

IS IT A SIN?

The question has arisen as to whether it is a sin to break the orders of the governor of Illinois regarding wearing masks, standing 6 feet from one another, and congregating in groups of more than 10. The answer is no, it is not a sin. The reasoning is as follows.

In general we should follow the laws of our society; the only time we need not is in regard to *unjust* laws. *Unjust* does not simply mean that I don't like the law: I didn't like the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit on the interstate when I first began driving, but there was nothing unjust about that law. *Unjust* means what it says, a violation of justice.

Quarantine laws are not inherently unjust: the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy include laws quarantining those with leprosy. Such laws are difficult for those who are forced into isolation, but the protection of society outweighs the temporary restriction of the rights of those with a dangerous contagious disease. Our English word *quarantine* comes from the Latin word *quadraginta*, which became the Italian *quaranta*, both of which mean *forty*. Centuries ago, those in Italy who had (or were suspected of having) a dangerous contagious disease were kept isolated 40 days.

What is now happening in Illinois (and many other places) is something altogether different. First, the executive order of Illinois' governor is *not* isolating those who have the Wuhan corona virus. Rather, he is restricting the rights of *everyone* in the state. This is unprecedented. Second, he is not setting a *specific* time period, but is issuing continuing extensions. The State of Illinois has a law that limits the emergency powers of the governor to 30 days.¹ The law is meaningless if the governor keeps issuing one emergency declaration after another for as long as he wants.²

Just law allows quarantine, or isolation, of *specific* people (those who have a dangerous contagious disease) for a *specific* time period. But it is unjust to decree that, since anyone might get the disease someday, *all* people in the state are deprived of their rights *indefinitely*. Such orders by government officials are unjust, and therefore invalid.

Laws become more complicated regarding things like private property, semi-public property, and the licensure of businesses; and obviously there is no right to block a street or sidewalk. But the bottom line is this: it is not a sin to disobey the current order of the governor of Illinois. The people of Illinois can walk around without masks; stand as close to one another as they want; and gather in groups of 11 or 50 or 100. None of those things are sins. If there is any sin involved, it is on the part of those who trying to stop people from exercising these minimal rights.

¹<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=002033050K7>

²<https://www.illinoispolicy.org/as-pritzker-continues-to-extend-his-emergency-powers-what-role-should-the-general-assembly-play/>