In our current crisis, we have understood that if we all act together, we can impact the spread of the disease. Through physical distancing and masking, we can limit or at least slow the spread of the disease so as not to overwhelm the health care system, buy some time until effective therapies and a vaccine are developed, and reduce the death rate. Acting together, the common good that benefits ourselves and our neighbors, we can “flatten the curve” and limit the virus’ destruction.

Flattening the curve is a collective endeavor that is all about the promotion of the common good—benefitting when we all benefit. The common good is a foundational concept in Catholic social teaching. As Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ has noted, it is “basic to our entire social ethics.” [1]

To be an ethical Catholic—or human being for that matter—it is imperative that we act in consonance with what is in the collective good. And so, we need to continue to act in a way that helps to reduce the spread of the deadly disease.

We must also advocate for our government (local, state, federal) to take the necessary steps to reduce the spread of the disease and limit its death rate. In addition, however, we must demand that public policies be enacted that address the economic harm done to workers, families and communities by the restrictions that have been put in place. The common good requires economic matters, as well as to our health. We absolutely should not have to choose between physical health and economic survival. We can address both, as other countries have done.

Martin Luther King, Jr., being one of the great moral leaders of the 20th century, made the promotion of the common good a centerpiece of his life’s work. He lived his life imagining and pursuing a better world for all. He concluded his Nobel Peace Prize lecture with these words:

“Free, then that realization can lead to all sorts of collective actions around the globe, then that realization can lead to all sorts of collective actions—whether they be those of individuals, families, communities or nations. And so, we as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations, have the opportunity to make a difference in the world. And so, let us continue to work together, to bend the arc of the moral universe so that justice will reign in the hearts of all people.” [2]

For the common good—I benefit when we all benefit. The common good is a foundation of Catholic social teaching. As Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ has noted, it is “basic to our entire social ethics.” [1]

As our number of enrolled students continues to rise, we need to make sure that each and every one has access to an exceptional educational experience. We can’t do it without your help.

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Number 107 Mindful Solidarity Flattening the Curve and Bending the Arc

By Dennis Kalob, Ph.D.

May 28

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