

Statement for Website  
From Fr. Michael Basque

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Nostalgia is a strange thing. We look back on certain times in our lives or periods of history as a “golden age”. They were times of energy and enthusiasm. They were periods when things seemed to be moving in the right direction. They were times when people got along and worked together for the common good. These periods seem better than what is experienced today. Yet, with a little reflection, the warm glow of these times begins to fade. Lethargy and disillusionment existed along side the energy and enthusiasm. Progress was often stalled by setbacks and mistakes. Divisions between people flared up which often led to selfishness and a lack of cooperation. This more realistic view of a “golden age” helps us to recognize the ideals it tried to embody and the difficulties which hindered people from achieving them.

In today’s First Reading, Luke presents an idealized view of the early Church. During this “golden age”, everyone was of one heart and soul. No one claimed private ownership of goods because it was all held in common. People sold their property and shared the proceeds with the needy. Everyone prayed and “broke bread” together. They were united by the goal of preaching the Gospel and many people joined them. While it is possible much of what was recorded did occur, the early Church was far from perfect. Certain “converts” associated with it held back some of their property (Ananias and Sapphira). The Hellenist and Hebrews squabbled about the allotment of food for their widows. Theological disputes about dietary laws and circumcision caused serious splits in the Church. The picture Luke presented of the early Church embodied the ideals to which that community aspired. These ideals have inspired countless generations in the past and should do the same for us today. The knowledge Luke’s portrayal was not fully accurate should not make us cynical but remind us of the difficulties involved with attaining them.

During this Covid-19 pandemic the importance of maintaining our ideals should not be underestimated. It is easy to stop caring about others when they don’t seem to care about you. If someone won’t respect social distancing, why should you help them find toilet paper? At a time when certain resources are scarce, it is tempting to focus only on what you or your loved ones need. If others are hoarding hand sanitizer, why should I have to share mine with a neighbour? If the predictions of medical experts have sometimes not been right, why should I let them infringe upon my personal freedom? Yet, how do we want to look back on this period in our lives. Few of us will see it as a “golden age”. Nevertheless, doctors, nurses and paramedics have continued treating Covid-19 patients despite the risk to their own health. The St. Vincent DePaul Society and local food banks are still helping the needy despite shrinking resources. Truck drivers, janitorial staff and grocery store clerks are keeping the economy going just by doing their jobs. What story will you be able to tell about your experience of this pandemic?

Although nostalgia might tempt us to believe there actually was a “golden age”, a little reflection teaches us differently. It might also teach us any age, including our present one, may have some “golden” in it if we can find it by overcoming the difficulties which prevent us from attaining our ideals.