

On this date, October 20, 2021, a Brazilian senator formally presented a report recommending that Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro be indicted on criminal charges for his egregiously inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic - pushing Brazil's death toll to second-highest in the world. The report concluded that Bolsonaro ignored international health guidelines on masks and restrictions on activities designed to prevent the virus' spread, relied on unproven treatments, and intentionally delayed the acquisition of vaccines. As a result, Brazil suffered over 600,000 known deaths related directly to the disease.

In the U.S. today, some are advocating for substituting unproven or anecdotal interventions for the prevention and treatment of diseases --which have been well-controlled for decades using traditional methodologies-- claiming that vaccines, prescription and OTC drugs will themselves cause greater harm than the conditions they are designed to prevent or treat.

Every year, vaccines prevent 3.5 million to 5 million deaths from diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza, and measles. Additionally, untreated pain, fever, and infection in pregnancy can lead to serious maternal and fetal complications, including miscarriage, severe structural and organ system birth defects, and premature births. Traditional medications, when used appropriately, can safely and effectively treat medical conditions and prevent the serious outcomes of not treating them with traditional therapy.

Catholic Social Teaching supports unimpeded access to standard disease prevention and treatment. This support is based upon principles of respect for human dignity, solidarity, and promoting the common good. Humans are social creatures who depend on each other to thrive. Protecting the health of the general population is important because reduces the chances of a widespread outbreak. Pope Francis called the decision to be vaccinated an "act of love," particularly for those most marginalized and vulnerable. In almost every epidemic and pandemic, it is the poor and vulnerable who suffer the highest sickness and death rates.

Care for the common good extends beyond a willingness to use vaccines and medications to prevent outbreaks of diseases. It calls us to commit to adherence to everyday actions that serve to decrease the spread of communicable diseases. This includes practicing good hygiene (especially frequent 20 second handwashing, rinsing and drying), safe food handling, avoiding contact with sick individuals or contaminated surfaces, using insect repellent, and always- always- staying home and away from group settings when you are sick (e.g. work, school, meetings). What seems like a nuisance cold to you, can lead to hospitalization and death to those who may be immunocompromised or have underlying respiratory or cardiac conditions.

Remaining home when ill is critical. The Catholic Church excuses Catholics from the obligation to attend Mass for illness in order to prevent the spread of sickness. The CDC recommends staying home when sick with respiratory virus symptoms for at least 24 hours after there is no fever without treatment of medications intended to reduce the fever. For suspected or confirmed flu, the guidance is to stay home for at least five days after symptoms began, as people with the flu are most contagious during the first three days of the illness.

Your unrestricted donations to Catholic Charities of Stockton allow us to continue to provide critical health care access and disease prevention services to those who come to us in need. In addition to assisting clients with enrolling into health and dental care, Catholic Charities of Stockton offers regular and ongoing health fairs providing services such as diabetes, cholesterol, and blood pressure testing, free glucometers and blood pressure meters, free vaccinations, mental health, memory, and fall risk assessments, nutrition guidance and medication reviews.

Our commitment to the common good of all people calls us to take advantage of these services in order to keep ourselves and our community healthy, and to donate whenever and whatever we can to assure that the services are always there when they are needed.

God bless you all,

Deacon Mike