

JULY 4, 2021

14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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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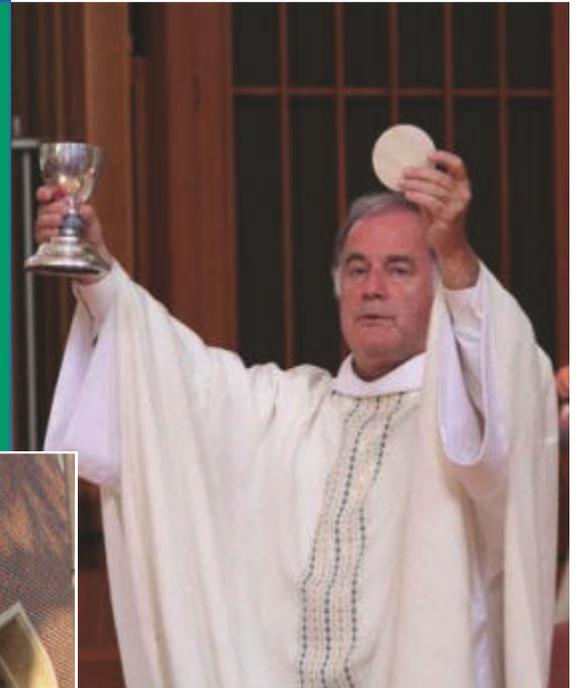
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“Believe in God;
believe also
in Me.”

Jesus



Say YES to
love and peace.
Amen! Alleluia!



This week at St. Albert's(masses and intentions are in **BOLD** type)**Saturday, July 3****5:00 pm mass** – For peace in our country and its cities**Sunday, July 4****9:30 am mass** –

For cooperation in government

12:00 pm mass –

For all who continue the fight against Covid-19

Monday, July 5**8:15 am** – Martha Schick †**Tuesday, July 6****8:15 am** – Cam & Mary Lou Sim ††**Thursday, July 8****8:15 am mass** – Dorothy Geis †**12:00 to 3:00 pm** Crafters in the Social Hall**Friday, July 9****8:15 am mass** – Christopher Tye †**Saturday, July 10****5:00 pm mass** – David Zeta †**Sunday, July 11****9:30 am mass** – Joe Messenbrink †**12:00 pm mass** – Mary Brown †**In our prayers**

We remember those who need healing, including Michael Callaghan, Mary Iffert, Ron Rengel, Joan Ellison, Curt Huovie, Ann-Marie Christiansen, and Kira & Baby Girl Walstrom.

Please add a prayer for those who have died, including David Zeta and Christopher Tye.

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.

The New Normal

- * **We will continue to offer three Masses** each weekend for as long as the Sunday noon mass remains popular/practical. We also continue to livestream the 9:30 AM liturgy.
- * **The general dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation has been lifted.** The dispensation remains available to people at high risk of developing serious and for people who care for such individuals. Anyone with symptoms or recent exposure to COVID-19 must still remain at home for the safety of all.
- * **Morning masses in the chapel resumed at 8:15 am as of July 1.** As in the pre-pandemic past, weekday masses will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The East door off the back parking lot will be open for weekday masses, along with the elevator entrance. Generally, a volunteer leads the Rosary at 8:00 am.
- * **Use of the front center church doors will continue to be encouraged for weekend masses, along with the elevator entrance.**
- * **We no longer are enforcing seating restrictions.** Please respect the desires of those who wish to maintain some physical separation. The hand sanitizer will be available for the foreseeable future, as it's good practice any time.
- * **Masks are no longer required** although of course they are still permitted. If you want a mask, we have disposable ones available.
- * **Go ahead and sing** all the mass acclamations and the Psalm, and songs if you know them. We're not putting the hymnals out just yet.
- * **Give the Sign of Peace** to those near you in ways others are comfortable.
- * **We will likely continue to have windows open** when practical, just to ensure fresh air. Please do not close or adjust the windows.

Serving together

In September, we'll offer training for altar servers, 4th grade and up, and we'd love to have some parent/child teams: Mom & daughter, Dad & Son, Mom & Son, Dad & Daughter. (Even Grandparents!) Give some thought to whether this sounds appealing in your family, and watch for training dates. And, of course, unrelated teams are still fine, too!

Are you on the Friday "Blast List"?

During the Covid-19 quarantine, we began a weekly email on Fridays with attachments of the current Bulletin and the readings for the weekend masses, along with news updates, poems, etc. We simply began by sending to everyone for whom we had an email address. If you aren't on that list, and would like to be, let Erin know at e.sim@saintalbertthegreat.org. This weekly "blast" will remain one of her duties/ministries as she steps back to part-time at St. Albert's.

“You’re looking at an old person who’s trying to get into heaven now.”

During the 1960’s and 70’s, many of us remember listening to the comedian Bill Cosby talking about growing up in a ghetto in Philadelphia, PA. However, his television series, **The Cosby Show**, which aired from 1984 until 1992, portrayed the opposite of ghetto life. The sit-com highlighted the experiences of an affluent African American family and reflected family problems found in affluent white homes.

Cosby, who has had his share of legal and moral problems, found ample comedy material in describing his family, especially his mother, Anna Pearl. As he was growing up, Cosby’s mother was a strong disciplinarian and a religious woman who took the Bible and her faith very seriously. In one comedy routine he described his mother in later life as a grandmother who had become a warm, sweet and generous person once she had grandchildren, a description far different from her early days as a parent. Cosby’s conclusion about her “conversion to nice” was, “You were looking like an old person who’s trying to get into heaven now!”

When I sat with Harry, a ninety-seven-year-old veteran of World War II, he was uncertain that he would ever get into heaven. When I asked him “Why do you feel this way?” he would simply say, “My life has been complicated. I did many bad things during the war and I can’t forgive myself. I’ve tried to change myself and I even quit drinking, but still my children ignore me. Even God seems to ignore me. I love my grandchildren and would do anything for them, but my own children seem to hate me. I don’t think there is a place in heaven for me.” To my knowledge, Harry died “unforgiven” in his own mind, but not forgotten by friends and staff who loved him for his sweet and helpful ways. While most of his family did not attend the funeral, there were two funeral flower bouquets with the signs, “Dad” and “Grandfather.”

At his funeral I read a passage from the gospel of John (14:1-8): “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places; otherwise, how could I have told you that I was going to prepare a place for you? I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, so that where I am you also may be.*” Harry liked this passage and felt a sense of reassurance when he first read it to me. The idea of Jesus coming back and “taking him to heaven” was an appealing thought, especially if it meant being with his wife, Delores. Harry would often say, “Hey! I’m not looking for the “governor’s reprieve” or a deathbed conversion. I’ll take my chances on God’s forgiveness and mercy.” Confused by his own mixed messages, Harry died in a state of sacred ambivalence.

This Sunday we are celebrating the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time and the readings present some paradoxical opportunities to display strength in weakness, and reliance on the mercy of God in moments of doubt. Ezekiel, Jesus and Paul all demonstrate a level of frustration with their ministries and had to avoid a “hardness of heart” by relying on the forgiving and healing power of God. In Ezekiel 2:3-5, God sends his prophet into the proverbial “lion’s den” where the children of Israel have rebelled against God and are “impudent and stubborn.”

Ezekiel, like all prophets, did not have an easy life. To be the bearer of lamentations and dire warnings regarding a “change of heart” to a hostile group might provide a one-way ticket to heaven. Ezekiel’s commission from God was, “*Whether they hear or refuse to hear, they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.*” This passage in Ezekiel prefigures the gospel reading (Mark 6:1-6) for today. Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth with his disciples to preach in the synagogue and conduct some healing services. The local people were astounded at his words and wondered, “*Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by*

his hands?” It did not take long for the local community to reject Jesus, essentially calling him a “smarty pants” and asked him to leave. Rebuffed by their surly attitude, Jesus uttered the famous line, “*A Prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, and among his own kin, and in his own house.*” Jesus was amazed at their unbelief.

In Paul’s second Letter to the Corinthians (12:7-10) he is extraordinarily forthright in talking about his own personal failures. Reframing a particular personal problem, Paul sees how God uses the problem to keep Paul’s pride in check. On three occasions Paul complains to God about “the thorn in the flesh”, but the Lord said to him, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.*” Aware of the grace that dwells within him, Paul was content “*with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities.*” Historically, scripture scholars have argued about what “the thorn” consisted of, but there has been no definite or plausible explanation. While begging God to take away the thorn, Paul concludes that the failure to remove the malady is an opportunity, “*To boast more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*” Always the optimist, Paul concludes by saying, “*I am content with weaknesses for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.*”

Amid our own doubts resides the certainty of our faith. Jesus’ compassionate words, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. I am going to prepare a place for you*”, provides the right metaphor to help visualize a shared future together. The word “belief” at its Greek roots simply means to “give one’s heart to.” To believe that our hearts can be forgiven is an invitation “for our hearts not to be troubled.” It was St. Augustine who fervently prayed, “Our hearts, O God, are restless until they rest in Thee.”

Young or old, we are looking for some place of peace that, in our imaginations, might qualify as heaven. The poet Maya Angelou, in her poem “Preacher, Don’t Send Me”, described heaven as a place “I’d call paradise where families are loyal and strangers are nice, where the music is jazz, and the season fall. Promise me that or nothing at all.” Whether it is Bill Cosby, his mother, Harry or the five individuals whose funerals I recently presided over, we are encouraged amid our “thorns in the flesh” to persevere in the mercy of our God and wish for a place of peace. Discovering the paradoxical “strength in weakness” of St. Paul, the gift of faith always leads to hope and hope moves us beyond resentment and fear to rely on the loving forgiveness of God. Wouldn’t that be heavenly?

I can still remember the dramatic anointing of an elderly woman who confessed that she was ready to leave for heaven, ready to go home. Looking up at me, she said: “I look forward to meeting Jesus in person. He promised to prepare a place for me. Would you like to come with me and see your room?” I was not planning on leaving that day, but I continue to think about the phrase she uttered right before her death: “You know not the day nor the hour, so get your ducks in a row!”

So far so good. I must admit, however, that I am enjoying life one day at a time and occasionally trying to get my ducks in a row. How about you? Any plans for the near future? Any thoughts about what might scare the hell out of you and prepare you for the heavenly journey home?

Peace,

Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.

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