

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

09 April 2020

First, some things you should know:

- Bishop Bergie has announced the Diocesan Synod scheduled to begin in September 2020 has been postponed. It will likely begin in the spring of 2021.

As a Priest, I have celebrated Mass in many different places. I have done so in large urban parishes where the congregation numbered over a thousand. I have also offered it in a rural parish with one other person present. I have celebrated Mass in famous Churches like Notre Dame in Paris and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. I have also done so in a shantytown outside of Lima, Peru where a dog fight broke out in the middle of it (no I am not making this up). Yet, no matter the location or circumstances, the experience of making Christ present in the Eucharist to a community of people remains one of the most moving experiences I have as a Priest.

In tonight's Second Reading, Paul provides us with the oldest account of the celebration of the Eucharist. It recalls how on the night before he died (Holy Thursday) Jesus gathered his disciples for a Passover Meal and transformed it into what we call the Mass, which Vatican II calls the source and summit of our faith life. Nothing else we do as Catholics better expresses our identity and builds the community we call the Church. Paul describes the basic elements of the Eucharist: Jesus took bread and said, "This is my body that is for you" and a cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant in my blood" and "do this in remembrance of me". Paul knew this celebration was a vital part of the faith which needed to be preserved and so he wrote it down. With minor variations, each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) recorded the same elements. Over the years, Popes, Bishops and Theologians have expanded our understanding of its meaning. It has been celebrated in numerous languages, cultures and social situations. It has provided comfort in times of distress (like at a funeral), expressed happiness (like at a wedding) and strengthened resolve (like during wartime). It provides an opportunity to join our struggles to those of Christ and offer them up along with the bread and wine at Mass.

This Holy Thursday, most Catholics will not be able celebrate Mass because of the need to stop the spread the Covid 19 virus. It is important to remember our Catholic tradition teaches that the Eucharist unites not just be people assembled in the pews but also everyone else in our Church. Tonight, when I celebrate my Mass you will be there next to me (although remember to practice social distancing). We will offer to Christ the sacrifices we have had to make or are making because of the circumstances we face. He will take them and join them to his and offer them to His Father. The sufferings we endure are likely not as severe as those he experienced on the cross, but he wants them included anyway.

As Catholics and all people of faith understand, regardless of the circumstances under which we make them, sacrifices are a part of our relationship with God. Within our Catholic tradition, the Mass is a vehicle for us to gather as a community and join the sacrifices we must make with those of Jesus to continue on our faith journey.