

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

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I am someone who likes routine. Every day I get up at the same time. I eat pretty much the same thing for breakfast. I go for a walk about the same time each day. The television shows I watch, clothes that I purchase, the kind of books I read haven't changed much in quite a while. Many people think I am boring. But, I like it that way. This approach to life enables me to be organized, focused and productive. My routine allows me to establish a "normal" which I find comforting. Yet, there are times when my routine is disrupted and I have learned to deal with it. Sometimes, these disruptions become permanent, like when I learned I was diabetic and had to change my diet. Adjusting to a "new normal" means acquiring a new way of thinking and acting.

In today's Gospel, seven disciples encounter the risen Christ beside the Sea of Galilee and learn about their "new normal". During the earthly ministry of Jesus, the disciples "normal" consisted of following him, listening to his teachings and witnessing his miracles. After Christ's passion and death, everything changed and their "new normal" seemed to involve being fugitives from the Jewish authorities and hiding behind a locked door. When Jesus appeared to them on Easter evening, he showed them his hands and side, spoke words of peace, gave them a mission and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. His reappearance the following week provided Thomas with the evidence to know Christ had risen. The "new normal" had become filled with hope and focused on an important undertaking. Yet, it might have seemed a little overwhelming to some of the disciples. So, Peter decides to go back to the original "normal": fishing. After this return to the familiar ends in failure, the risen Jesus appears and gently prods the disciples towards their future. Although as Peter will soon discover, this "new normal" will eventually lead to his own death, it is the right direction for his life. Christ understood his disciples would need time to adjust their ways of thinking and acting in order to accept their "new normal".

Catholics and other people of faith have had their normal disrupted by this Covid 19 pandemic. Sunday Mass and Church services have been cancelled. Celebrations of Weddings, First Communion and Confirmation have been postponed. Churches are not even open for private prayer. Like most people around the world, they long for a return to "normal". Recently, government leaders have discussed how the restrictions designed to limit the spread of the virus will be gradually lifted in order to re-start the economy and get things into some kind of order. Many individuals have wondered about what this "new normal" will be. Most people agree we will never return to the way things were before the virus started to spread. Yet, our experience of the pandemic should make us pause and ask questions about the "old normal". Did nursing homes become warehouses where we put old people so we could focus less attention on their care? Did cost reduction measures lead to dependence on suppliers who became unreliable in a time of crisis? Did the desire to protect the economy hinder from governments introducing measures designed to stop the spread of the virus earlier? These are serious questions which have an ethical dimension. Catholics and other people of faith have the resources to contribute to the conversation about these questions. Their conception of "normal" also places things into a longer timeframe than other groups.

Most of us want to reach a “new normal” soon. Yet doing so, requires us to acquire a new way of thinking about the past (so we can learn from our mistakes) and a careful grasp of what is unfolding before us (so we can make good choices for the future). It also requires us to acquire a new way of acting to insure we move forward together through this crisis and after it. Routines are only good if they work for all of us.