

## Moral Basis of Lockdown Vis-à-vis Corona Virus Pandemic

Nurturing life is a moral obligation. What that means, however, depends on the optic one is using in the time of corona virus pandemic. Almost all countries that have corona virus cases have imposed paralyzing lockdowns, limiting the movement of people to minimize if not stop the spread of corona virus disease-19 (COVID-19). The lockdowns have affected livelihood, loss of income and there is work displacement due to closure of business establishments, being deprived of social interaction, among others. It is not surprising many citizens have protested against the measure. In the United States and Brazil, pockets of rallies against the lockdowns were held. In the Philippines where the lockdown is called Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), there is a general uneasiness of the effects of the imposed restriction. There is uncertainty how basic needs could be met given the limited resources vis-à-vis widespread poverty.

In the present dilemma whether the continued lockdown is justified or not, we have to ask the question: What is the most probable way to nurture life? We have to keep in mind that the word “probable,” as used in Catholic moral tradition means “arguable” or “possibly true.” A moral opinion is “probable” when it has good arguments to support it; having good arguments is having the intrinsic and extrinsic foundations. The intrinsic basis refers to the strength of the argument’s validity; the extrinsic basis refers to agreement of opinion. By saying so, let's go back to the question: What is the most probable way to nurture life? Is it to keep people in their homes for their safety (but hungry and economically deprived) or to allow them to work for sustenance and meet their needs (but at risk of COVID-19 infection)?

The moral assessment on lockdown, I think, has more intrinsic and extrinsic validity than exposure of people to possible infection by allowing them to do things as usual. As regards hunger and basic needs, it is the moral obligation of the State to provide for the people's needs (although limited); privileged people (who have more financial resources than others) are obliged to help as well especially the poor and vulnerable (Christian values of solidarity and compassion). Different institutions, groups, congregations (like my congregation, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart-Philippine province) have exhausted ways to help those in dire need (giving of relief goods).

Given the tension and the struggles to make a moral choice between two difficult circumstances, the lockdown (with the sacrifices one has to make) is morally probable than exposure (to infection) in terms of nurturing life. Simply put, there's more danger of losing life in lifting the lockdown than having the lockdown in place when the cases of COVID-19 are fast spreading.

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