

APRIL 11, 2021

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Church of

ST. ALBERT *the* GREAT

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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.

Although state capacity restrictions have been lifted, we must still maintain six feet of physical distancing between groups, which means that our attendance is still limited. The 9:30 mass is the most popular. When your schedule allows, please consider attending one of the other two services.

Attendance at mass is still 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.

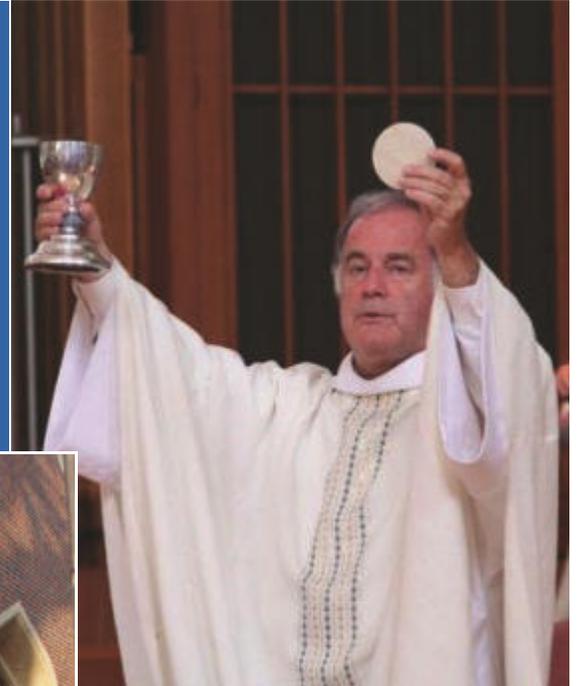
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Do not
doubt, but
believe.



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 10 –

5:00 pm Dorothy Geis †

Sunday, April 11

9:30 am – Joe Messenbrink †

12:00 pm – Dorothy Geis †

Monday, April 12– Fritz Magnuson †

Tuesday, April 13 – Jake McCoy †

Thursday, April 15 – Employees of FSS

Friday, April 16 – Victims of Atlanta shooting †

Saturday, April 17 –

5:00 pm Jake McCoy †

Sunday, April 18

9:30 am – Frank Murphy †, Felix Fettig †

12:00 pm – Geraldine Ryan †

In our prayers

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Diane Hauschneck, Michelle Larson, Diane Marrin, AnneMarie Christensen, Lenny Klosinski, Judith McCormack, Dick Martin, Jack Lachenmeyer, Dave Buck, Mary Lindahl, Jack Duffy, Bill Zimniewics and Hugh Sweeney

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including Geraldine Ryan and Timothy Duna.

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.

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.

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.)**
- * Although we have previously asked that people separate themselves alphabetically by last name, you may attend the service that is convenient for you. 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 marked spaces with members of your group only.** A group can consist of people from the same household or from two households that are part of a pre-existing "pod." It can also include any number of individuals who attend together and have been fully vaccinated, which means that it has been at least two weeks since the final vaccine dose. We have marked three spaces in each open pew which are spaced out to ensure that people remain six feet apart. Please sit at one of these spaces. Larger groups 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.*
- * We have been blessed recently with some delightful weather, but we expect to see a variety of temperatures in the coming months. **Please dress appropriately** for a church that will have its front door and all of its windows open even when we would normally be running the heat or the air conditioning. Also, please do not close or adjust the windows.
- * We have resumed the distribution of communion during its proper place in the liturgy. You may return to your seats after receiving communion. If you are not comfortable with this, you may also leave immediately after reception.
- * Please exit the church immediately after the dismissal and move away from the front doors to ensure a path for other people to exit. 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.

“Faith is not genuine unless it is tinged with a trace of doubt.”

Whenever I am experiencing moments of doubt regarding my faith, I head for St. Mary's Cemetery in South Minneapolis. The cemetery has become a “depository of faith”, a sacred ground containing generations of ancestral bones as well as stories of faith, hope and love. It is not difficult to hear the voices of my father and mother, especially in the changing of the seasons when winter morphs into spring. The voices offer lessons of fidelity in moments of uncertainty and words of encouragement when life has gone awry. A recent visit evoked a fragment from T. S. Eliot's poem, “Little Gidding” (from Four Quartets): “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

It did not take long to rediscover a sense of peace. Grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts rest side by side. Separate generations linked by a common DNA and the reality of death. With the most recent addition of my sister Molly and a cousin, a new generation was added to the family plot in recent years. These generations were keepers of the faith, lovers of laughter and good story tellers. The visit to the cemetery would provide me with the courage to enter once again the Easter season, preparing me to listen to the stories of creation found in the Book of Genesis, and the promise of Jesus' Resurrection in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The stories of faith and hope continue to be found in the scriptural readings discovered in the Sundays after Easter.

Indeed, the gospel reading (John 20:19-31) for the Second Sunday of Easter invites us into the question of personal faith and doubt in a very dramatic way. Jesus had appeared to his disciples on the evening of the day that he rose from the dead. Thomas, one of the disciples, was missing that evening and found it hard to believe that the Lord had really appeared to the other disciples. Confidently, Thomas said: “*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the marks of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.*” Eight days later, Jesus would appear to the disciples when Thomas was with them. Jesus challenged Thomas “*to put his finger and hand into the wounds.*” Jesus said to Thomas: “*Do not doubt but believe.*” Thomas simply answered: “*My Lord and my God.*”

The theological significance of recognizing Jesus as “Lord and God” would testify to the reality of the messianic hope being realized in the person of Jesus. The question Jesus posed to Thomas (and, of course, to all of us) would become the learning curve of real faith: “*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have come to believe.*” What will it take for any of us to believe in the resurrected Jesus? What wounds must we discover in our lives or the lives of others to experience the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

Searching for faith and hope amid a world filled with pain and suffering becomes an on-going challenge for all of us. Putting aside the demand for some ideal community of faith, we are free to discover the Kingdom of God in the wounds of our daily lives. There is no ideal Christian community that can assure us of a “perfect faith.” With the recent death of George Floyd and so many young Black lives, The Black Lives Matter movement confronts the underlying racist attitudes of so many Americans. The recent shootings deaths in Atlanta, Georgia and Boulder, Colorado heighten the anxiety of Asian Americans as well as ordinary people shopping for groceries. The perennial battle for appropriate gun control and protected voter rights ignites a polarization among families and friends.

However, after today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47), the portrayal of the early Church hints at an ideal form of community: “*All who believed were together and had all things in common, and would sell*

their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as they had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread in various houses and ate their food with glad and generous hearts. Praising God and having good will for all.” The idyllic community of faith was dependent upon the Apostles' challenge to share all things in common. The desire to “break bread together” would initiate the institution of the Eucharist as a reminder of Jesus' “last supper” with his disciples.

The real sinfulness of any community is based upon its exclusion of individuals from participating in the Lord's Supper. While it is important to present an “ideal community” as a living hope, the reality we face is a church filled with diversity and theological division. Unfortunately, the historical divisions between Christian denominations remain as a norm. On all too rare occasions, the creative work of the Holy Spirit amazingly appears to challenge a visibly fractured Church with invitations to love and forgiveness.

Periodic reformations have produced charismatic leaders who can lead us into glimpsing vestiges of an ideal community. I suspect that Pope Francis is one of those leaders. In a recent statement by Francis, he reminded us: “Faith must be renewed and refreshed again and again. God does not give us faith by dictating abstract truths; rather God is revealed in history by God's willingness to enter into the joy and the suffering of the human community, the Church.” Like the celebration of the resurrection, we must be willing to bring back to life a community of faith, even amid our doubts.

Recapturing the enthusiasm of the early Church will never guarantee immunity from suffering and pain; however, standing in the shadow of the cross, we must be willing to put our fingers and hands into the wounds of Christ as they are manifested in the real problems of the world. We are, once again, invited to become the wounded healers of our generation. While faith is not genuine unless it is tinged with a trace of doubt, all of us must risk a leap of faith, even at safe distances. During this catastrophic pandemic, we can seek the certainty of hope in the intersection of faith and science.

Looking intently at the grave markers located in the family plot, my grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts all survived the Spanish Flu of 1918. In the words of Yogi Berra, the former catcher for the New York Yankees, when asked about the repeated pennant wins of the Yankees, he said: “It seems like “*déjà vu* all over again!” Perhaps Covid-19 is reminiscent of “*déjà vu*” all over again. A walk in the cemetery of your choice will offer you a chance to hear the dead speak about the need for a living faith and hope, especially in this time of pandemic. Indeed, we are all in this world together until death does us part.

We must face our fears with faith and facts. Trying to avoid “fake news” has become the major stumbling block of our generation. Seeking to avoid harming one another, we can never afford to forget Dr. Martin Luther King's admonition: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” In the immortal words of the poet Robert Frost: “In three words, I can sum up everything I've learned about life. It goes on.” Let us pray, however, that life goes on with dignity, respect, compassion and love for one another “and to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

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



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