

Statement for Website  
From Fr. Michael Basque

17 May 2020

First, a few things you should know:

- The new Sunday Liturgy Video has been completed and the link should be on the Parish website.
- While the provincial government has announced the loosening of some restrictions for individuals and businesses as part of its effort to begin returning things to normal, it has not yet given any indication about when Churches and other places of worship will be allowed to resume some of their activities. As a result, the Bishop has requested Parishes remain closed until further notice. He has also indicated the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is putting together a protocol for when Churches will be allowed to open.
- As I have previously announced, the Feasts of St. Anthony and the Assumption have been cancelled for this year. A few people have dropped off envelopes with donations to support these events and others have asked if they should do so. I want to make it clear that any funds collected this year (2020) for the Feasts will be deposited in the Parish account and the may be used to pay for the costs of putting on the Feasts next year (2021) such as the insurance coverage, the permit from the City of Thorold and the police escort.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I first entered university, I missed my family a lot. It wasn't just that my mother was no longer around to do my laundry or prepare meals, I couldn't ask my father to use the car whenever I needed it or my brother wasn't available to fix the television. I was alone in my room without anyone around who cared about me. I felt disconnected. However, it didn't take me long to realize my family was still present to me. There were the pictures on my dresser, the telephone calls from my parents and the occasion parcel from home. But, most importantly, there were the memories of all the things we had done together as a family. In time, it dawned on me presence is not so much about physical proximity but mental or spiritual connection.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that he will ask the Father to "give you another Advocate to be with you forever". When Christ said those words, he knew he would not be with them much longer. His Passion and Death were on the horizon. While he visited them following his Resurrection, this would only be for a short time. They would be alone and charged with the mission of spreading the Gospel message throughout the world. Perhaps to help them adjust to this new situation, he told them the Father would send the Holy Spirit (Advocate). Through the Holy Spirit, his presence would remain with them. Its gifts would give them the knowledge to understand what he taught them, the wisdom to know in what direction to move forward and the courage to withstand persecution. Jesus could not teach them or demonstrate his power through miracles as he did in the past. But, he would remain connected to them mentally and spiritually and so be present until the end of time.

Catholics and other people of faith know God is always present in their lives. During this Covid-19 pandemic, there are bound to be times when either we or others forget this truth. When someone close to you is seriously ill the fear of losing them can become overwhelming. On those

occasions when someone you love dies, the grief can be overpowering. After dealing for months, with the restrictions imposed because of the virus, your determination to just keep going starts to disappear. At moments like this people often feel very alone: they have difficulty sharing their feelings with others or even admitting them to themselves. Yet, often when they think they can't go any further, something happens. It may be a new way of looking at their situation or a burst of energy to help them get a project finished. They suddenly feel connected mentally or spiritually to others although physically there is no one around. Those are the times when the Holy Spirit is letting them know they are not alone.

The Catholic tradition teaches that grace builds on nature. God doesn't force His way on people but helps them through their natural abilities or those of others. When we listen to those who need to talk, call someone who lives alone or pick up some items for an elderly neighbour at the grocery store, we can be used by the Holy Spirit to make God present to one another. During this Covid-19 pandemic, it is important for Catholics to help others know they are not alone.