

MAY 9, 2021

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Church of

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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.

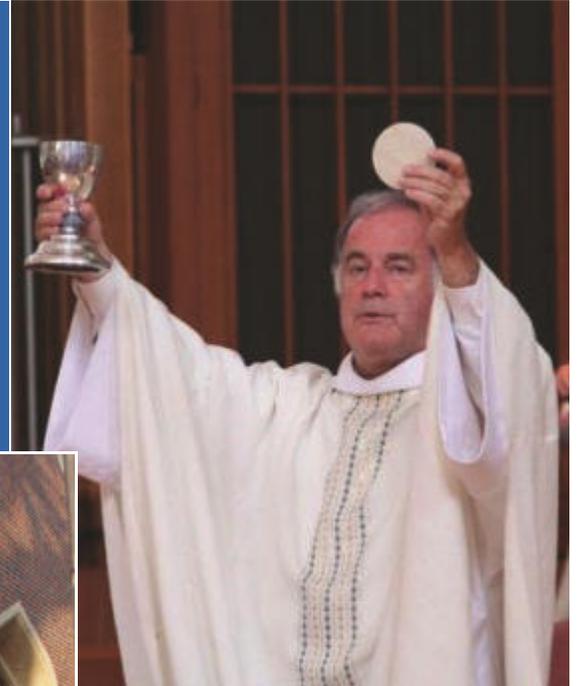
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Call the Parish Center at 612-724-3643 to learn more about this special ministry of sharing God's caring presence.



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“Beloved,
let us love
one another,
because love is
from God.”



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 8 –

5:00 pm mass Rick Magnuson †

Sunday, May 9 – Mother's Day

9:00 am 'til they're gone: Apple Pie Sale

16" frozen, pre-baked apple pies just \$5 each

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

12:00 pm mass – The Andrews Family †

Monday, May 10 – Lee Bauers †

Tuesday, May 11 – Mary Lindahl †

Thursday, May 13 – Healing for Joan Ellison

12:00 to 3:00 pm Crafters in the Social Hall

Friday, May 14 – The Andrews Family †

Saturday, May 15 –

5:00 pm mass Rose Holland †

Sunday, May 16 –

9:30 am mass – Jerry Shannon †

12:00 pm mass – Bill Brown †

In our prayers

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Joan Ellison, Curt Huovie, Naomi Burke, Diane Hauschneck, Mary Jo Marty, Dick Martin, Rosella Messenbrink, Dave Buck, Ben Wilkie and Hugh Sweeney.

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including Jack Duffy, Cesar Cruz and Bill Zimniewicz.

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.

“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.”

If I were to ask you how many how many ways God loves you, would you be able to count the ways? To make it a bit easier, why not count the number of times the word “love” is used in two of our readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter? By my count in the first Letter of Saint John (4:7-10), the word love is mentioned ten times. In the gospel of John (15:19-17), the word love is mentioned nine times. In total, “Let me count the ways” proclaims an intimacy of God’s love for us that is remarkable and, at times, overwhelming.

Searching for the right poem to help understand God’s love for us might easily be found in **Sonnets from the Portuguese**, a collection of love poems written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning for her husband, Robert Browning. First published in 1850, Elizabeth, an accomplished poet even before marrying Robert in 1846, wrote forty-four poems professing her love for him. By far, the most famous poem (# 43) from the collection begins: “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” Given the history of their relationship and their elopement to Italy from England against the wishes of her autocratic and vindictive father, Elizabeth, a semi-invalid due to a childhood accident and addicted to morphine, regarded Robert as her “savior.” Their love for one another grew as she recognized his love for her in a “normal world” of mutual love for one another. Elizabeth’s Victorian imagery of her passionate love for Robert is “chaste” by current poetic standards; however, the sincerity of her love extends beyond life: “And, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death.”

The redemptive nature of love bears repeated affirmations of the evolutionary relationships we create with one another. In Barrett’s poem “How do I love thee?”, the words “I love thee” appear in eight of the poem’s fourteen lines. The repetitive need to highlight the obvious, places an emphasis on abstract qualities that become readily accessible. Do we ever get tired of being told that we are loved? I hope not. Reaching into the world of poetry for language and images allows us to sustain a sense of passion and consistency, even as the years of familiarity take their toll.

Our readings for this Sunday affirm God’s love for us and help to create new levels of understanding when it comes to God’s relationship with us. The image of friendship gives witness to the intimacy of God’s presence within us. The redemptive gift of God’s love for us becomes evident in John 1:4: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” The life-giving friendship created in the mystery of the Incarnation continues to offer life in the imagery of “indwelling.” God dwells in us and we dwell in God. The intertwining of the divine with the human creates a “redemption theory” that espouses an ecclesiology based upon friendship and sacrificial love. The writings of both John and Luke (Acts of the Apostles) reflect an early church that struggled with differences but tried to promote viable models of justice and care for one another.

In today’s first reading from Acts (10:25-48), we see Peter proclaiming his own humanness when Cornelius, a soldier, fell at Peter’s feet and began worshipping him. Peter made him get up and said: “*Stand up, I am only a man.*” Then Peter began to speak: “*I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who loves him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*” In dramatic fashion, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard Peter’s words and the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out, even among the Gentiles. Basking in the love that God has for us, it does seem ironic and contrary to the invitation to love one another as God has loved us to maintain the scandal of the separation of Christian churches.

Ecumenism is often perceived as an unattainable goal, despite the workings of the Holy Spirit. However, with the surrendering of fear and prideful differences, it is possible with the love of God to explore similarities leading to fellowship and peace. Arbitrary barriers of prejudicial thinking encapsulated in historical theological arguments, perpetuate levels of hypocritical thinking that make it impossible for faith communities to achieve any semblance of unity. Artificial litmus tests for membership create roadblocks that insure separation. It was the “*circumcised believers who had come with Peter*” who were astounded that the Gentiles (the uncircumcised) could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter had a vision in which he heard a heavenly voice telling him, “*What God has made clean, you must not call profane.*” (Acts: 10:15). As we remove our self-imposed barriers to ecumenism, we might be astonished at what can happen. Perhaps a parallel dynamic can be just as easily applied with our current struggle with racism.

At the risk of sounding goofy and naïve, why is it so hard to accept the love of God and the invitation to abide with God and with one another? God’s choice of us in friendship is the most human and remarkable gift that we have been given and it is this gift that must be protected, especially from self interest and staid institutional practices that maintain prejudicial boundaries. Understanding that God loves us, whether we deserve it or not, is the most outstanding insight offered to us. Dispensing with all the Hallmark trappings of love, maybe Augustine of Hippo said it best when he described love: “It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sigh and sorrow of others. That is what love looks like.”

Recently I visited a nursing home and sat at the dinner table with a couple that had been married sixty-eight years. I was noticing the many ways in which they compensated for levels of physical diminishment. She had sight impairment and he helped to cut up her roast beef and arrange the food on her plate. He was hearing impaired and she ordered for both of them. They both blessed themselves before the meal, thanking God for their happy years together, for their children, grandchildren and for the other residents in the nursing facility. The complementary ballet of gestures filled with touch was remarkable. Reaching out to care for each other epitomized the assurance of respect and trust. How many ways did they love each other? I could hardly count the ways.

The challenge to love others and remain open to being loved can be problematic, especially when the chasms of fear and distrust get in the way. All of us have been bumbling through the uncertainty of the pandemic and searching for ways to remain in contact with one another. Social distancing and perpetual Zoom relations can hardly replace the need for social interaction, but maintaining creative gestures of hope and assurances of love does provide comfort and joy. Discovering ways to lessen the pain of separation occurs when love overcomes fear and we jettison unfounded feelings of abandonment in favor of God’s consistent love for us and the need for one another. God’s love brings with it forgiveness and the chance to start over once again. The love of God for us offers the paradigm of our love for one another. Isn’t that an embracing thought?

No doubt about it, Jesus and Elizabeth Barrett Browning got it right: “How can we love one another? Let us count the ways.”

Peace,
Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.

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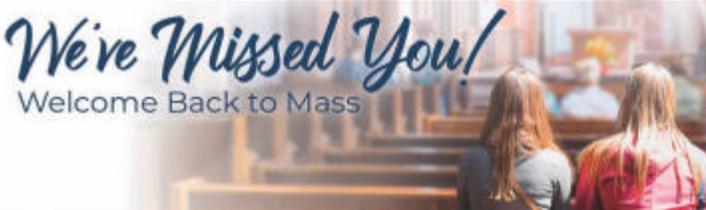
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