

## **Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church**

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 100 \* New Melle, MO 63365 Website: www.ihm-newmelle.org Office Phone: 636-398-5270

Deliveries only address: 8 West Highway D, New Melle, MO 63365

#### **Schedule of Holy Mass**

Saturday: 8:00am, 4:00pm Vigil Mass for Sunday

Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am, 11:30am Weekdays: 8:00am, in church

#### Weekly Devotions and Prayers

#### **Eucharistic Adoration:**

Monday 8:30am until Friday, 11:00am

#### Rosary:

Following 8am Mass weekdays & before Sat. 4pm.

#### Perpetual Help Devotions:

Tuesdays following 8am Mass

#### Respect Life Prayers:

Thursday following 8am Mass

#### First Saturday of the Month Devotions

8am Mass, Rosary, 15 minutes of meditation

#### **Sacraments**

Reconciliation: Wednesday in church, 7pm

Saturday following 8am Mass

Marriage: Contact the parish office

at least six months prior to the wedding

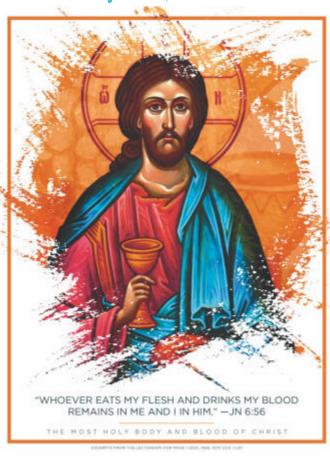
**Baptism:** Contact the parish office

to register for class and to arrange date

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults:

Contact Shawn Mueller in the parish office

June 7, 2020



## Deeper Understanding of Scripture

It is no wonder that followers of Christ are called the Body of Christ. After all, sharing in the same spiritual food and sacred meal, they become what they eat and reveal the Divine Image. There is so much power for healing in the community of believers. Through the Eucharist, Christ becomes as present in those who have partaken of his Body and Blood as he has the elements themselves. The very presence of God touches the depths of the human soul and visits a part of us that no human being can ever hope to explore. We are God's. The sacred Eucharistic meal is a celebration of intimacy, the reunion of two loves in constant search of and longing for the other.

The community of believers receives the

power and the presence to touch and heal in the name of the One they have welcomed within. It is now within their grasp to change the way life is lived and to more intentionally put into practice the Beatitudes that the Divine Guest has revealed. We are asked to be like Christ and work to create a world of sufficiency, where the greed of some no longer creates the want of others but where all of God's children can find a home and a place at the table of life. The One who makes a home within calls us to live a life that transforms. We are changed ourselves and now become agents of change for others. We are the Body of Christ. God is with us. We have been nourished.

Sadly, many are afraid to try. We know what we are called to do, but we struggle with feelings of doubt as to whether God really is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Do our systems have to change? Is it possible that we somehow missed the mark when we put all of our social networks in place and established the business of our lives? Perhaps we have to radically rethink our approach and that can scare us. We might have to give something up or change, and we don't want to. As long as want, injustice, division, prejudice, and scarcity still exit, there is tremendous work for the Body of Christ.

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#### **Parish Staff**

Parish Office: 636-398-5270

Fr. Tom Miller, Pastor askpadre@aol.com

(for emergencies only: 314-303-2428)

Deacon Chris Ast chrisast@archstl.org
Deacon Tony Falbo tony.2011@centurylink.net
Laura Orf, Business Manager
Peggy Dupree, Secretary secretary@ihm-newmelle.org
Bryan Beams, Director of Music and Liturgy

bryanbeams@ihm-newmelle.org

Janet Hespen, Youth Leader janethspn@outlook.com

Karen Wappelhorst, Child Safety Coordinator

childsafety@ihm-newmelle.org

#### **Religious Education**

**Shawn Mueller, Director** 

636-398-5270, smueller@ihm-newmelle.org

Parish School of Religion

Grades 1 thru 8, September thru May, 6-7:30pm, Wednesdays

**Confirmation Preparation** 

8th Grade—September thru May, 6-7:30pm, Wednesdays

Children's Liturgy of the Word

September thru May, during the 9:30am Sunday Mass

Adult Education

Wednesdays at 8:45am and 6:10pm, September thru May

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—contact Shawn for schedule

#### **Quick Contacts Directory**

Weddings, Receptions, Events		Parish Organizations				
Pat Gentry, Hall Rental	636-398-5270	Budget & Finance				
Kelly Meyer, Wedding Coordinator	636-828-4994	Larry Graves	314-799-9804			
Jean Hitt, Wedding Coordinator	636-987-2131	Cemetery Committee				
Joan Marren-Slaughter, Event Coordinator	636-398-5270	Mark Keune	314-220-7075			
Mary Keune, Event Coordinator	636-398-5270	Dinner Committee				
Prayer and Devotion		Jeff Comotto	314-570-6972			
Eucharistic Adoration		Funeral Lunches				
Shawn Mueller	636-398-5270	Carol Grady	314-662-2281			
Legion of Mary	030-330-3270	Ruth Neske	636-398-5699			
Maria Romine-Kantor	314-614-0857	Vicki Grunz Helping Hearts	636-497-5230			
Prayer Chain						
Brenda Hutchcraft	636-248-8493	John Grady	314-662-2138			
Prayer Intercession/Jonah Team	030-240-0433	Mary Fischer	636-561-7747			
Debbie Gillespie	636-398-4971	Bob Hutchcraft	636-346-3471			
Prayer Shawl Ministry	030 330 4371	Maria Romine-Kantor	314-614-0857			
Julia Kettler	314-616-0096	Knights of Columbus				
Julia Rettlei	314 010 0030	Bob Hutchcraft	636-346-3471			
<u>Liturgical Ministries</u>		Marian Council				
Extraordinary Ministers		Barb Pope	773-383-8602			
Irene Caldwell	636-398-4311	Meal Train				
Lectors		Kelly Meyer meyer5853@qmcin	c.org, 636-828-4994			
Joe Willis	618-806-6684	Meals on Wheels				
Gift Bearers		Jean Bammann	636-798-2718			
Peggy Dupree	636-398-5270	Pro Life				
Ushers		Bill Winters	636-828-4133			
Gary Struckhoff	636-828-6067	Quilters				
Altar Servers		Mary Ann Brakensiek	636-828-5776			
	l1@centurylink.net	Ruth Willis	636-398-4597			
Altar Society		Scouting				
Pam DeBold	636-482-4765	Chuck Hinkle	636-544-6639			
Art & Environment		Cub Scouts: Adam McCarthy	636-634-7622			
Mary Karll	636-433-5049	Boy Scouts: Chad Peters	314-807-7177			
Music Ministry		St. Vincent de Paul				
Bryan Beams	636-398-5270	Joe Willis	636-398-2106			
Adult Choir		Welcoming Committee				
Mary Sweeten	314-324-3249	Teresa Berfanger	636-398-5565			
Children's Choir						
Elizabeth Jaeckle	636-828-4811	Youth and Young Adults				
Contemporary Music Group		High School Youth Leader				
Debbie Gillespie	636-398-4971	Janet Hespen	314-369-6521			
Praise & Worship Band		Young Adults				
Steve Farber	636-751-3567	Julie Lassiter	636-357-0121			

## There Is No Greater Love

Dear parishioners,

A few years ago I shared this prayer with you as part of our Eucharistic devotion. As we celebrate the Mystery of Our Lord's Body & Blood, may this Sacrament truly be the source and summit of our lives as disciples of Jesus.

#### Come, O Jesus of the Eucharist

Jesus of the Eucharist! Come to us and be our Ruler!

All that we have and are is Yours to command, for all that we have is Yours.

If our hearts are poor, enrich them with Your grace.

If they have been sinful and soiled, accept them pure and cleansed through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Suffering Heart of Jesus!

To You we confide all the trials of our souls.

Sweet Heart of Jesus!

To Your care we confide our weaknesses and ask You to accept our sincere repentance.

Compassionate Heart of Jesus!

To You we confide our souls tormented by our suffering conscience.

Gentle heart of Jesus!
We confide to You the peace and salvation of our families.

Eucharistic Heart of Jesus!

The world, worried unto death, finds a refuge in Your Heart, where the lance once opened for us the source of Life.

Come, O Jesus! Be our brother in the pure joy of Christian love! Come, O Jesus! Be our friend in the depths of this world's sorrows.

This is Jesus, Emmanuel.

God is with us in this sacrament.

Come receive Him, adore Him.

This is Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ-Year A

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" Mark 14:12

On the night of the Last Supper, as in the embrace following a wedding feast, Jesus gave His Bride, the Church, Himself—"This is My Body." Fulfilling all the "types" of the Old Testament, particularly the Passover meal, our Lord united Himself to us by way of a Communion meal, leading us out of the slavery from sin. Think of these "types" of the Eucharist in the OT and how Jesus has fulfilled them. The tree of life. The offering of Abel. The offering of Isaac. The offering of Melchizedek. The offering of the Firstborn / Passover Lamb. The Manna in the Desert.

If someone charted all my words and actions over a period of a month, would their report give much evidence that I truly believed in the Eucharist?

#### **Ministry Schedule**

June 13—4pm

EM: Deacon Tony Falbo, Karen Wilson,

Pat Roche, Ann Zaleuke Mike Greene, Sharon Hagan

Serv: Zara Panus Music: Bryan & Amelia

Lec:

Ush: Ed Etzkorn, Larry Graves, Tom Zaleuke, Mike Rieker, Tim Wilson, Andy Pope

June 14-7:30am

EM: Deacon Chris Ast, Mary Hardesty,

Jan Kardasz, John Fiacco
Lec: Kris Jenkins, Nancy Ast
Serv: Sydney Jaecklle
Music: Verdi & Brooke

Ush: Tom Meczkowski, Chris Molitor, Frank Kardasz,

Larry Smith, Gary Potter, Ron Jacob

June 14-9:30am

EM: Deacon Chris Ast, Don & Susan Hladky,

Janet Hespen, Pat Gentry, Chris Richter

Lec: Patrice Riley, Joe Willis

Serv: Janie Becker

Music: Bryan, Amelia & Betsy

Ush: Brenda Hutchcraft, Joe Weber, Jerry Hespen,

Alan Raymond, Gary Struckhoff, Michelle Greiwe

#### **Corpus Christi Procession begins at 11am**

Recycling bins are located on the gravel lot behind Fr. Tom's house.

## Please pray for all the sick and suffering:

Mark Hanna, Phyllis Zerr, Vickie Brink, Sandy Knott,
Mike & Pat Ryan, Carol Rabbitt, Fran Bussen, Karla Sitzes,
Vicky Monroe, Nancy Hollenstein, Walt Reel, Jean Bamert,
Amy Robbins, Kathy Feldewerth, Loretta Bruns,
Betty Heppermann, Don Schmidt, Frank Marquart,
Cindy White, Janie Roth

David & Lisa Debold (Dave & Pam DeBold's children),
Dave Asinger (brother-in-law of Larry & Rita Bendel),
Bob Holland (friend of Shirley Augustine),
Fred Brown (son-in-law of Bill & Bernie Pollihan),
Leon Burkemper (son of Carol Rabbitt),
Loretta Nolan (sister of Kathy Lalonde),
Doris Eisenbath (mother of Judy Molitor),
Janet Piel (sister of Joni Marren-Slaughter),
Loren & Evelyn Brandon (parents of Marty & Peggy Dupree),
Audrey Molitor (sister of Flo Joerling),
Pat Finan (daughter of Fran Bussen),
Steve Wengerski (family friend of Mandy Daub),

Jim Raymond (brother of Alan & Marsha Raymond),

Sophia Hartsfield (granddaughter of Ed & Marcia Etzkorn)

Keith Langford (son of Rita & brother of Valerie Langford)

#### **Ministry Schedule**

June 20—4pm

EM: Deacon Chris Ast, Bob Brossette,

Ed Etzkorn, Sharon Hagan

Lec: Jerry Knott, Yvonne Brossette

Serv: Zara Panus Music: Maya & Bryan

Ush: Wally & Jan Karase, Chris Cuddihee,

Bill & Bernadine Pollihan, Mike Rieker

June 21-7:30

EM: Deacon Tony Falbo, Dianne Dickherber,

Maureen Blondin, Betty Tuepker

Lec: Mary Hardesty, Kris Jenkins

Serv: need a volunteer
Music: Brooke & Verdi

Ush: Tom Meczkowski, Dave London, Gary Potter,

Brenda Hutchcraft, need 2 more please

June 21-9:30

EM: Deacon Tony Falbo, Laura Orf,

Don & Susan Hladky

Lec: Pat Gentry, Michelle Greiwe

Serv: Janie Becker Music: Mary Ann & Bryan

Ush: Larry Smith, Alan Raymond, Gary Struckhoff,

Chris Molitor, Joe Weber, Jerry Hespen

June 21—11:30am

EM: Chris & Kat Menne

Lec: Mary Busby-Simpson, Marcy Pivin

Serv: Thomas Kokker

Music: Contemporary Group
Ush: Chuck Hinkle, Ron Simpson,
Tim Maher, John Hofman

## Prest in Peace 5

We offer our prayerful sympathy on the passing of Robert "Bobby" Eisenbath father of Judy and Chris Molitor

May he and all the faithful departed rest in the eternal peace of Christ.

Marriage in Christ has been promised between
Alyssa Heinsohn and Matthew Doll
Megan Preuss and Russell Hoock



Hospitalization: If you are hospitalized, please let us know. Please call the office or ask a friend to call for you if necessary.

Communion Calls: If you would like to receive Communion but are unable to get to Mass because of illness or disability, please contact the parish office: 636-398-5270.

Prayer Requests: Brenda Hutchcraft at 636-248-8493 or email

brhutchcraft@centurytel.net

## Mass Intentions

Monday, June 15

8:00am Jack Roderick +

Tom+ & Maria Miller 65th wedding anniv.

Tuesday, June 16

8:00am parents of Jeff & Chris Comotto +

Rose Reuther +

Wednesday, June 17

8:00am intention of Roger & Vicki Brink

Thursday, June 18

8:00am Marjorie Hatfield +

Jean Reel +

Friday, June 19

8:00am All Souls

Dave Gentry +

Saturday, June 20

8:00am Dick Meier (27th anniv.) +

Matthew Hewitt +

4:00pm Dr. Maurice Lonsway (1st anniv.) +

Sunday, June 21

7:30am Josephine Seper +

parents of John & Karen Wappelhorst +

9:30am Steve Kettler +

living/deceased Bader & Wolff Families

11:30am People of the Parish

## Prayer to the Sourced Heart (St. Alphonous Liguori):

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, living and life-giving fountain of eternal life, infinite treasure of the Divinity, and glowing furnace of love, You are my sanctuary. O adorable and glorious Savior, consume my heart with that burning fire that ever inflames Your Heart. Pour down on my soul those graces which flow from Your Love. Let my heart be one with, and in all things conformed to, Yours. May Your Will be the rule of both my desires and my actions. Amen."

## Contributions, May 30/31

 General Offertory:
 \$10,935.05

 Online – General Offertory:
 \$5,440.82

 TOTAL
 \$16,375.87

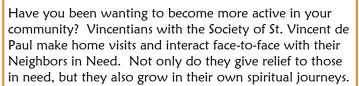
"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:17)

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to lead holy lives and invite others to join us. Living a stewardship lifestyle, being grateful and generous with our gifts, serves a twofold purpose. One, it helps build God's kingdom here on earth. Two, it helps us strengthen each other's relationship with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. It becomes our road map to Heaven. Let's help each other get there!

Let us pray . . . that we answer God's call to build His kingdom on earth and help each other get to Heaven!

## Deeded at the Pointry

sugar, jelly, fruit juices, chicken broth, dish soap, laundry detergent, shaving lotion, razors, hair conditioner, body wash, saltines, cake mixes, icing, brownie mixes, paper products, syrup, bisquick, jiffy mix, jello and pudding



For more information about becoming a Vincentian with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, call 636-398-5270 x225.



A great way to organize emergency meals for the people of our parish!

Arrival of a new baby Military deployment Condolences Injuries/Surgeries Extended illnesses Group events

Please contact Kelly Meyer at <a href="mayer5853@qmcinc.org">meyer5853@qmcinc.org</a> if you have any questions or would like to become a part of this ministry.



#### Pope's Intentions for June: The Way of the Heart

We pray that all those wo suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.

Authentic Catholic Radio: AM 1460

#### What's Your Catholic Catechism IQ?

"The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith." (Pope St. John Paul II)

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Due to the circumstances of the Covid-19
Pandemic we will not be hosting our Heart of the
Parish Dinner or Recognition this year.

## New Cernelery Section now open

Please call the church office to set up an appointment to reserve your final resting place in our cemetery. The price for the lots at this time is \$750, and we will keep this price until September. Also, we still have many niches available in our columbariums for the repose of cremated remains. Give us a call if you are interested in either option!



Janet Hespen, Youth Minister, 314-369-6521

#### All teens: join us for IHM Youth Group

Zoom meetings every Thursday evening at 6:30pm. It lasts 1 hour and is lots of fun. Yes, we play lots of games.

Also, call me any time if you need to talk. I have been praying for each of you and I know this is not how you wanted to end your school year. I am here for you any time!!

We have another meeting at church lined up in June, Founders Hall pavilion, 6:30—8pm.

⇒ June 25th: Finding treasures in new friendships and chocolate night (what are our treasures?? treasure hunts and chocolate guessing).

Download Zoom app on your phone or get your computer and use this information for Thursday night meetings: meeting ID is 636-268-5487, pw 099612



The Rummage Sale will be rescheduled sometime in August (as long as the Archdiocese allows activities to resume), the date to be determined. Drop offs can begin the week of July 20th, if that date changes we will advise. Please do not bring your items up before July 20. I know you all have lots of "stuff" as most of us have used some of our "Free" time cleaning or organizing. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

## Inmountale Heart of Mary Parish Boundary Embaristic Conservation and Blessing

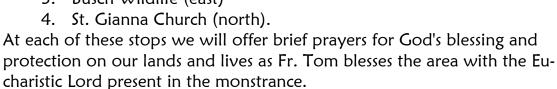
## Join other parishioners to ask for God's Blessing and Protection on our parish and on all the people's and lands within our parish boundaries

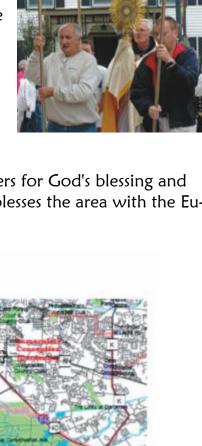


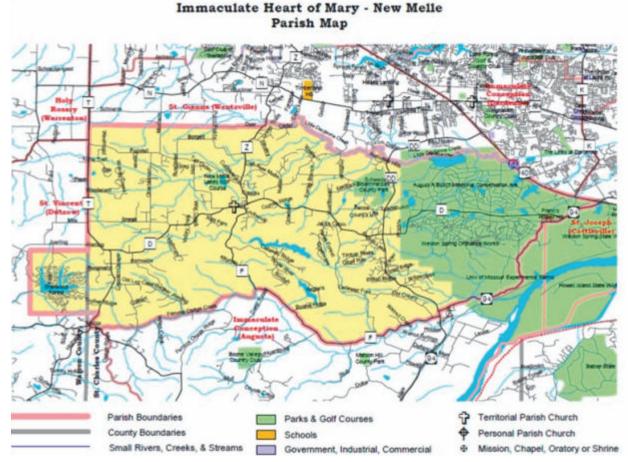
On the Feast of Corpus Christi, June 14th at 11 am (there will be no 11:30 am Mass) we will be forming a car pool "procession" with Fr. Tom and Jesus in the Eucharist leading the way. We will travel the parish boundaries and stop at 4 stations, marking the north, south, east and west boundaries of the parish. These will be



- 2. Daniel Boone Home (south)
- 3. Busch Wildlife (east)

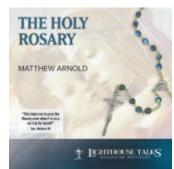






8. Pour Library / Lighthouse CD Resources
(Note: With close to 4000 items, the <u>Parish Library</u> is located in the <u>Grand Hall</u> past the restrooms. It is open during the week-normal business hours-and works on an honor system. Items from the Lighthouse CD rack are located and available in the Narthex

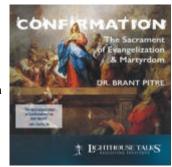
#### From the Lighthouse CD Rack (Narthex)



Rooted in Sacred Scripture, the Rosary has been called the Gospel in miniature. Beautiful music is blended with subtle voices as the symphony of prayers of this timeless treasure is presented by Matthew Arnold so that all can participate. The recitation of this traditional Catholic prayer honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary is perfect for personal use in private meditation or for family devo-

Thank you for the most beautiful rosary CD I have ever heard! It is so well done, peaceful, and very powerful. Mary Ann - Steubenville, OH

Today there is oftentimes a misconception of what the Sacrament of Confirmation is actually for or how it affects our lives. In this talk, Dr. Brant Pitre invites us to better understand the tremendous graces and calling received through this sacrament. He points to various passages in scripture which provide a historical foundation and, through bold witness, challenges us to willingly surrender our lives to Christ. Dr. Brant Pitre is a professor of Sacred Scripture at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, LA.



Until this talk by Brant Pitre, I have not really understood what Confirmation is all about. I wish I had this talk when I was confirmed so I can live up to this great sacrament! Daniel - Vancouver, Canada

Julie - Sterling, VA Absolutely the best explanation of the Sacrament of Confirmation I have ever heard!

## PSR corner

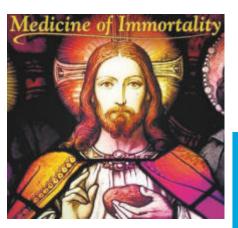
## Sourcement of the Most Holy Eucharist

In these days of "viruses" - imagine a vaccine that was created which would be a "medicine of immortality." This is in fact was Christ offered His life to give in the Eucharist. The term medicine of immortality was used to describe the Eucharist by St. Ignatius of Antioch at the turn of the first century. Prayers and Blessings to all those who will be making their first communion this year.

Elaina Buescher Sofia Cruz Claire Fredric, Natalie Jaeckle Bennett Kuebler Clayton Mottert Evangeline Schulte Amelia Wood

Riley Carlstrom Sophia Czuchna Zoey Goertz Addyson Katzfey Aidan Lyons Garrett Mottert Kensington Sellenriek

Kelsey Cobb Emma Clifton Jenrose Hespen Avery Kleekamp Cameron Meadows Zachary Scheer Tate Stafford

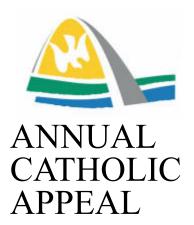


## Heavenly Duster Schedule

Week of June 14: Pat Roche Week of June 21: Shirley Gassei Week of June 28: Dot Keune Week of July 5: Karen Wilson

#### INTERESTED IN MEMORIALIZING A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE?

To learn more, contact the planned giving experts at the Roman Catholic Foundation. 314-918-2890 | giftplanning@rcfstl.org



This weekend as we look forward to returning to a more normal schedule of activities and sacramental celebrations, you are invited once again to participate in the *Annual Catholic Appeal* by making a gift. If your circumstances permit and your family is blessed with good health and employment, please consider increasing your gift to make up for those who are unable to make a gift at this time.

If you did not receive your pledge card in the mail, please contact our parish office.

More information can be found at <u>aca.archstl.org</u>. Your gift will help many who have been impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak in our Archdiocese. As we celebrate the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, we acknowledge that we are one Body in Christ, that we make sacrifices for others, not because they are Catholic!

## **BLOOD DRIVE**

## Immaculate heart of Mary New Melle

MUST MAKE A DONOR APPOINTMENT TO ENSURE SOCIAL DISTANCING

### Tuesday June 23rd

Hours 2:30 pm-6:30 pm

#### Founders Hall

\$5 gift card voucher for all donors

To schedule an appointment, call 866-448-3253 or online at bloodcenter.org to make an appointment. Use sponsor code 9118

www.bloodcenter.org



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY
REGIONAL BLOOD CENTER

#### Readings of the Week

Sunday: Dt 8:2-3, 14b-16a/Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20 [12]/1 Cor 10:16-17/Jn 6:51-58

Monday: 1 Kgs 21:1-16/Ps 5:2-3ab, 4b-6a, 6b-7 [2b]/Mt 5:38-42

Tuesday: 1 Kgs 21:17-29/Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 11 and 16 [cf. 3a]/Mt 5:43-48

Wednesday: 2 Kgs 2:1, 6-14/Ps 31:20, 21, 24 [25]/Mt 6:1-6, 16-18 Thursday: Sir 48:1-14/Ps 97:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7 [12a]/Mt 6:7-15

Friday: Dt 7:6-11/Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 10 [cf. 17]/1 Jn 4:7-16/Mt 11:25-30

Saturday: 2 Chr 24:17-25/Ps 1 Sm 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd [cf. 1]/Lk 2:41-51
Next Sunday: Jer 20:10-13/Ps 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35 [14c]/Rom 5:12-15/Mt 10:26-33

Monthly Outdoor Mass

Wednesday, June 17, 7pm at Our Lady Queen of Peace Shrine in O'Fallon, MO. Please bring a lawn chair as we will be spreading out. Our celebrant will be Fr. Nick Kastesholz. Come pray for an end to COVID-19 and rioting. Please call Ruth at 636-233-1082 with any questions.



#### HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

As you remember, a few months ago a number of deacons and their wives, and family members and friends, were scheduled to join me and participate in a life-changing pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Several of the members of our IHM family expressed interest in joining us. Unfortunately that trip was put on hold, but it is now ready to be rescheduled. Please consider joining Nancy and myself and others for an 8-day Holy Land Pilgrimage, September 8-15, 2020. See Deacon Chris for info.

#### Leaning Into Thin Places

By: Dr. Ed Hogan

Academic Dean, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

I was one of 6 children growing up, and my father read to us all the time.

One of our favorites was The Hibernian Nights. Think of them as an Irish version of the Arabian Nights: they relate amusing incidents, portray character strengths and weaknesses, and reveal some of the underlying beliefs of Irish culture.

One of those underlying beliefs is the concept of "thin places" – locations and times and people that make the veil between the natural and supernatural worlds easy to see through. Think of places like the Grand Canyon, or the ocean, where it feels like God is present. Think of people whose holiness is almost palpable, who help us be closer to God by becoming wiser, more attentive, more forgiving.

These stories helped form our imagination in the recognition that the visible world isn't the whole of reality. Irish culture reflects the Catholic faith on this point: there's a spiritual world that surrounds the visible world and, occasionally, breaks through.

The concept of "thin places" has helped me deal with the crisis of the past two months, and I think it can help all of us. How so?

One of the central features of Catholic life during the COVID-19 shutdown has been a long Eucharistic fast. We've needed to learn how to make a spiritual communion. Once upon a time such a communion would have been common. For most of us it's been a new thing. But I think there's an invitation from Jesus in it – an invitation to something that our culture needs far beyond the present crisis.

The words to the act of spiritual communion are easy. But knowing how to receive Jesus this way requires knowing how the invisible reality of

Jesus breaks through into our lives. That's more than a new set of words to memorize. It's an invitation to discover the landscape of a thin place, and dwell there more readily and more often.

There's more than one way to develop our knowledge of that landscape. There are as many different ways as there are forms of prayer! (Music has always been an important one for me. So has time in the kitchen, baking. I sense God's presence more readily in those concrete activities. What are they for you?) But let me describe one example and invite you to think of your own.

I try to pray with the Scriptures every day. One of the things I've become keenly aware of, as I do so, is the truth of these words of the Catechism: "Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word." (#102) The words of Scripture are a divinely inspired "thin place." They're human words; we take them in with our eyes and ears. But in and through them the one Word – Jesus Christ – breaks into our lives and speaks to our hearts.

Several years ago, I started reading the Bible out loud – even if quietly, to myself. I wasn't satisfied to let the words of the Bible be a thin place where I could encounter Jesus. I wanted the Word of God to move so habitually from my mind to my mouth that it would shape all the words I speak, letting my words become a "thin place" where others could encounter Jesus.

Sadly, I can't say I'm perfect on that score! But I can report: the practice has changed me. I more readily receive the Word of Jesus into my heart through the visible and audible words of the Bible. I more quickly and deeply let my words be an instrument of the Word for others. I've tried my

best to lean into that thin place on a daily basis, and it's transforming me.

I think the current crisis is an invitation to all of us to be transformed.

Here's the thing: Jesus wants us to dwell in the "thin places" where he breaks into our lives all the time. As we go through the various concrete tasks of our daily life, he wants us to be in constant spiritual communion with him.

If we make a spiritual communion once a week, that's good! But if we don't return to the thin place where Jesus comes into our heart more than once a week, we won't be able to sustain our ability to dwell there.

So the experience of making a spiritual communion once a week is also an invitation to develop the discipline of making a spiritual communion in every moment.

If we take some time every day to dwell in the thin places where God is intersecting with the visible and concrete world of our lives, then our spiritual communion won't be an isolated act. It will become the pattern of our lives

So, my sense is that this spiritual discipline could be more than just a shortterm response to the present health crisis. It could be a long-term response to a cultural crisis of faith which came before and will persist after, and to which the only adequate response is a massive growth in holiness on the part of the Church.

The COVID-19 shutdown of 2020 has been a hard time, and a scary time. I don't know that those will ever go away. But it's also providing us with a great opportunity to deepen the life we share with Jesus. Let's take him up on the invitation.





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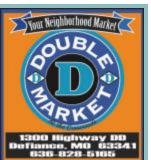
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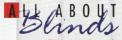
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