

GROWING Together

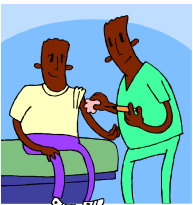
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ABUNDANCE AND SCARCITY IN A CULTURE OF FEAR: THE H1N1 PAN(IC)DEMIC

Not enough! We have heard that phrase a lot in the last year. There isn't enough vaccine! There isn't enough protection! There isn't enough time to get everyone vaccinated in order to stop the spread.

Last fall, the H1N1 panic demonstrated how possessed we are by the media. Television and the internet constantly suggest that we must be afraid of everything that might get us, dupe us, harm us - even kill us. We are kept in a constant state of anxious high alert - whether it be financial, social, or health-related. H1N1 dominated the television and internet news for weeks, bumping aside the ongoing genocide and poverty plaguing millions of people around the world. Prior to this health crisis, the media used many other frightening situations to keep everyone glued to the source of all such information. We saw it in the bombing of the Twin Towers when American news reports dominated every television channel for weeks.

Even as we were told that we must be vaccinated, the vaccine was not to be available for several weeks. To have patience at a time of uncertainty and fear is no easy task. Of course, Christians know all about waiting and can handle it well, right? Perhaps! Having faith in God does help us understand that we are not in complete control of our lives, giving us strength to get through whatever trials we have to face. But, despite our faith, waiting in fear and uncertainty sometimes overwhelms us.



Accustomed to having control, we may use God as a crutch only when we have run out of more attractive options. Many of us, Christians included, do not know how to truly surrender ourselves into God's care. When we feel that all control is lost, we often try to find someone or something to blame. By allowing media coverage to determine the severity of a crisis, such as H1N1, it is easy to lose a sense of proportion when the pandemic is compared to the many other ongoing crises in the world.

What does our faith tradition have to say in the midst of a crisis such as the H1N1 pandemic? If Jesus had words for us, what would they be? The scriptures remind us that God is in control, overseeing all that happens! Trust the scientists, doctors and nurses who are working to prevent the spread of H1N1. As well as they can, they are doing the work God expects them to do. Meanwhile, if we must wait or even if we succumb to the disease, we trust in God, who is there with us - in the person of Jesus.

In the midst of frustration and fear, Jesus walks beside us supporting us along the way. This is the hope and faith we are given to get through times such as these.

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult...
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

(Isaiah 46:1-3,7)

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