

THE FAITH WE FORGOT

If you know who Vin Scully is, then you likely won't have to worry about the draft. This legendary baseball broadcaster is now 92 years old. He spent well over half of those years broadcasting the games of the Brooklyn (and then Los Angeles) Dodgers. In a Fox News interview, Scully predicted that the present virus crisis may help a lot of Americans to rediscover their faith.

I hope he's right. He cited the revival of faith in our country during World War II. Pearl Harbor totally disrupted life as we had known it. Sugar and tires had to be rationed. Highway speed limits helped save gasoline nationwide. Female homemakers began making bombs and machine guns instead. And, in that terrible time when a new death toll was reported almost every day, three out of every four Americans became active members of some church. Death and fear turned us back to faith.

We saw a similar but shorter-lived response right after 9/11. Even a few of our TV journalists stopped deriding faith and embraced it themselves while the smoke of the trade towers still hung over Manhattan. I wasn't alive to see it, but history tells us that we had a similar reaction to the stock market crash that preceded the great Depression. Thousands of people who had become too busy working or playing were led by the crisis back to a pew.

What does all of this tell us? That faith is the only viable option when a worldwide disaster surprises us and all of us in the nation realize that, despite everything we do to quell it, the danger of the moment is beyond our control. When doom threatens the land, our only other available response besides faith is despair.

Scully's prediction is hard to verify right now since most of our pews are currently behind locked doors. But church attendance and public worship are only our most visible expression of faith. Only God knows how many of our neighbors who usually spent Sunday morning on a golf course or sleeping in have for the first time in a decade opened their Bibles or bowed their heads, looking for help when they feel helpless as the coronavirus spreads.

I can't think of a better time for us to re-read the 91st Psalm. "Because you have made the Lord your dwelling," this psalm assures us, "no evil will befall you, no plague will approach your tent."