

Easter C 3 and First Communion May 4, 2025

Happy Star Wars Day! May the Fourth be with you!

When I preside at the 9:45 family mass, I invite the children to sit with me on the altar steps while I preach. Often, I use a visual aid to illustrate the lesson.

This weekend, I won't need visual aids. The children themselves will illustrate the Good News. At the 9:45 and noon masses we will celebrate first communion.

For the first time, 40 youngsters, 20 this weekend and 20 two weeks from now, will approach the altar, not with their arms crossed over their chests to ask a blessing, but with hands outstretched, left hand cupped in their right, to receive the very Body of Christ in the Eucharist.

And on Friday night 37 young adults knelt before Bishop Caggiano as he prayed over them and anointed them with Sacred Chrism, that they be sealed with the Holy Spirit.

With those simple gestures, the children and young adults are leading all of us more fully into our own encounters with the mystery of God, the paschal mystery of the dying and rising of Jesus, the mystery of the very life and Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts and in our midst.

Even if you don't attend any of those liturgies, even if you don't know any of those children or young adults, they mean to be witnesses to you and to our entire parish family, to remind you of your own baptism, your own first communion, your own confirmation, your own vocation, call, to follow Jesus.

We all spent Lent together, pondering the immense gift of God in creating us out of mud and breathing life into us; and then contemplating the even greater gift of God pouring into us the gift of divine life, through the waters of baptism, when the Lord chose us, uniquely and personally, to be God's own beloved child, and clothed us in the robes of the household of God.

This weekend the children and young adults witness to two more gifts the Lord has bestowed on us. First, God has called us to the table of the Eucharist, where the Lord Jesus offers himself as sacrifice and supper, to ready us for the Eternal Supper of the Lamb.

Second, Christ calls us into our own unique vocations, transforming our natural gifts and talents into charisms for building up the People of God. Watch for our confirmands to take up ministerial service to God's people.

And there is one more witness, one more invitation this weekend: Simon Peter.

Peter had walked by the side of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple.

He had sat at table with Jesus at that final seder meal of farewell.

He had warmed himself at a charcoal fire outside the house of the High Priest, when Jesus was arrested, and then three times Peter denied he even knew Jesus.

Peter was shamefaced when Jesus looked upon him as the rooster crowed, and wept bitter tears.

Peter had run to the empty tomb, then met the Risen Lord in the locked upper room, and rejoiced as Jesus pronounced “shalom” forgiveness and reconciliation on him and the other disciples, breathed on him the Holy Spirit, and sent them as the Father had sent Jesus.

And after all that, Peter had gone back to fishing!

And yet again Jesus fed him, forgave him, called him again and confirmed him in his vocation to proclaim the Good News.

This weekend isn't just about the children receiving first communion or the teens receiving Confirmation. Their witness, their generosity in responding to the Lord's call, means to stir in you the memories of your own vocation, your own call.

Remember your own birth, and the gift that your life is, to you, to those who love you, and to our world.

Remember your own baptism, and the gift of divine life you have been given, and the gift you are to the Church.

Remember your own first communion, and every celebration of Eucharist since, and the gift you receive of the very Body and Blood of Christ.

And let St. Peter today remind you of two additional truths: first, every time you have sinned or turned a blind eye to injustice or preferred to stay by the warm fire and avoided humble service, you've said in effect, "I don't even know him"

But more importantly, let today's gospel remind you that, just as he did for Peter, Jesus sets for you a simple meal, gives you bread blessed and broken, and in the light of the new Fire of Easter, Jesus renews his call to you: Follow me.

It's not a charcoal fire but the flame of the Holy Spirit who reveals that it is Jesus himself who serves us to save us. This eucharist is a meal of reconciliation, a meal of recognition, a meal of thanksgiving.

For all those gifts, of life and Eucharist and Spirit and vocation, and forgiveness, and renewed calls to follow him, all those prompt us to make the great prayer, the most basic of all praying, Thank You.

So blessings upon our first communicants; blessings upon our confirmands; and blessings upon each of you, as together we answer the Lord's call to follow him. Amen

For the 9:45 mass and First Communion

Happy Star Wars Day! May the Fourth be with you!

Ok, we got that out of the way!

You all know that when I preside at this mass, I invite the children to sit with me on the altar steps while I preach. Often, I use a visual aid to illustrate the lesson.

And my words are aimed at the children, while I invite the adults to “listen in.”

But not today. If it’s ok with the youngsters, my words mostly are for the parents and grandparents and adult parishioners, and I want to invite the children to overhear and “listen in.”

And parents, at home I hope you can help your sons and daughters understand more deeply what we are doing.

This weekend, I won’t need visual aids. The children themselves will illustrate the Good News.

For the first time, some of our youngsters will approach the altar, not with their arms crossed over their chests to ask a blessing, but with hands outstretched, left hand cupped in their right, to receive the very Body of Christ in the Eucharist.

And on Friday night 37 young adults knelt before Bishop Caggiano as he prayed over them and anointed them with Sacred Chrism, that they be sealed with the Holy Spirit.

With those simple gestures, these children and young adults are leading all of us more fully into our own encounters with the mystery of God, the paschal mystery of the dying and rising of Jesus, the mystery of the very life and Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts and in our midst.

Even if you don't know all, or even any, of these children or young adults, they witness to us and to our entire parish family; they remind us of our own baptism, our own first communion, our own confirmation, our own vocation, call, to follow Jesus.

We spent Lent together, pondering the immense gift of God in creating us out of mud and breathing life into us; and then we contemplated the even greater gift of God pouring into us the gift of divine life, through the waters of baptism, when the Lord chose us, uniquely and personally, to be God's own beloved child, and clothed us in the robes of the household of God.

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He had sat at table with Jesus at that final seder meal of farewell.

He had warmed himself at a charcoal fire outside the house of the High Priest, when Jesus was arrested, and then three times Peter denied he even knew Jesus.

He had wept bitter tears when Jesus looked upon him as the rooster crowed.

He had run to the empty tomb, and puzzled over the burial cloths abandoned there.

He huddled with the other disciples, locked in the upper room, fearful and confused.



He met the Risen Lord and rejoiced when Jesus pronounced “shalom” forgiveness and reconciliation on him and the other disciples, breathed on him the Holy Spirit, and sent them as the Father had sent Jesus.

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