TO:  IBC AND MICAH PARTICIPANTS  
FROM:  MONSIGNOR RICHARD LIDDY  
SUBJECT:  THE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES  
DATE:  NOVEMBER 2019  

NOVEMBER 2019 MEETING  

- Welcome and Self-Introductions  
- Ignation Business Chapters Mission Statement  
  - The Mission of the Ignatian Business Chapters is to establish and lead a national and international network of business executives to explore their respective religious traditions in order to help the individual executives:  
    - To integrate faith, family, and professional life,  
    - To develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values  
    - To exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large.  
  - The conference, grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another’s religious tradition. It is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one’s religious heritage.  


Paul and Jewish Leaders in Rome  

Three days later he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our
ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” They replied, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you. But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

‘Go to this people and say,

You will indeed listen, but never understand,
    and you will indeed look, but never perceive.
For this people’s heart has grown dull,
    and their ears are hard of hearing,
    and they have shut their eyes;
    so that they might not look with their eyes,
    and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
    and I would heal them.’

Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

- Quiet reflection: five minutes followed by sharing insights

Article:

Last November, the Food and Drug Administration issued a recall for romaine lettuce. The leafy green had been identified as the culprit in an e. coli outbreak that eventually sickened 62 people and hospitalized 25 nationwide, including two with kidney failure. This followed a recall from
earlier in the year that left 172 sick and killed one. Millions of romaine heads ended up in dumpsters. The second recall banned the product during the height of the Thanksgiving season, savaging the bottom lines of growers.

No one can dispute the FDA took decisive action to protect public health. People got sick, they quickly traced it to romaine consumption, then they shut down the industry. That decisiveness came at a cost to us since 15% of the packaging we manufacture contains romaine. Our sales for the quarter which had been tracking up 10% ended only 5% higher.

Having felt the sting of FDA action, I am puzzled if not outraged by FDA inaction. In recent weeks a mysterious disease has struck the lungs of vapers, rendering them unable to breathe. As of September 30, it has claimed the lives of 15 people and sickened at least another 800 across 46 states, according to the Center for Disease Control. The CDC jumped in immediately, trying to nail down a reason for the affliction, but so far can’t. Neither can the FDA. They only have theories.

Some victims combined nicotine and marijuana. Others did not. It may be the chemicals used by the companies that make e-cigarettes. On September 25, the deputy director of the CDC, Dr. Anne Schuchat, admitted at a U.S. House of Representatives hearing that “it is indeed possible the process itself is risky.”

Given the deadly and widespread outbreak, have e-cigarettes been pulled from the shelves? No, you can still buy them wherever sold. Sure, the federal government talks about banning flavored e-cigarettes, though no one has connected them to the mysterious lung disease. So, unlike romaine when it sickened people, e-cigarettes, which have killed, haven’t been banned. If you want to risk lung disease, the Feds seem to think that’s okay.

I wonder why. Perhaps because, unlike romaine, no single culprit has been found.

That makes it worse in many ways. If you don’t know the reason, shouldn’t you act quickly to protect people? A ban would provoke huge outcry given the number of people who vape. Combine that with Big Tobacco, and regulators face serious clout.

The Altria Group, owner of leading cigarette maker Philip Morris, controls 35% of Juul Labs, the largest producer of vaping devices. When Altria made its investment last December, it valued Juul at $15 billion. Perhaps such girth outweighs that of Big Romaine, which in truth doesn’t exist. Romaine producers are mainly family farms clustered in the Salinas Valley. Not quite the same political clout.
My point is this. All industries should be treated alike. If the FDA pulls romaine out of supermarkets because it makes people sick, then it ought to do the same when e-cigarettes sicken and kill people. Why they haven’t shouldn’t even be a question by the likes of me. Or else the next time a leafy green has an e. coli problem, leave the stuff on the shelves and let consumers decide whether to buy it. That’s essentially what the FDA and CDC have done with vaping. One path or the other. It shouldn’t be one industry gets treated differently than the other. Even if it is Big Tobacco with lots of vapers.

Kevin Kelly is CEO of Emerald Packaging, Union City, California. This commentary appeared on the company’s website, October 1, 2019.

Be Attentive: As you read the Musings of a CEO, what thoughts and emotions were evoked? Have you been affected by salmonella? How do you observe the vaping phenomenon?

Be Intelligent: What values are in conflict? What is this commentary saying about how power is exercised? How would you weigh in if you were a decision-maker in either industry, and how would you react if you were a stakeholder like Kevin Kelly?

Be Reasonable: What implication do you see for business/government agency practices. What recommendations would you put forth to the FDA? What implications might there be in your family or among friends?

Be Responsible: What values or points of view surfaced in today’s discussion? Any action steps? What are the implications for you at your place of work, in your community and at home? Leverage the conversation for good!

Closing Prayer: Suscipe, St. Ignatius

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. To you Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen