

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

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First, a few things you should know.

- Some technical problems have delayed the completion of our Easter Video Service which is now available for you to watch on this website or on our facebook page. There is discussion about putting out a more videos based on the Sunday Readings every week until regular Masses resume. I will let you know about this possibility later this week. Thanks again to those who took part in the effort.

When I was working as a summer student at General Motors, one of my co-workers used to say, “If you haven’t heard a good rumour by 9:00 AM; start one”. It has always fascinated me why some people are so obsessed with hearing and repeating rumours. Most of the information passed on this way is trivial and often false. Yet, rumours can spread like wildfire. Perhaps it is the belief knowing something another person doesn’t gives one a kind of power over them or puts one in a superior social position. One thing I know for sure is rumours can cause real harm.

In today’s Gospel, Matthew’s account records a rumour invented by some Jewish leaders and the soldiers who had guarded Christ’s tomb that the troops had fallen asleep and the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus on Easter morning. Matthew’s Gospel was likely written to a pre-dominantly Jewish Christian community who would have had to defend their beliefs about Jesus from attacks by other groups within Judaism. The most important conflict would have focused on whether Christ had risen from the dead. Without the resurrection being true, Jesus would have been either a well intentioned martyr or religious fraud. Many Scripture scholars have argued the rumour about the disciples of Jesus stealing his body from the tomb was probably being levelled at early Christians by their Jewish opponents and it is for this reason only Matthew included this incident in his Gospel. This rumour has remained popular into our own times with books written periodically to support it. It is important to remember Christ’s resurrection is an article of faith. It can be neither proven nor disproven to the satisfaction of all. There are many explanations for an empty tomb including a resurrection and a stolen body. The Scriptures never recorded the actual resurrection; only empty tomb stories and risen Christ appearance stories. The point is Christians need to be aware of the popularity and power of rumours and respond to them appropriately.

As I have mentioned in earlier posts, during this Covid 19 pandemic there have been a lot of rumours swirling around people. Some deal with present circumstances while others focus on future possibilities. Many people speculate this Covid 19 pandemic is a “game-changer” for our world: things are going to be very different in the future. Yet, as Andrew Coyne pointed out in a recent column in the Globe and Mail, we have no idea what changes will occur and their long-term significance. Rumours about such matters may be tempting to hear, believe and repeat. Yet, it is important to remember there may be individuals and groups who seek to use the Covid 19 pandemic and the world created after it to their own advantage. When people are fearful and uncertain they become vulnerable to manipulation. Rumour is a subtle way to do this. Without

being alarmist or sounding like a conspiracy theorist, it is important we proceed throughout and after this crisis cautiously, thoughtfully and with our eyes wide open.

Catholics and other people of faith are aware of the dangers of rumours. As I have mentioned before, they seek the truth about God and the world around them. This should make them more wary of the attractiveness and power of rumours. Yet, they are human. They are as susceptible to the same emotions as others and can respond to them in a like manner. Despite this vulnerability, they should use their faith to reinforce their resistance to the temptations which rumours bring. Inevitably, they will hear rumours. But, how do they respond? They have the critical thinking skills to distinguish between fact and fiction. They have a faith based on truth which compels to respond to one and reject the other, despite the advantage which could come from getting another individual or group to believe a questionable rumour.

Experience teaches us the harm a rumour can cause. Only the truth can stop it.