

Flashback to 2011, the 31-year-old, future MLB Hall of Famer, Albert Pujols left the St. Louis Cardinals after eleven amazing, record-setting seasons. Just to name a few of his accomplishments: National League Rookie of the Year, three-time National League MVP, 2006 and 2011 World Series Champion, 9-time All-Star, and named the Greatest Player of the Decade by ESPN.com in 2009. However, when the Angels gave him a \$240 million contract with other perks to play ball for the next decade, it was as if a superb book ended leaving the city of St. Louis in darkness and tears.

However, after eleven years, tears have finally turned into joy as all the major newspapers and news outlets announced that Pujols is coming back to the city of St. Louis for one last “go at it” with the Cardinals at the ripe age of 42. Being an avid Cardinal fan who grew up attending baseball games at old Busch Stadium, I cannot wait to see how this story ends.

While the above story warms the hearts of numerous fans in a major baseball city, there is a much more powerful and larger story that has from generation to generation transformed the lives of millions around the world. According to the Gospel writers, in a merely three years, Jesus touched the hearts and minds of all kinds of people. Like a pebble tossed in a pond leaving ripple effects, Jesus’ life-giving words and acts of compassion impacted all of those around him and impacts can be seen today. When John the Baptist found himself wrongfully in prison, you cannot blame him for wanting some definite answers about Jesus. Therefore, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask if Jesus really was the messiah or should they be waiting for someone else. Jesus would reply back “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Matthew 11: 2-5). Jesus was on the move in ministry, but he would eventually set his face towards Jerusalem doing what we cannot do for ourselves—save us. And, yet, without our Easter eyes, we cannot imagine what that first “Good Friday” must have felt like when Christ was crucified. It must have felt like the last of the era, the end of the *good times*, or the last page of a good book.

Strangely enough Mark’s Gospel, which is historically the first Gospel written, leaves readers hanging without the appearance of the resurrected Jesus. The earliest manuscripts and other ancient accounts do not have the added verses, Mark 16:9-20, but conclude with verse eight which states “So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (NRSV).



Some argue the longer ending was torn off the end of a scroll or maybe even lost. However, before we try to explain this away, what if this is how Mark intentionally ended his Gospel? That is, Mark wanted to emphasize how even the earliest followers of Jesus were unable to grasp the full truth and wrap their minds around resurrection. Mark knew that it was up to each individual reader and each individual follower of Jesus to experience the Risen Christ and to share. (Hint, Hint) It’s up to you and me!

Each Easter gives us a chance to “write the script” as we not only experience Christ but follow the gospel command to tell others “The Lord is Risen.” Just as my phone was blowing up this past Monday from phone calls and texts about the return of Albert Pujols for his last year, let us not forget to invite a friend or neighbor to worship or to participate in online worship, as the greatest story in the world continues on generation after generation! Presumably, we share the Good News!

Prayers and Praise to God from the Past Month

Lee Camps, hospice at home, Church Family
(update) Pam Williams, in the hospital with COVID, Church Family
Rainy and Sal Genovese, in the death of Rainy's father, John Blasi Sr. (friends)
Charlie Fink, cyst in his kidney, Church Family
Mackenzie Lee, diagnosed with arachnoid cyst in her brain, Linda Lee (granddaughter)
Ricardo Rivere, grandpa's in the hospital with heart and breathing complications, Church Family
Teresea Gullett, recent cancer surgery on March 23, Scott Hamm (sister)
Karen Burns, knee surgery on March 25, Church Family
April and Chris Turton, April is at home recovering from a tragic car accident, Church Family
Brenda, a severe case of the shingles, Mary and Harry R. (daughter)
Harry Rubin, back home and doing well, Church Family
Shirley Fizer, bladder infection, Church Family
Joyce Turney, weakness in legs and having upcoming tests, Church Family
(Update) Ernest Sarkissian, good report in Tampa and anticipating a full recovery of eyesight, Asya Teruni (husband)
Prayers for Ukraine, Russia, and peace in the world



He is Risen! Let's keep the tradition and decorate our sanctuary with Easter Lilies. There is an order sheet in the narthex or you can email disciplesmcc@gmail.com if you would like to purchase an Easter Lily. The cost is \$15 per lily and the deadline to order is Palm Sunday, April 11.

April Birthdays and Anniversaries

(Email the office if your name is missing)

Donna Fielding	Apr 6
Kathryn Hamm	Apr 9
Elaine Maley	Apr 10
John Battazzo	Apr 14
Ron Bly	Apr 15
Anna Comer	Apr 16

Congratulations to Rev. John and Carol in their wedding on Saturday, April 2!



Outreach

Gladiolus Food Pantry needs our help in April. Demand remains high. This month as you think about Easter Baskets - think of Food Baskets for Gladiolus Food Pantry. Staple items as well as nonperishable foods that are common with an Easter meal are needed. Miriam asked that in particular they are in need of pancake mix.

On April 10 and 17 there will be a Special Offering to support the General Ministries of Disciples of Christ. General Ministries address central administrative functions, special studies and services to meet responsibilities of witness and service throughout U.S., Canada and the world. Special Offering envelopes will be provided on the table in the narthex.



Thanks to your generous donations, homebound members will receive a "caring bag" as a reminder of God's love.