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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.

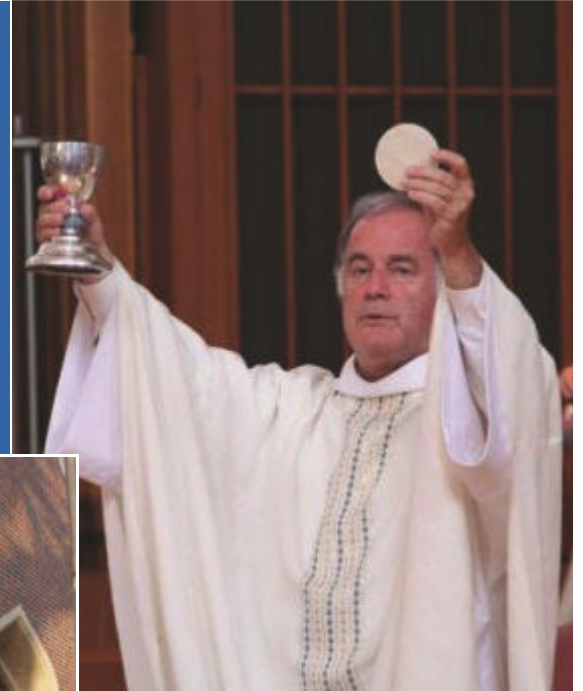
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www.saintalbertthegreat.org

He is
 risen!
 Alleluia!



Say YES to
 love and peace.
 Amen! Alleluia!



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, April 3 –

8:00 pm Easter Vigil

Sunday, April 4 – Easter

9:30 am – Nancy Bielinski †

12:00 pm – Dorothy Geis †

Monday, April 5– Judy Magnuson †

Tuesday, April 6 – Ruth Brown †

Thursday, April 8 – Dorothy Geis †

Friday, April 9 – Glenn Gilbertson †

Saturday, April 10 –

5:00 pm Dorothy Geis †

Sunday, April 11

9:30 am – Joe Messenbrink †

12:00 pm – Dorothy Geis †

In our prayers

We remember those who need healing, including Geraldine Ryan, Michael Callaghan, Diane Hauschneck, Michelle Larson, Diane Marrin, Anne-Marie Christensen, Lenny Klosinski, Judith McCormack, Dick Martin, Jack Lachenmeyer and Dave Buck.

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including Josh Phalouka.

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.

Thanks!

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 outside with appropriate physical distancing.

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.

Volunteers will mask and safely deliver communion to you.

“The great gift of Easter is hope.”

Waiting in the wings to go on stage was the image that came to mind as I stood in the shadows of the funeral parlor. In a way, I was the guest performer who would attempt, once again, to enter a death-defying situation and try to make sense out of a completely senseless crisis.

Keeping in mind that every crisis signals danger and opportunity, I confess that I always rely on the safety net of the Catholic funeral rituals to defuse the grief of the family and to soften my potential fall from the liturgical tightrope. Maintaining a theological balance while searching for empathetic human connectedness is not always easy to do. Looking directly at the grieving widow and the young children, I am acutely aware of how easily their tears will wash away any theological platitudes I might offer. When Whitney Houston's rendition of "I Will Always Love You" ended, I would begin the service for a young man, age forty-four, who had died of a massive heart attack.

Gurgling sounds momentarily distracted me as I moved toward the podium. It was the sight of a young mother breast-feeding her baby that heightened the irony of what I was about to do. New life in the shadow of death offered me a premature insight into Holy Week. I was hoping that in the face of so much pain and suffering, the promise of new life would somehow overshadow death, especially for the young widow and her children. At the time of the funeral, Easter was just weeks away and the faith of all who were present would be tested in the crucible of this pastoral situation. Seeking hope in the midst of grief is similar to searching for light amid darkness. However, it was the tiny, but audible, burp of the infant that drew the eyes of the mourners from the coffin to the child. A ripple of laughter in the midst of a tearful situation helped to make my task a bit easier.

The assurance of new life in the face of death is at the heart of Easter. The great gift of Easter is hope, but it is only because of our faith that hope can find its way through the dimly lit labyrinth of life. Achieving some semblance of balance in life requires a willingness to tolerate ambiguity as well as clarity. Faith, as the Irish poet Seamus Haney once said, "is like walking on water against our better judgment." Sorting through our experiences amid the complexities of life demands a certain flexibility allowing us to bend without breaking. To take up the challenge of "walking on water" requires a willingness to suspend our rational assessment and risk a faith response. Sink or swim, the gift of faith allows us to navigate rough waters with courage and uncertainty. Being led to hope demands a risky, but lively sense of faith.

When a little boy was asked what the significance of the Easter story was, he replied: "Jesus died on the cross for our sins and after three days in the tomb Jesus rose from the dead. When he came out of the tomb, Jesus saw his shadow and we all knew it would be a long winter." Blending resurrection theology with the myth of Groundhog Day might summarize the inherent dangers of our human lives.

We are creatures who like good stories, preferably with happy endings. Blending theology and popular mythology creates, at times, a level of comic relief, and allows us to smile in the midst of uncertainty. Faith and hope, however, allow us to hold out for the mystery of the resurrection despite the implausibility of scientific certainty. The rich association between Christian faith and parallel pagan myths creates a syncretistic history of overlapping explanations of reality. The arrival of spring and the awakening of new life link all of creation with the new light of the vernal equinox. Dispelling the chilling darkness of winter, the light and warmth of spring produces new life and hope.

Since the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, Easter in the Western Church has been celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon after the vernal equinox, between March 22nd and April 25th. Discrepancies in the actual dates of Easter for the Christian communities within the Roman (Gregorian) and Orthodox (Julian) calendars offer reasonable confusion on when to send out your Easter cards!

For Christians, Easter Sunday makes all the difference in the world. Whether we can maintain the intensity of joy and surprise surrounding that first Easter morning remains a matter of personal piety and a sense of humor. Competing with Easter Bunny mythology, Christian theology can easily lag in appeal behind a basket filled with chocolate eggs and multi-colored jellybeans. How exciting is talk about an empty tomb when you have a full basket of candy?

During my first visit to the empty tomb of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, I felt strangely disappointed by the chaos that surrounded this historic and holy place. The one redeeming event that enkindled my faith on that first day was the vision of a large man dressed in shiny boots, a white cowboy hat and carrying a bible. Squeezing out of the narrow entrance of the tomb, he stood in the midst of hundreds of strangers and took off his hat and threw it into the air and shouted: "That a boy, Jesus! I knew you could do it!" The normal cacophony of sounds and competing voices momentarily became silent and then the church erupted into laughter and shouts of agreement. What better testimony of faith could offer hope to skeptical strangers searching for a reason to shout, "Jesus Christ is risen today!"

The unfolding story of that first morning of awareness that the tomb was empty is summarized rather succinctly in our gospel reading for today. In the gospel of John (20:1-18), we read that early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple telling them, "They have taken him out of the tomb and we do not know where they laid him." In parallel accounts, all the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11) give similar reports of Mary Magdalene and other women arriving to find the tomb empty. It was the faithful women who remained with Jesus through his passion and his death who would be the first witnesses to his resurrection. With a genuine sense of irony, even though the first preachers of the "Good News" were women, in today's Roman Catholic Church women are forbidden to preach.

Another funeral engaged my pastoral presence during this past week. However, the deceased was eighty-nine years old, not forty-four. In talking with the daughter of the deceased, she said her mother was eager to get to heaven and catch up with her husband and family members who had died over the years. There was no resistance to death in this funeral. But I must be honest; I still relied on the funeral rite of the Church as a "safety net" for attempting to make sense out of death no matter what the age. In light of Easter Sunday, my confidence in what Jesus said he would do offers me assurance that the greatest gift of Easter is hope, both for the living and the dead.

Have a Blessed Easter filled with hope, especially during this time of the pandemic. Thank you, Jesus, I knew you could do it! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

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

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