LIVING FAITH

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S

THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

John 10:1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

What a beautiful image Jesus gives us in today's Gospel. He describes himself as the gate for the sheep. He lets friends in and keeps dangers out. He opens to invite and closes to protect.

You and I are the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today. We are gates for others. How do we do this? First of all, we are gates for others when we let them in, when we welcome them and make them feel at home. We are gates when we welcome people to our homes. We are gates when we make newcomers feel welcome in our churches, inviting them to get involved and use their gifts. We are gates when we help new immigrants or people who may be new to our communities get used to things, and to the way we do things. Older people can be gates for the young when we let go of things that we've been doing for years in order to make room for them. Younger people can be gates for older folks when we introduce them to some of our new technology, and show them how to use it to stay in touch with their loved ones and the world.

Be a gate. Be the means by which Jesus brings abundant life to the people around you and to the world.

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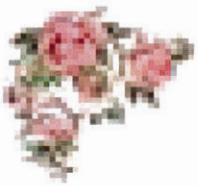
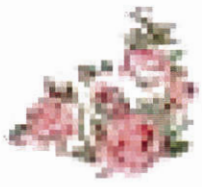
A Family activity for this week: Sometimes when we pray we recite words. This week take some time as a family to say and ponder the words of this beautiful prayer. Take some time to teach it to our children.



Hail Mary

Full of Grace
The Lord is with Thee
Blessed art Thou Among Women
And Blessed is the
Fruit of thy womb
Jesus

Holy Mary
Mother of God
Pray for us Sinners
Now and at the hour of
our death
Amen



May is a month when we traditionally honour Mary. In our homes we often statues and pictures of Mary. As a family during this month we can place these in a special place to remind us of our special relationship with Mary the Mother of God.

YOU ASKED... CONFIRMATION

I was Confirmed when I was 14, and I learned that Confirmation is a Sacrament of Christian maturity. Now, I see children being Confirmed before First Communion. I don't understand. What's up with that?

The Archdiocese of St. John's, and an increasing number of dioceses and parishes in Canada and other places, have restored the order of the celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. This means, quite simply, that it becomes standard policy for Catholics who were baptized in infancy to receive Confirmation *before* First Communion, not *after*.

Why do they call it "restored" order?

During the first five hundred years or so of the history of the Roman Catholic Church (and still today in the Christian churches of the East), it was always the case that the sacraments of Christian initiation were celebrated in an invariable sequence: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. And it was almost always the case that all three sacraments were celebrated together at the same time, even with infants.

Following the lead of official documents that were issued by the Church after the Second Vatican Council, more and more places are restoring this original order to the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Isn't Confirmation a sacrament of maturity that should come after First Communion as a child grows older?

Not really. Confirmation is actually the completion of Baptism (by the full gift of the Holy Spirit). To celebrate Confirmation requires nothing more by way of age-appropriate maturity than to receive the Eucharist. Remember, there is a legitimate, parallel practice in Eastern churches of fully initiating even infants with all three sacraments.

The maturity that is required for receiving any of the sacraments of Christian initiation is only what is age-appropriate. The Church expects interior dispositions of readiness, such as understanding freedom, that are realistic at any given age, nothing more.

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MARY'S PRAYER

THE MAGNIFICAT

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for
he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.

(Lk 1:46-55)

MAY IS MARY'S MONTH

There are four dogmas, or profound teachings of the Church, which have directly to do with Mary.

1) Divine Motherhood
Mary's divine motherhood was proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Various names are used to describe Mary's role as mother of Jesus. She is called "Mother of God" which translates the more accurately stated greek term "Theotokos" or "Birthgiver of God."

2) Perpetual Virginity
The expression perpetual virginity, ever-virgin, or simply "Mary the Virgin" refers primarily to the conception and birth of Jesus. From the first formulations of faith, especially in baptismal formulas or professions of faith, the Church professed that Jesus Christ was conceived without human seed by the power of the Holy Spirit only. Here lies the decisive meaning of expressions such as "conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary," "Mary's virginal conception," or "virgin birth." The early baptismal formula (since the 3rd century) state Mary's virginity without further explaining it, but there is no doubt about its physical meaning.

3) Immaculate Conception
The dogma of the Immaculate Conception states "that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin."

4) The Assumption
This Marian dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950 in his Encyclical Munificentissimus Deus.

The dogma states that "Mary, Immaculate Mother of God ever Virgin, after finishing the course of her life on earth, was taken up in body and soul to heavenly glory." The Assumption had been a part of the Church's spiritual and doctrinal patrimony for centuries. It had been part of theological reflection but also of the liturgy and was part of the sense of the faithful.