

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Po Box 197  
Easton, MO 64443

Holy Week 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you receive this letter, we are in the midst of the most solemn celebration of the liturgical year—Holy Week and then, the glorious celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord. I have placed various preached reflections on the St. Ann parish website ([stannplattsburg.org](http://stannplattsburg.org)) to help aid you in your spiritual life while we are away from one another. Another resource for celebrating Holy Week at home can be found at the Diocesan Family Life website at <https://kcsjatholic.org/coronavirus-updates/holy-week/>.

I would also like to take this time to thank you for your continued donations to our church. I am very appreciative of your support. I know that together we can overcome the financial burden that we are called to face in this unique moment. I have enjoyed speaking with many of you on the telephone. This crisis has unusually provided the quality time for us to have some personal discussions that I don't believe many of us would've had. It has been a joy to get to know you better. I will continue making these calls. Please don't hesitate to call if I can provide you with anything you need (confession, anointing of the sick, etc.).

By the end of next week, we will have celebrated Easter, but unlike encountering the glory of the empty tomb, we will have encountered an empty church. I do believe, however, that even in moments such as these that are spiritually confounding, it behooves us to remember the Resurrection event itself. All were initially confused and in absolute disbelief at the empty tomb. Peter and John rush to the tomb to see it for themselves to verify it. Mary Magdalene, when she meets the Risen Lord, doesn't recognize Him and even at that, He does not permit her to touch Him. And then the Lord appears to the Apostles, and St. Thomas misses it! Maybe we can be like St. Thomas this year, although certainly not by choice!

While we often associate Easter with all of the joy and festivity that surrounds it (this is a good thing to be festive!!), we should not miss its strikingly mysterious character. If anyone has time, listen to the Latin Introit or Entrance Antiphon entitled *Resurrexi on YouTube—it is a haunting and tantalizing melody. No one saw Jesus rise from the dead. We were given a sign; an empty tomb. Even when the Lord meets the men on the way to Emmaus, they also don't recognize Him immediately, that is, until He "breaks Bread" and then quickly disappears.*

My friends, that is our sign, as St. John would call it. The Risen Lord is present among us in a Eucharistic and very real way in every parish church, in every tabernacle of the world. That is why St. Ann parish remains unlocked for prayer. And even though we, as Mary Magdalene, cannot touch the Risen Lord, we wait ardently until we can once again. This is a good desire that I hope we can continue to nurture.

The Paschal Season is a season of hope, but, as St. Paul writes, we hope in what we cannot yet see. That is the essence of hope. We know and believe—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for your intentions every day here at this church. We know and believe the Risen Lord is among us in the Most Blessed Sacrament and we know and believe that we will see Him again. We do not know when, but we shall not miss the time of our “visitation” when He comes, or rather, when we are permitted to encounter Him again. That is what I would like all of you to remember—there is no replacement for the great gift we have in Holy Mass—it is the summit of Christian worship. There is no replacement for the grace-filled opportunity the Sacrament of Penance offers us to be free of our sins and experience the innocence of holy baptism again.

During this Holy Week, I will make myself available for the Sacrament of Penance following the prescribed guidelines in the St. Ann parish office/sacristy on the following days/times:

Holy Thursday from 5-7pm

Good Friday from 5-7 pm

Although the current diocesan guidelines prohibit us from the public celebration of Mass, to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament, especially on Holy Thursday, or the Cross on Good Friday, provided that we follow the social distancing guidelines, is a great gift. God is still among His people!

I wish you and your families, while bittersweet this year, a joyous celebration of the Lord’s complete and total victory over darkness, the devil and all death and sin. He has won this war for us; it is up to us to continue to fight the battle in time. Let us not lose hope and may we be able to encounter the Risen Lord together in a new and profound way with a greater love and devotion than ever before.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Eric A. Schneider



