

APRIL 25, 2021

FOURTH 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.

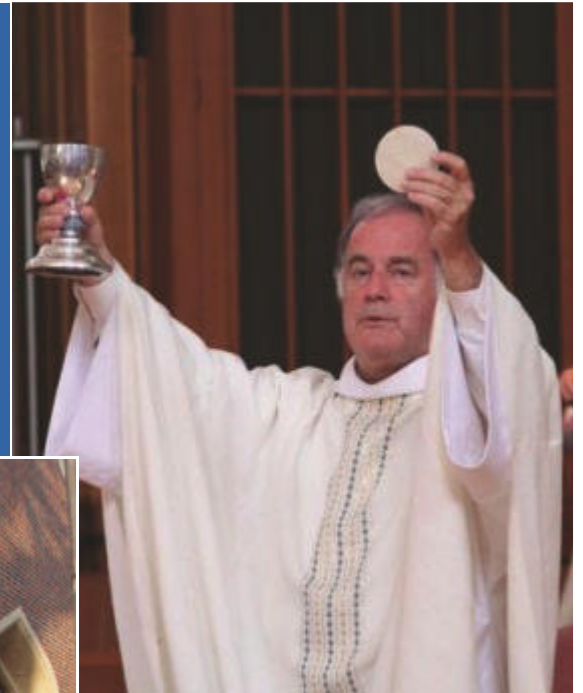
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Call the Parish Center at 612-724-3643 to learn more about this special ministry of sharing God's caring presence.



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“Beloved,
we are God’s
children now.”



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 24 –

4:30 pm to 6:15 pm – Drive-by Donuts

5:00 pm mass **Dean Santos †****Sunday, April 25**

9:00 am to 1:15 pm Drive-by Donuts

9:30 am mass – **Marie Swetz**12:00 pm mass – **Babs Santos Anderson †****Monday, April 26 – Katie Parker †****Tuesday, April 27 – Special intention of FSS****Thursday, April 29 – Mary Lindahl †**11:00 am **Funeral for Fr. Chuck Leute, O.P.**

12:00 to 3:00 pm Crafters' Circle, Social Hall

Friday, April 30 – Diane Marrin †**Saturday, May 1 –**

9:00 to 11:00 am – Celebration of Mary & the Rosary, for adults and for children

5:00 pm mass **The Andrews Family****Sunday, May 2**9:30 am mass – **Joe Messenbrink †****In our prayers**

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Joan Ellison, Maggie Peters, Diane Hauschneck, Lenny Klosinski, Judith McCormack, Dick Martin, Jack Lachenmeyer, Dave Buck, Jack Duffy, Betty Foster and Hugh Sweeney.

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including Diane Marrin, Michelle Larson, Mary Lindahl, Bill Zimniewics and Walter Mondale.

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.

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.

“You must be shepherds who smell like your sheep.”

A few years ago, Pope Francis admitted that he had made “grave errors” in judgment. In a highly explosive sex abuse scandal that occurred in Chile involving clergy, the Pope begged forgiveness from those victims whose accusations he had discredited. In an extraordinary letter published at the time, Francis called on all the Chilean bishops to deal with a lack of truthfulness and balanced information. Never disguising his simmering anger at the betrayal of these prelates, Francis set about to re-establish confidence in the church with the dismissal of those who colluded in the cover-up. He compared these shepherds to wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Pope Francis has consistently urged Catholic bishops and priests to go out among their flocks and know the people they serve, “Like shepherds living with the smell of their sheep. God’s grace comes alive and flourishes to the extent that clergy are among their flocks giving themselves and the gospel to others. You must be shepherds who smell like your sheep.” Echoing the metaphors of sheep and shepherd found in the gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Easter (John 10:11-18), Pope Francis embraced Jesus’ image of himself as the Good Shepherd: *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. I know my own and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”* Francis cautioned bishops and priests not to hide behind their ceremonial rituals and funereal faces, but to follow the model of Jesus as shepherd who was willing to live among his sheep and to offer his life in service for them.

Jesus uses the expression “I am”, and in today’s gospel he refers to himself as, *“I am the good shepherd.”* The familiar metaphor of shepherd was found in Jewish scripture (Psalm 23, Micah 7:14, Isaiah 40:11, Genesis 48:15) and conveyed an image of the Messiah as the “good shepherd.” This appellation would have been a familiar one among the Pharisees and Scribes who were already suspicious of Jesus, especially when he used the image to reinforce his claim to be the Messiah. Jesus contrasted the “good shepherd” with a “hired hand” who would “run away when he sees a wolf coming.” The implication, of course, was that a good shepherd would lay down his life for the sheep and not run away. The Pharisees and Scribes were, no doubt, feeling a little paranoid about being compared to “hired hands.” In a rather oblique reference regarding responsibility for “other sheep that do not belong to this fold”, Jesus implied a bigger mission which would include Gentiles: *“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.”* In the minds of the religious authorities, Jesus was not only a blasphemer and violator of the Sabbath, but one who consorts with pagans and Gentiles as well.

In a previous passage (John 9:1-41), Jesus got into an argument with the religious leaders who did not believe that he really cured a blind man. Calling the religious leaders “blind hypocrites”, Jesus launched into the analogy of the “good shepherd and the hired hand.” Using the metaphor of “wolf” as the threat to the sheep, Jesus implied that the religious leaders were like “hired hands” that would run away when they saw the wolf coming. In other scriptural comparisons, Jesus would liken the Pharisees to “wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing” (Matthew 7:15). Jesus was not timid in his understanding or comparisons of the threat of wolves to sheep. When he was giving his disciples a “pep talk” before sending them into ministry, he warned them: *“Go on your ways and have faith, for I send you forth as lambs among wolves”* (Luke 10:3).

In a more idyllic passage from the Prophet Isaiah (25:23-25), the messianic hope would be: “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and they shall not hurt or destroy one another on my holy mountain.” In a more cynical observation regarding this passage, the comedian Woody Allen

observed that in the real world, “The lamb will lie down with the wolf, but one of them will not get much sleep.”

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally known as Good Shepherd Sunday. Using the deeply rooted metaphor of “shepherd” found in Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus is confident of his messianic identity. However, with the identity comes the foreshadowing of his death and resurrection: *“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”* Confident of the mission, the “Good Shepherd” will lead the entire flock to the “green pastures” of the Kingdom of God. The relationship of shepherd to sheep describes an intimacy depicting the unique identity Jesus shares with his Father. This profound relationship goes beyond the consoling imagery of resting in green pastures and longed for refreshment found in Psalm 23. In choosing to be sheep that willingly follow Jesus as shepherd, we are choosing a union of heart and mind with Jesus Christ himself. Indeed, we become card carrying members of the flock.

In the Acts of the Apostles (4:7-12) and the First Letter of John (3:1-2), the authors speak of the power that comes from accepting the healing relationship of God’s love for us. Peter’s ability to heal others is only a reflection of Jesus’ healing love. Even in the mysteriousness of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ, John cautions us, *“What we do know is when He is revealed, we will be like him, and we will see him as he is.”* Searching for working metaphors of Jesus’ relationship with us, the “good shepherd” comes closest to concretizing how this relationship beckons us to assume responsible leadership roles. The invitation for all of us in leadership roles (bishops, priests, parents and teachers) is to be like good shepherds. To know one’s sheep is to move about the flock with humility, joy, gentleness and absolute integrity.



Certainly, there are enough sappy portrayals of Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” found in paintings and statuary, but a recent photo of Pope Francis carrying a lamb on his shoulders symbolically captured the persistent metaphor of the protective role of the shepherd. The fact that the pope’s pristine white cassock smelled like the lamb gave credence to his invitation to all bishops and priests to “smell like their flocks.” The smile on Pope Francis’ face was, indeed, worth more than 1,000 words.

Celebrating the end of Lent, I gathered with other members of the flock on a Friday evening at one of my favorite watering holes for Fish and Chips. One of the proprietors said, good heartedly: “All of you mackerel snappers [old term for fish eating Catholics] smell like fish.” I took it as a compliment and felt comfortable with the parallel observation of Pope Francis: “All Catholic shepherds must smell like their sheep.” Knowing my preference in scotch whiskey, a round of Sheep Dip was ordered. What better drink, I thought, for a shepherd? Bad theology, perhaps, but very good scotch. Much better than the sour wine of Chilean bishops!

Peace,
Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.

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