

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

19 May 2020

First, a few things you should know:

- This past Sunday (May 17) was the Memorial of St. Giulia Salzano, the foundress of the Catechist Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the religious community which serves our Parish so faithfully. It is wonderful to have such a group of dedicated Religious Women working at Holy Rosary Parish by providing daycare for children, ministering to the Italian community and working in many of our programs. At present, the Sisters are well and awaiting the return of Sister Amelia who went home to visit her dying mother in the Philippines last Fall. Due to problems with her visa, compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, she has been unable to return to Canada. Please pray for all the Sisters and in particular Sister Amelia's efforts to come back to Thorold.

The summer before I went to university I knew I had it pretty good at home. My mother cleaned the house, did my laundry and prepared all the meals. At school in Kingston, I would have to do all these things myself. Over July and August, my mother taught me how to keep the house clean, do laundry and prepare a few simple meals. By September, I was ready for living on my own. While I didn't always like the experience of being independent, it was another essential step in the process of my becoming an adult. The separation from home did me good.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples "it is to your advantage that I go away". Since they did not know about Christ's upcoming Passion and Death, the disciples likely had little idea what this statement meant. Jesus knew they would be shattered by these events but would also be called upon to complete his mission on earth by proclaiming the Gospel. It was only when Christ was absent that the Holy Spirit (Advocate) could come and bestow upon them the gifts necessary to accomplish their task. This separation from Jesus would require them to enter a new stage of life and face the challenges of discipleship and ministry on their own. However, memories of his life combined with the gifts provided by the Advocate insured they could make the transition.

Separation has been a common experience for people during this Covid-19 pandemic. In some families, members are kept apart by the need for social isolation to protect the elderly and vulnerable. Other families who were planning to visit relatives living far away will likely have to postpone their trip for a while. People are constantly being reminded in stores and banks to keep six feet when in line for service. Although physical separation is inconvenient, mental separation can pose a larger problem. Individuals of particular ethnic backgrounds or who work in hospitals or long term care facilities are shunned as people are separated into categories of safe or unsafe to be around. For economic reasons, workers are separated into those who get personal protective equipment and those who don't really need it. Within the international community, countries are separated into those who can and cannot be trusted. For many people, these separations appear to be undermining the sense of community on the local, national or global levels.

Catholics and other people of faith, separation has often provided an opportunity for growth. Since their religious beliefs make them different from other people, many of the faithful have used the experience to grow in confidence and resilience. They can stand on their own two feet and overcome rejection and hostility. Yet, their faith calls on them to be concerned about the welfare of others. Perhaps their patience, resolve and altruism obtained through experience may better help those people to cope with the negative

consequences of separation. This Covid-19 pandemic may help them become mentally stronger and more prepared to handle future crises.

As I learned, separation can be a difficult experience. But the lessons it can teach are worth it.