

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

21 May 2020

First, a Few things you should know:

- As you probably have heard, the Province of Ontario has decided to close all schools until September 2020. This means at Holy Rosary Parish celebrations of the Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation will not be taking place until at least September or October of this year. The parish will set dates for and release details about these celebrations when Churches are allowed to have large gatherings (more than 50 people). We have no idea when this will occur. Some review and preparation for these Sacraments will be required for candidates before they can receive them. Parents and students will be informed about these programs when they are finalized. Please pass this information along to anyone you know who may be affected by it.
- You may have also heard the Province of Ontario is permitting drive-in religious services if certain guidelines are followed. After reviewing the information we have received about this possibility, I have decided there will be no drive-in religious services at Holy Rosary Parish. At the present time, Mass (daily and weekend) is being live-streamed over the Internet by almost a dozen parishes and we have a video Sunday Liturgy available through our Parish website. I can see no additional benefit arising from a drive-in Mass when people will have to remain in their cars and unable to receive the Eucharist.
- The St. Vincent DePaul Society is now providing food for the needy only on Thursday mornings at the Parish Hall. Once again we ask people to continue to support this organization through donations of cash or non-perishable food and toiletry items. I would also like express my thanks to the volunteers who continue to operate this ministry despite the risks.

When the terrible events of September 11, 2001 occurred, people reacted with different emotions. Some people were sad at the large number of deaths and injuries which took place that day. Others were afraid that this kind of event could happen again and they might be involved in it. There were individuals who were angry at the perpetrators and wanted punishment inflicted upon someone. Many people felt sympathy for the victims and wanted to do something to help them. This variety of reactions to the same event shows the unpredictability of human behaviour.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples when he goes "you will weep and mourn but the world will rejoice; you will have pain but your pain will turn into joy". As I have indicated in earlier posts, when he said these words Jesus was aware his Passion and Death were immanent. He also knew those experiences would be devastating for his disciples. They had probably left everything to follow Jesus because they believed he would make the world a better place and bring Israel closer to God. This belief was reinforced by his feeding the hungry, healing those who were blind, lame and had leprosy as well as his teaching with greater authority than other rabbis. His Passion and Death would appear to destroy everything to which they had committed themselves. The corrupt and well connected would triumph. The world would rejoice at these events because they would prove its power. However, Jesus knew the story didn't end on Good Friday but Easter Sunday. The Resurrection would prove the world's power was no match for that of Christ.

His love was stronger than sin and death. The disciples' faith was not misplaced and would be vindicated. This event would cause the disciples to rejoice and the world to scratch its head in disbelief. It revealed how God could make life very unpredictable.

Catholics and other people of faith recognize life and human behaviour are unpredictable. How many children raised by their parents in the faith stop believing in God? Others who were raised in a home where religion was ignored or ridiculed become fervent believers. Sometimes individuals who were strong in their faith appear to lose it but later return to it. People leave one religious tradition and join another. If these changes appear surprising, they shouldn't be. People responded to Jesus with faith, apathy and hostility. Judas Iscariot was an apostle, part of the inner circle of disciples, yet betrayed Jesus. When Christ told his followers they must eat his flesh and drink his blood they left him. One can never know how people respond to a given situation.

One of the most difficult dimensions of our experience with this Covid-19 pandemic is its unpredictability. We don't know what is going to happen in the future. Will a second wave of the virus come? How bad will it be? Will researchers come up with a vaccine? All the uncertainty is driving some people crazy. Catholics and other people of faith strive to understand and accept the uncertainties of life. As occurred on September 11, 2001, individuals have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic with different emotions. Some are sad at the suffering they see, fearful they might contract and die from the virus, angry at how their freedom has been restricted by it and sympathetic to the needs of those affected by it. The faith response to the situation is to address the needs of others regardless of their emotions: give hope to the sad, reassure the fearful, be patient with the angry and express gratitude for those who try to help.

Since the Covid-19 crisis is still unfolding, it is impossible to know what emotions people will be feeling as it does. Life and human behaviour are just too unpredictable. Yet, the response of believers should be the same: just be there.