

Statement for Website  
From Fr. Michael Basque

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Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to encounter many good role models. My father was someone who taught me what it takes to be as man: the ability to take responsibility for your actions and care about others. My teachers just didn't instruct me in Mathematics or English but taught me how to learn and why it was important to do so. After my ordination, some of my peers showed me how to become a good Priest not by what they said but through their actions. These experiences have made me want to become a good role model for others.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples to "love one another as I have loved you" and then adds "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends". When he said those words Jesus knew he would soon experience his Passion and Death. Throughout his ministry, Jesus had taught his disciples through example. He healed a man born blind to instruct them the condition was not the result of sin but an opportunity to demonstrate God's power and compassion. During the Last Supper, he washed the feet of his apostles to educate them about the importance of humility and service in the life of a disciple. His upcoming Passion and Death was to be a lesson that his followers must be willing to sacrifice everything (including their lives) to carry out God's plan. Abstract discussions about these issues would not have had the impact on how they understood or lived their faith as did living by example. For Jesus, love was not a feeling or idea but a decision which came with a price tag. This example had to be passed on to the apostles who could then relay it to their successors like Matthias whose feast day is today. It was likely for this reason the disciple who was to replace Judas had to be someone with a deep experience of Christ's presence on earth: a witness who had known Jesus from the start of his ministry until the Resurrection. Apostles had to be role models who learned and taught through experience.

Catholics and other people of faith understand how good role models have the ability to shape lives and change history. Within the Catholic tradition, the Communion of Saints indicates how this kind of person can come from every conceivable situation in life. Saints have been great teachers, committed contemplatives, active in charitable work or simple farmers. They have been Popes, Bishops, Priests, Religious men and women, husbands, wives, single people and children. Besides their faith, they all had one thing in common: the ability to inspire people to become the best human being possible.

During this Covid-19 pandemic we need a lot of good role models. We need doctors and nurses who care for the sick. We need medical researchers who can find better treatments and a vaccine (hopefully). We need government officials who can develop policies to protect the health and wallets of people. These individuals need to be more than good at what they do, they need to inspire confidence in the rest of us: in other words be good role models. Yet, we also need other kinds of role models: parents who will listen to their kids talk about their worries caused by the virus; spouses who will cooperate to get through any financial difficulties and adult children who check up on elderly parents. Catholics and other people of faith can be great role models by just doing the ordinary things in life extraordinarily well (with love). They know their faith is a call to serve God and others. All they need to do is to be themselves.