

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Years ago, the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" (often abbreviated, WWJD), was a phrase used by Christians to give them guidance in how to live their lives. Perhaps this phrase would be helpful for us to ask as well, as we begin our Lenten journey.

The phrase was the underlying question in the book, In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?, by Charles M. Sheldon. The book describes a fictional congregation that asks the question before making decisions. In turn, they discover that individually and collectively, in personal decisions as well as church decisions, they begin to ask this question on a regular basis, "What Would Jesus Do?"

Recently, on a WKBT News 8 broadcast, it was explained that many persons are experiencing COVID/Pandemic Fatigue. Their desire to get back to normal life is causing them to relax their compliance with the CDC guidelines and to let down their guard. As a result, they are tempted, and they are doing what they know they should not do regarding wearing masks, social distancing, and other precautions. (Please note, I am not referring to those who for medical reasons are unable to do these things.)

Some persons may simply be thinking--I'm tired of this. I'm going to do whatever I want! This may be true for some who have received their vaccinations, too. (Note: vaccinations are not 100% effective and those vaccinated can be asymptomatic. For these and other reasons, it is important to continue to follow the CDC guidelines.)

Doing whatever one wants to do without thinking of the impact on self or others, is giving into temptation. While succumbing to temptations may be easy at the time, doing so can have long-ranging negative effects. These effects can impact one's health, other's health, the safety of people in one's community, and possibly, one's own and/or other's longevity.

To connect these two ideas, individual's during this time of the Coronavirus Pandemic have written articles citing this question. One example is, "What would Jesus do during COVID-19? He would wear a mask" (Karl Lorenz, *The Dallas Morning News*, Dallasnews.com, July 26, 2020). Although he grew up in Georgia, in the article, Lorenz references that he was "Lutheran and his parents were from Wisconsin." He states,

The New Testament book of Galatians celebrates Christian freedom, declaring that it is "for freedom that Christ has set us free." However, it offers a caution not to use freedom for self-indulgence, but rather "to serve one another in love." God frees us from selfish inclinations so that we have the power to use our choices differently. From God's perspective, our freedom is intended to be used for others' benefit. Might using our freedom from selfishness to love others apply to mask wearing?

Christian love is defined as putting the needs of others above our own, exemplified in an ultimate way through Jesus' sacrifice for humanity on the cross. We can imitate Jesus' example of love in our physical care for others...

As we walk with Jesus during these 40-days, may we be mindful that our actions as

Christians speak of our service to God and humankind. To the day-to-day questions that arise in our lives during our journey with Jesus, we can reflect and ask, "What Would Jesus Do?"

Peace,

Pastor Cathy