

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

23 April 2020

Our modern secular society has an ambivalent attitude towards the Church. Many people appreciate the charitable actions undertaken by it and Catholic organizations. They respect how Catholic institutions like schools and hospitals contribute to the Common Good. However, when the Church expresses its opposition to certain activities like abortion, euthanasia or same-sex Marriage and promotes these teachings through its public institutions, the response is decidedly negative. The Church is told it must get with the times and yield to public opinion. This hostility extends to demands that Catholic schools and hospitals be forced to change or be abolished. Yet, Catholic teaching cannot be separated from its public expression because it is based on the truth revealed by Christ.

In today's First Reading, Peter and the apostles are told by the Jewish Council not to teach in the name of Jesus. Earlier, Peter and John had healed a lame man in front of crowd of witnesses and explained how this miracle occurred through the intervention of Christ. When the authorities learned of what had happened, they arrested the two apostles and after warning them not to teach in the name of Jesus, released them. When the disciples ignored the Council's threat and continued preaching in the Temple they were arrested and put into prison. They then escaped and returned to the Temple another time and preached before the crowds. This persistence of the disciples infuriated the Council who now talked about killing them. Yet, the apostles cannot deny the truth that Christ had risen from the dead and his power healed the crippled man. The crowds have recognized the truth about the healing and remained open to the message preached by the apostles. Even the threat of death was not a deterrent to the disciples. Integrity demanded their words and actions not be separated from each other and reflect the truth they knew.

As talk begins to shift towards a Post-Covid-19 world, Catholics and other people of faith have an essential contribution to make to the public conversation about what this world will look like. Mistakes were undoubtedly made by public and medical officials as the pandemic unfolded. Truth demands these errors be acknowledged and persons held accountable for them. Yet, it also requires a recognition that decisions were often made under time constraints, growing panic from the public and without complete information about the situation. Religious traditions maybe be able to help determine the truth in a balanced way which avoids scapegoats. The need for solidarity and compassion in repairing the economic, social and emotional damage caused by this crisis can be helped by the global presence of religious traditions. Recognition of the limitations of human knowledge and skills revealed by the pandemic and reflection on the possibility another such event could happen in the future, might be helped by the humility found in religious traditions. Yet, religious truths have value because they are true and not because we find them useful. As our world moves past the Covid-19 crisis, it cannot attempt to silence these truths because they don't fit into a secular, individualistic, materialist and modern or post-modern world view. It is God who is in charge and determines the truth not us.

Catholics and other people of faith know they must struggle to get others to recognize the truth they wish to share with others. By refusing to stop their efforts and keeping what they say and do connected, then they will enable truth to eventually triumph.