

While Powerful Pursue Greed, Let's Support the Common Good

We have a lot of competition for our attention these days.

I urge you to give a little space for this matter, which has been unfolding in Congress and will likely result in the largest economic relief package in the nation's history.

"Any time there is a crisis and Washington is in the middle of it is an opportunity for guys like me," according to an industry lobbyist on Capitol Hill [quoted by](#) The Daily Beast.

A March 22 [opinion piece](#) in The Guardian highlighted several industries and companies that have sought government funds during the pandemic to help offset the negative impacts.

These included requests of a \$60 billion bailout by Boeing, \$150 billion by the hotel industry, \$145 billion for restaurants, and \$1.4 trillion by the manufacturing sector.

Concerns have rightly been raised not about whether such action is necessary, but about who they will benefit and how oversight will be conducted to ensure employees, and not just CEOs and stockholders, benefit from the investments.

We are all experimenting on how to maintain physical separation without spawning social distancing.

Every time I now hear those two latter words, I consciously repeat this mantra: It's physical separation - social distancing is what has bedeviled us all from the beginning.

Four practical suggestions for pastoral action:

1. Unless your financial future looks disastrous, I encourage you to commit to putting a little money in your local economy, particularly in small businesses.
2. Find creative ways to say thanks to those "essential" workers who are not

furloughed.

For example, this morning I took a box of muffins to the wonderful people at my locally owned, mom-and-pop pharmacy, along with a short note thanking them for the extra risks they are taking to serve the common good.

3. The American Red Cross is reporting a severe shortage of blood donors.

Most of us are eligible donors, and the Red Cross has heightened protocols in place to protect from COVID-19 infection. This is something you can do. In fact, this ought to be a mission challenge for your entire congregation.

Call your local Red Cross or visit their [website](#). If there isn't a Red Cross near you, check the Blood Centers of America [website](#) for donor locations. Or check with your local hospital, some of whom have blood donor options.

4. This is a good time to give yourself space to write letters - to family members, to friends, to members of your congregation, to elected officials, to letters to the editor and so on.

Finally, let some of your prayers of lament center on this collective Lenten confession:

Our president was explicitly asked why wealthy people - professional athletes, celebrities and politicians - are able to get COVID-19 testing when most other citizens can't, inquiring if they get to go to the "front of the line."

"No, I wouldn't say so," he responded, and then "That does happen on occasion." His conclusion: "But perhaps that's been the story of life."

Which is true. But there is another story.