

Statement for Website  
From Fr. Michael Basque

12 May 2020

First, a few things you should know:

- Unfortunately, the celebrations of the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua in early June and the Feast of the Assumption in mid-August will not occur this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I realize the feast committees put a lot of hard work into preparing for these events and know they are important public expressions of our faith to the local community and of the Italian culture. If things get back to normal in the Fall, it may be possible to have some event (perhaps a Mass) to celebrate these occasions but no decision about doing so will be made for some time. Thank you to all those who help organize and participate in these events.
- I would again like to thank those who continue to provide financial support to the parish during this crisis by using the mail slot in the Parish Office door or making donations through Direct Deposit or on the parish website. Thank you also to those who donate money or non-perishable food items to our St. Vincent DePaul Society so they can help the less fortunate in our community.

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Anyone who reads the newspapers or watches the television news broadcasts these days knows peace is a rare commodity in our world. In the middle of a Covid-19 pandemic there is a civil war going on in Syria. Governments in nations such as Myanmar are killing members of ethnic minorities living within their territory and destroying their property. In our own country, conflicts between rival gangs cause many fatalities and injuries. Mass shootings like the recent one in Nova Scotia leave a trail of death and destruction. Domestic violence hurts vulnerable spouses and children. Many individuals want something to be done about this lack of peace. Diplomats are at work trying to come up with plans to end conflicts between and within nations. Political leaders advocate for tougher measures against criminal activity or restrictions on certain types of weapons. On all levels of society, policies are implemented to stop abusive behaviour. While all these efforts are commendable, it is important to recognize lasting peace requires more than human effort because it is beyond our ability to attain.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples the peace he leaves with them is not the same as that which is provided by the world. Christ understood his disciples would soon experience a powerful display of violence and its causes. He would be betrayed by one of them and denied by another. He would be taken by force from the Garden of Gethsemane and held in prison until he would be put on trial and through false testimony convicted of a crime. His accusers would force the local Roman official to agree to execute him in a painful and humiliating way when it wasn't warranted under the civil law. They would accompany him to the place of execution and ridicule him until his death. Any human effort to stop this travesty was doomed to failure. Peace seemed to be totally absent from this scene. Yet, was it? Christ had the power to stop these developments at any moment but did not. He understood this story would not end with his death. His ability to respond to violence without violence revealed its limitation. The peace established by the Roman Empire was the result of fear and coercion. Yet, outbreaks of violence continued. Lasting peace is built upon truth and justice. The truth Jesus preached about the power of love was vindicated

by his suffering and resurrection. The justice he preached was not established by earthly coercion but the authority of God's plan. The lack of peace was the result of human actions. The peace he offered was the result of becoming His Father's instrument.

Catholics and other people of faith are called to be agents of peace on earth. It is sad that within every religious tradition, certain members have used violence to impose their version of God's will on others. They seem to have forgotten that if God has a plan for humanity and the power to unfold it in due time, their intervention may really be interference. Isn't their peace the kind the world offers? History has taught us no amount of military strength, no treaty between nations, no measures against criminal activity or domestic violence insures peace for very long. Perhaps if believers began with the premise they cannot do it on their own, they might have more success. Believers are called not to offer peace but allow God to offer it through them. It includes defending the truth about how love is stronger than hate when individuals ridicule their beliefs. It means pursuing justice for the weak without resorting to threats or coercion. Doing this requires an unshakeable trust in God and commitment to stay out of the way when necessary.

As tensions flare up during this Covid-19 pandemic, the world needs the kind of peace Jesus talked about; not the kind which results from human ingenuity but humility. It frequently requires us to listen to people whose views on the crisis are opposed to ours. It often demands we put aside our own concerns to address those of others. There will be moments when offering this kind peace seems beyond our ability; which is likely true. But, it not beyond the ability of Christ.