response of the Catholic Church adequate during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and
- what creatively can we expect to take away when the restrictions are lifted.

I have always lamented the lack of a ‘think tank’ or other investigative group that would address issues for the Church. The whole emphasis on subsidiarity, encouraging decisions at the lowest level, seems to miss the improvement in the branding of the Church in the post ‘sexual abuse’ environment. Surely the Church must be seen to continue to speak out and gain credibility in moral and societal issues. Is this not a time to start to reclaim the moral high ground or are we going to sit back and continue the spiral to the bottom!

A few issues that tumble out on the Current Response:

- I would suggest that the response to Covid-19 has been to leave it to parishes to respond by ‘on-line’ liturgies!
- In fact how could the Ordinary actually reach out to his parishioners when no electronic data base exists.
- How many diocese have something similar to a daily issue of ‘Catholic Voice’? Should the wealthier Archdiocese not be helping others to communicate?
- What are the ethical issues surrounding the social separation and isolation. Is there a “social determinant’ and what can we do about it?
- I’ve heard nothing from the CDF on assistance to parish and institution loans situation, or the challenges being met Catholic Health Care and Aged Care sectors.
- How will we meet the fall in income especially the sustenance of Priests?
- Our education system response has been very parochial. Could we not offer facilities and/or services to the wider community?
- Etc, etc, etc

What about the Aftermath:

- Will we just hurry to return to the ‘physical’ church environment?

- Will we have learnt anything from working from home.
- Will we demand that all parishes have a modern interactive Web Site?
- We desperately need a comprehensive data base and programmes that will improve our communications ability
- Etc, etc, etc

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5 April 2020