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Office staffed T thru Th, as we are able.

We continue to offer three masses each week to enable people to attend while maintaining appropriate social distancing. The Sunday 9:30 am mass continues to be live streamed on our Facebook page. We are also offering a Saturday 5:00 pm mass and a Sunday 12:00 pm (noon) mass.

In the spirit of trying to make room for those who choose to attend, while adhering to the requirement to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet between households, we encourage people to attend based on their last names:

A-G Saturday, 5:00 pm

H-M Sunday, 9:30 am

N-Z Sunday, 12:00 noon

Attendance at mass is NOT required. Please make choices that keep you and the community safe.

Fr. Joe and the staff hold you all in our prayers, and ask that you pray for us and for all the essential workers who are striving to keep things running.

We support the quality, faith-based K-8 education at

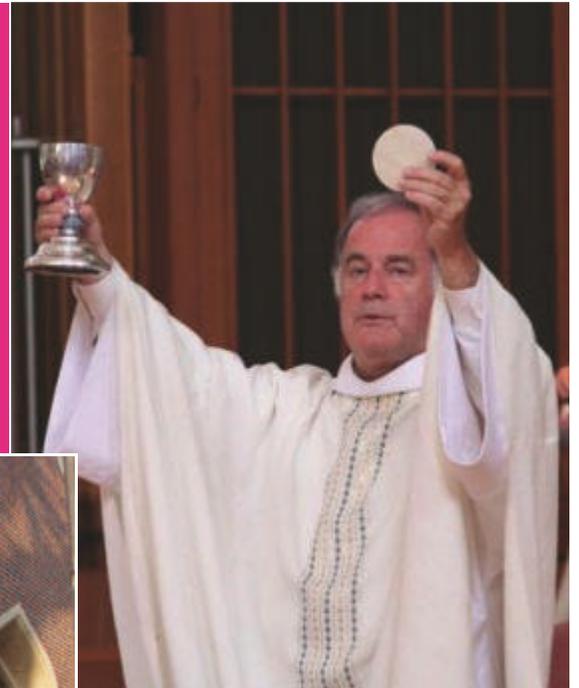
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LIGHT.



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love and peace.
Amen!



This week at St. Albert's(masses and intentions are in **BOLD** type)

*During the pandemic, we are offering **three** masses per weekend to help attendees maintain social distancing. Fr. Joe is still celebrating private daily masses for the intentions below.*

Saturday, March 13 – Peter Daley

Sunday, March 14 –

9:30 am – Peter Daley

12:00 pm – Dorothy Geis †

Monday, March 15 – Pearl Lansing †

Tuesday, March 16 – John Roban †

Thursday, March 18 – Marylis Boyden †

Friday, March 19 – Alma Fabio †

Saturday, March 20 – Betty Schuster †

Sunday, March 21 –

9:30 am – Susan Bielinski

12:00 pm – Dorothy Geis †

In our prayers

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Dave Boehnen, Diane Marrin, Laura Schomer, AnneMarie Christensen, Lenny Klosinski, Dave Buck, Copper Schadow, Ellen Goettsch, Rosie Ekelund, Mary Ann Egan, Jack Lachenmeyer and Dick Martin.

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including from Covid-19 and other diseases, violence and natural disasters worldwide.

Due to HIPAA privacy standards, hospitals and care centers cannot notify us of your need for our prayers or visits unless you direct them to call.

If you or someone you know would like to be included in our prayers, or have the Sacrament of the Sick, or communion brought to you, please let the office know at 612-724-3643. Messages are checked regularly.

If you don't want your name printed or spoken aloud, you can always ask to be included in the Prayer Chain, a group of parishioners who will hold you quietly in their prayers.

IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY

The church elevator will now be available at all masses for those with mobility issues. Please limit to one family per elevator ride as a Covid-19 precaution.

As you consider returning to in-person mass:

- * **We are continuing to offer three Masses** each weekend for those who wish to attend in person at 5 PM Saturday and at 9:30 and noon on Sunday. We encourage those who are age 65 or older or who have underlying health conditions to stay home and view the 9:30 AM livestream. Anyone with symptoms or recent exposure to COVID-19 must remain at home.
- * **ONLY Front center church doors are open, along with the elevator entrance. (One household at a time in elevator.)**
- * While we have asked that **people separate themselves alphabetically by last name** so we need not turn anyone away, you may attend what's convenient for you. Saturday 5:00 pm: A-G; Sunday 9:30 am: H-M; Sunday noon: N-Z.
- * The 9:30 AM Mass is the most popular. If you have the flexibility to attend at 5 PM Saturday or noon on Sunday, we invite you to do that. We have not yet had to turn anyone away due to overcrowding, but we will regretfully do this if we run out of space at any liturgy.
- * **Thank you for wearing your masks!** This important health measure is *required* in the state of Minnesota. Please remember that your mask must cover both your nose and mouth and that you should keep it on for the entire time you are in church except when receiving communion. If you need a mask, we have disposable ones available.
- * As appealing as our music is at masses with cantors, we ask you **NOT to sing, even while masked**. This is a precaution the Archdiocese recommends, as even when we keep six feet apart, viruses can still travel further through the air when propelled by speech or singing,
- * **Please sit in designated spaces only.** We have marked three spaces in each open pew. Please sit at one of these spaces. These spots are marked to ensure that people remain six feet apart. Larger families may need to occupy two spots. **Do not sit in an available spot if you cannot maintain six feet of separation from people who are already seated in that pew.**
- **The change of seasons is making it tough to control the church heat.** We've been warning you about bundling up for the cold, and now we're saying to wear layers because it might be too hot! It IS nice to have the open doors and windows refreshing the space,
- Communion will be distributed after the dismissal. **Please exit the church immediately after receiving communion.** The only people remaining in church will be staff and volunteers who are cleaning the church in preparation for the next service. You are welcome to have conversations out-

To request that the Eucharist be brought to you at your home, please contact Fr. Joe at 612-245-3345, or Jim Curran at 612-483-1546.

They will mask and safely deliver communion to you.

“Star light, star bright, The first star I see tonight; I wish I may, I wish I might, Have the wish I wish tonight.”

Her hospital room was filled with multicolored stars dangling from the ceiling. Each star contained a “get well wish” from family, friends, classmates and hospital staff. Cecilia, who was eight years old and suffering from a rare form of brain cancer, was known to her family as “Star Light.” She loved the little nursery rhyme “Star light, star bright” and had a small music box next to her bed which she often activated to play the melody. Cecilia was a beautiful girl with strawberry blond hair and very blue eyes that seemed to twinkle. However, one of the devastating side effects of her cancer was blindness.

Despite the growing discomfort of the cancer, she was playful and not resentful. Many of her commanding speech metaphors incorporated “sight” as an avenue of expression. Cecilia’s parents had asked me to visit and to offer the Sacrament of the Sick to her. When I arrived in her room, the room was filled with Cecilia’s family. Before the sacramental ritual began, Cecilia asked to feel my hands and my face. With her tiny hands she first caressed my hands and then gently embraced my face. She said, “Father Joe, it’s nice to see you. I hope you will make a wish and sign a star before you go.”

Blessing the oil and asking that it be a remedy for all who are anointed with it in body, mind and spirit, I anointed her forehead, her hands and her eyes saying, “Cecilia, through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy spirit. And May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.” All through the ritual of the Sacrament of the Sick, I had the distinct impression that Cecilia observed what was going on and peered through her blindness to a light that none of us present was able to see. Finishing with the prayer for a child I said, “God our Father, we have anointed your child Cecilia with the oil of healing and peace. Caress her, shelter her, and keep her in your tender care. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.” Inviting the small community to hold hands, three generations recited The Lord’s Prayer, linking this “little church” with the oldest prayer of our Christian Church. Then Cecilia and the family received the Eucharist.

After Communion, Cecilia asked each of us to make a wish while the little music box played the familiar tune of hope. Before leaving the room, I signed a paper star with a wish for continued joy for her and hope for her family. I took an extra star for myself to keep in my anointing book. While walking down the corridor, I quietly hummed: “Star light, star bright, the first star I see tonight; I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight.”

Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Lent, traditionally known as *Laetare* Sunday, a day of rejoicing. During this ongoing pandemic, it might be difficult for many of us to rejoice, especially if we have been wishing for answers not yet received. Stimulus checks, vaccines and basic health protocols will help, but the loss of traditional rituals of work, school and personal interactions continue to heighten anxiety and fear. The uncertainty of figuring out what might be the “new normal” remains a speculative guessing game. Slowly emerging out of the brain fog and fatigue of decision making, we continue to sort out the contemporary dramas unfolding in our personal lives. The real challenge confronting us is the need to eradicate the blind spots that inhibit us from seeing and telling the truth of a changing and highly vulnerable world. Dismantling the mythologies that perpetuate our stubborn ideologies is no easy task, but Lent does offer the challenge to reflect on the invitations to see reality differently. Indeed, there is none so blind as the one who will not see.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (5:18-14), he encouraged the Christian Community to recognize, “*Once you were in darkness, but now in the*

Lord’s light. Learn to live as children of the light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Sleepers, awake! Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you!” Perhaps, all of us would do well to listen to Johann Sebastian Bach’s well-known cantata, “Sleepers Awake”, as a source of hopeful alertness during the darkness of our pandemic. The hymn itself was written by a small-town German Lutheran pastor, Philipp Nicolai, who in the depths of a fearsome epidemic that ravaged his community, sought to comfort his congregation with words of hope. Consoling himself in what appeared to be the apocalypse, Nicolai composed the piece as a hopeful star shining during a terrible darkness. He entitled his hymn, “Mirror of Joy.” Two hundred years later, Bach would find musical inspiration and courage to dispel fearful thinking.

Both Saint Paul and Jesus were fond of “light metaphors” as a way of contrasting the devastating moral darkness associated with sin and fear. In today’s gospel from John (9:1-41), Jesus has lengthy conversations with multiple audiences regarding a man born blind. His disciples, the Pharisees, the parents of the blind man, skeptical bystanders and the man born blind all chime in when the blind man’s sight is restored. Struggling to clarify the prevailing traditions of mismanaged perceptions between sin and physical disabilities, Jesus infuriates the Pharisees with his disregard for healing a blind man on the Sabbath and for challenging their theology of sin. It was Jesus’ disciples who would raise the question, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.”

Setting the stage for an exciting series of argumentative truth telling confrontations, Jesus went “eye to eye” with the religious leaders who were incensed that he would break the Sabbath by restoring sight to the blind man. The fact that Jesus dismissed the traditional biblical connection between sin and blindness infuriated them, as well. When the skeptical religious leaders grilled the man born blind, the man simply replied, “*I don’t know whether I am a sinner or my parents sinned, but one thing I do know, though I was born blind, now I see.*” When Jesus asked the man born blind whether he believed Jesus was the Messiah (Son of God), the man simply replied, “*Lord, I believe.*”

The simplicity of this faith statement, “Lord, I believe,” might serve as a reasonable mantra during Lent. Using this wonderful story, all of us have an opportunity to put ourselves in the shoes (sandals) of the various characters and explore how easy it can be to blind ourselves from seeing the truth of Jesus’ claim of being the Messiah. Rediscovering the courage to say, “Lord, I believe,” even in our moments of doubt and uncertainty, will provide us with an awakening to the skepticism of our unbelief. Through the grace of God, all of us are led to search for the star that will dispel the darkness of our fears and lead us, like the Magi, to the light of Christ. Maybe our enlightenment will come through an unexplained miracle of healing or in the presence of a little girl named Cecilia, who would die peacefully in the arms of those who wished differently. Taking the time on a clear night, see if you can pick out the stars of Cecilia and the man born blind, and make a wish.

What better season than Lent to look, to see and to say: “Lord, I believe?” Star light, star bright, the first star I see tonight; I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight.

*Peace,
Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.*



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