Twitter Thread by James Martin, SJ



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To those who have asked me, sincerely, how President Trump's "Do not be afraid of Covid" differs from Jesus's "Be not afraid," some thoughts:

First, Jesus often told his followers "Be not afraid." In fact, that phrase brackets his earthly life. I.e., the Angel Gabriel...

....says that to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation. And after his Resurrection, the Risen Christ says it to his disciples. It's one of the few phrases Jesus utters several times in the Gospels. He is encouraging his followers to turn away from fear and rely on him. But...

....Jesus is not telling us to ignore the reality of human life. That is, God does not ask us to check our brains at the door and be stupid about our bodies. We don't jump off of tall buildings expecting not to get hurt. We don't drink poison expecting not to get sick....

God gave us brains for a reason. So "Don't be afraid of Covid" not only makes no sense, it's dangerous. Like Jesus, we have human bodies that must be cared for. There are also others whom we have to protect from illness. That's part of being pro-life: reverencing lives....

...both yours and those of others. That means taking the necessary precautions: going to the dentist, getting an annual physical, taking medicine when needed. Today this means taking precautions against Covid: wearing masks, maintaining social distance, washing your hands...

...and, yes, being reasonably afraid of disease. It makes sense to be afraid of, e.g., chicken pox, measles or meningitis. And it makes sense both to treat them and to be careful not to pass those illnesses to others. So being afraid is both reasonable and charitable....

Jesus said, "Be not afraid." But his whole life was about giving life, not taking it. And by not taking precautions against Covid, you are endangering lives, both yours and those of others.

Trust in God, but listen to your doctors, too.