

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

04 April 2020

First, a few things you should know.

- Bishop Bergie has asked the Priests of the Diocese to remind everyone to stay home as much as possible, especially as Covid 19 is now present in our community and has claimed lives.
- He has indicated the Catholic Center, all Parish Churches and Offices will remain closed until at least May 30. Employees will be working at home as much as possible.
- The Bishop has asked Parishes not to distribute blessed palms to the public on the weekend of Palm Sunday to encourage everyone to stay home.
- All large celebrations including First Communion and Confirmation scheduled before May 30 (including those at Holy Rosary Parish) will be postponed until a later date. A new date for these celebrations will not be set until after things have settled down.
- In order to accommodate couples who need to reschedule their wedding due to this pandemic, the Bishop is temporarily lifting the ban on these celebrations taking place on a Sunday (they will not take place within a Mass), if this is necessary. Please contact the Parish Office about setting a new Wedding Date after things have settled down.
- Bishop Bergie will be celebrating all Holy Week celebrations at the Cathedral (without a congregation present) as follows: Palm Sunday at 11:30 AM; Holy Thursday at 7:00 PM; Good Friday at 3:00 PM; Easter Vigil at 7:00 PM and Easter Sunday at 11:30 AM. These celebration will be live streamed through the websites of the Diocese www.saintcd.com and the Cathedral www.thecathedralinstcatharines.com and on Facebook www.facebook.com/DioceseofStCatharines. The Easter Mass will also be broadcast on Cogeco TV Channel 10.
- Bishop Bergie has indicated if people are unable to make an appointment to go to Confession, it is sufficient for them to make a sincere Act of Contrition and commit to going to Confession at a later date. Confessions will not be available in a drive-through or drive-in manner. General Absolution will not be permitted during this time.
- Bishop Bergie would also like everyone to know there are specially appointed and trained Priests available to celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick at hospitals in the Niagara Health System. No other Priests will be permitted to visit the hospitals for the foreseeable future.
- Bishop Bergie is also asking people to consult the Diocesan website for the most up-to-date and accurate information about pastoral issues during this Covid 19 crisis. There is a lot of inaccurate information in the public domain so please check with reputable sources. As Pastor, I will try to update the Parish website on a daily basis with information specifically about Holy Rosary Parish. If you need further information, please do not hesitate to call the Parish Office.

Staying together is essential for the success of any organization. Every group is made up of individuals who all have different priorities, suggestions and talents. For the organization to thrive, one or a few individuals must sift through all the aspirations, ideas and resources to set a goal and plan a course of action which will achieve it. Staying together means individual group members might have to set aside their opinions and activities for the common good.

In today's First Reading, Ezekiel ponders the effects of past divisions upon the Jewish people and their present desire for unity. During the reigns of King David and King Solomon, the Jewish people were a united, strong and prosperous nation. After the death of King Solomon, this community was divided into two nations: Judah in the south and Israel in the north. This division weakened their ability to repel invaders such as Assyria and Babylon and led to internal political and religious problems. In exile in Babylon, Ezekiel remembered how these divisions and the religious infidelity of the people led to their present difficulties. Yet, Ezekiel sought to give his people hope. God had not abandoned them. One day, they would return to their land as a single united people under the sovereignty of God.

Staying together is a challenge for our country. We are divided by ethnicity, religion, region, language, class, gender and many other things. It seemed only a few months ago that our nation was becoming ungovernable as disputes over First Nations land rights, the construction of oil pipelines, global warming, equalization payments and other political, economic and social issues intensified. Our country's leaders had a hard time being civil toward one another. Now, those same national leaders are working together and being nice to one another. Neighbours who are different from each other seem to be looking out for one another. This change may be one of the few positive things to come out of this pandemic.

Yet, unity is a fragile thing. It doesn't take much to shatter it and tense times like the ones we are living in increase the chances that will happen. Certain medical resources (surgical masks, ventilators, face shields, hand sanitizer) are scarce and the demand for them grows as the number of Covid 19 cases increases. Countries, even provinces, may start fighting over procuring and distributing them. It is natural that every jurisdiction wants to protect the people for whom they are responsible. Even on the individual level, people have started fighting over toilet paper and frozen vegetables.

Like Ezekiel, we can see the effects of not staying together both today and in the past. Divided we get weaker and on the international, national, regional, local and personal level the net result of this trend is we all lose. Hard decisions will have to be made which means some people will not get what they want or perhaps need. Catholics and other people of faith need to follow the prophet's example and help others put things into perspective. This may mean letting someone else have the last package of toilet paper. They are also called upon to provide hope through their words and actions. Holding things together when others would prefer to tear them apart is hard. A while ago, a priest in Italy gave up his respirator so that a younger man could have it. The Priest died. Think of how that action gave hope to that young man's family.

One day, we will make it through this Covid 19 pandemic. When we do, how will look back upon this time? Were we trying to help people stay together or tear them apart?