

MAY 2, 2021

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Church of

ST. ALBERT *the* GREAT

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on E. 29th Street at 32nd Avenue. S. in Minneapolis, Minnesota*

PARISH OFFICE:

2836 33rd Ave. S.
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FAX 612-722-9726

Email: info@saintalbertthegreat.org

Office staffed T, W and 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.

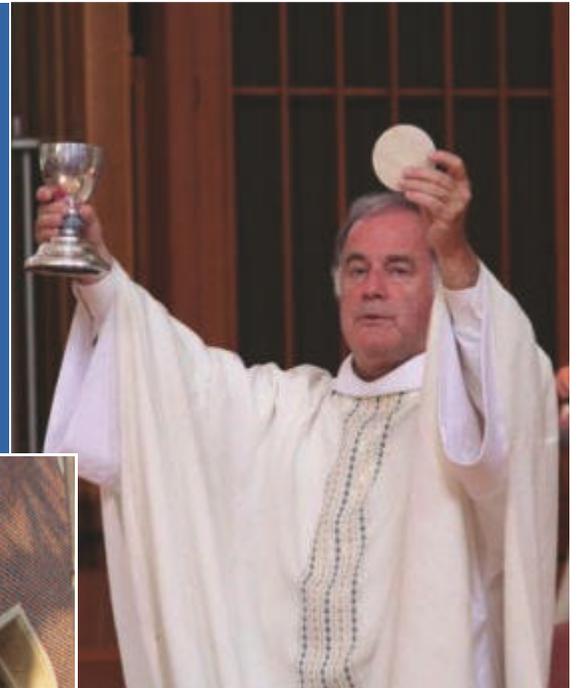
We support the quality, faith-based K-8 education at **Risen Christ Catholic School** 1120 E. 37th St. in Minneapolis. 612-822-5329

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



www.saintalbertthegreat.org

‘LET US
LOVE
NOT JUST IN
WORD or
SPEECH
but in
TRUTH and
ACTION.’



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, May 1 –

9:00 to 11:00 am – Celebration of Mary & the Rosary, sessions for adults and for children
5:00 pm mass **The Andrews Family**

Sunday, May 2

9:30 am mass – **Joe Messenbrink †**
12:00 pm mass – **Sarah Strigel**

Monday, May 3 – Monica Diedrich †**Tuesday, May 4 – Tom Rowe †****Thursday, May 6 – Fr. Chuck Leute, O.P. †**

12:00 to 2:00 pm Crafters in the Social Hall

Friday, May 7 – Michelle Larson †**Saturday, May 8 –**

5:00 pm mass **Rick Magnuson †**

Sunday, May 9 – Mother's Day

9:00 am to 1:15 pm – 16" Apple Pie Sale, \$5 ea

9:30 am mass – **All who mother, in one way or another**

12:00 pm mass – **The Andrews Family †**

In our prayers

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Joan Ellison, Curt Huovie, Diane Hauschneck, Lenny Klosinski, Judith McCormack, Mary Jo Marty, Dick Martin, Rosella Messenbrink, 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.

Getting knocked off your high horse is not just an occupational hazard for jockeys.

My first horse race proved to be a winner. I was twelve years old and in the company of my father and brother at Arlington Race Track, located outside of Chicago. My two dollar bet was on a long shot named TV Lark, who won the race. With great excitement I collected my winnings and watched with pride as my horse and jockey pranced around the winner's circle. As the jockey accepted the traditional applause, he stood high in his stirrups and promptly fell off the horse. It took me years to realize that not only jockeys fall off their high horses.

In our first reading for the Fifth Sunday of Easter (Acts 9:26-31), we are drawn into one of the most dramatic storylines of the early Church. Luke's account of the conversion of Saul (Paul), which was written about twenty years after Paul's martyrdom in Rome around the year 65 A.D., offers an insight not only into Paul's conversion, but to the conversion of the other Apostles' willingness to trust Paul: *"When Paul had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the other disciples; and they were afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took Paul and brought him to the Apostles and described how on the road to Damascus he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus Paul had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus."*

The Apostles had every good reason not to trust Paul based upon his vigorous persecution of the early Church prior to his conversion. It was only through Barnabas' testimony to the sincerity of Paul's conversion that the other Apostles would cautiously welcome him. Their skepticism, like that of the Apostle Thomas who initially refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, was understandable. No doubt each of us harbors similar moments of uncertainty and doubt regarding the sincerity of those who claim to have changed their abusive behaviors. Perhaps it's reminiscent of the Peanuts cartoon characters of Lucy inviting Charlie Brown to kick the football. Just how long would it take for Charlie to believe that Lucy would not yank the football away at the last moment and he would not fall flat on his back?

The main account of Paul's conversion is found in Acts 9:1-19. Paul, who was on the road to Damascus in hot pursuit persecuting the followers of Jesus, was surrounded by a heavenly light and fell to the ground. The voice of Jesus said to him: *"Paul, Paul why are you persecuting me?"* Paul, blinded by the dazzling light, was instructed by Jesus: *"Get up and go into the city and you will be told what you have to do."* After three days, Paul was baptized by a disciple named Ananias and his sight was restored. Almost immediately Paul started to preach in the local synagogues saying: *"Jesus is the Son of God."* Paul (Saul) the persecutor would soon become Paul the persecuted. Paul's ministry would be marked by hardship, rejection, imprisonment and, eventually, martyrdom. Paul's fall from grace would be miraculously redeemed by a call from Jesus to preach the Good News. Reframing Paul's conversion as an experience of getting "knocked off his high horse"; we can see the perceived tragedy as an invitation to salvation. Incidentally, there is no scriptural reference that Paul fell from his high horse.

Usually the phrase "getting knocked off one's high horse" was a synonym for haughty, overly self-righteous and puffed up individuals who suffered some humiliation. Their "fall from grace" was often perceived as a form of the "pride that goes before the fall." Paul's fall from his position of ruthless power became the invitation to change, a *metanoia* (conversion of heart). In a contemporary understanding of the conversion process, the metaphor of "hitting one's bottom" might help to illustrate this dramatic change. The model of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other 12-Step groups offers its "converts" the gospel of hope. While maintaining their own sobrie-

ty, helping others entrapped in the disease of addiction becomes their mission.

The second reading for this Fifth Sunday of Easter, the Letter of 1 John (3:18-24), encourages all Christians is to avoid hypocritical behavior. Conversion of heart (*metanoia*) would become the norm and the love of neighbor would be the invitation to preserving the community. St. Paul uses the metaphor *"taking off the old man and putting on the new"* (Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:16) to illustrate this conversion process. Not unlike Paul's own conversion, it is an all or nothing experience. You snooze, you lose. No excuses are acceptable. In a typical addiction roadmap to recovery, the individual must be willing to "name the problem, claim it as their own and take responsibility to tame it." Accepting personal responsibility is the key to change. While the road to recovery, like the road to conversion, is fraught with ambivalence, it is with the grace of God that all things are possible.

In the gospel for today, John 15:1-8, Jesus uses an agrarian metaphor to help describe his desire to share his life with his disciples. While Jesus used the metaphor of the vine and the branches motif in his preaching, this imagery has deep roots in Hebraic Scripture (Isaiah 5:1-7; Hosea 10:1; Psalm 80:8-16). Jesus' creative imagery described the life giving relationship between God and believers. On the night before his death, Jesus would link the imagery of the vine and the branches with the Eucharist. In the "farewell discourse" (chapters 13-17), Jesus implied an everlasting relationship to be enjoyed at every Eucharistic gathering: *"Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches."*

Conversion is risky business and St. Paul proved to be an extraordinary example of God's redemptive grace at work in a sinner. The intensity of God's plan for us might be met initially with strong resistance, but the persistence of God's call will eventually knock us off our high horses. Even Saint Augustine's remark, "Lord, make me chaste, but not yet", would be met with divine patience. Eventually, Augustine found a way to get his life under control. Recognizing our dependence upon God is at the heart of conversion. Desiring an on going conversion is a gift that is given to us, but one that must be safe-guarded. We must, as St. Ignatius of Loyola was fond of saying, "Pray as if all depended upon God and work as if everything depended upon oneself."

The Easter season remains an invitation to rejoice and an opportunity to add an Alleluia or two in our conversations. Also, this might be the right time to get risk getting on a high horse to bring the Good News to the community. Yes, the danger is always there for a fall from grace, but with the grace of God there is no reason to think we could not win, place or show in the race to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The real disgrace is in our unwillingness to get into the race at all.

If Jesus could convince St. Paul to change horses mid-stream, just think what he might do for you or me? Since Arlington Race Track, I'm always willing to jockey my way to the window and place my bet on the long shots!

Peace,
Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.

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