

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, Fort Benton

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, Geraldine

April 21st, 2024: Fourth Sunday of Easter (Year B)

Rev. Mohan Raj Arockia

Website: iccfb.org

Pastor

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Day, Month & Date	<u>Mass Schedule for April 21st – May 26th, 2024</u>
Sun April 21 st	Fourth Sunday of Easter: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.
Sun April 28 th	Fifth Sunday of Easter: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.
Sun May 05 th	Sixth Sunday of Easter: 9 am Mass @ St. Margaret's & 11 am Mass @ ICC.
Sun May 12 th	The Ascension Sunday: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.
Sun May 19 th	Pentecost Sunday: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.
Sun May 26 th	The Most Holy Trinity: 9 am Mass @ ICC & 11 am Mass @ St. Margaret's.

Sunday Collections:

April 14, 2024	ICC, Ft. Benton: \$ 1,165 .00 + \$ 0 (Maintenance) = \$ 1,165.00
Third Sunday of Easter	St. Margaret's, Geraldine: \$ 190.00

Thank you to All who have generously donated. Your Generosity is very humbling.

Reflection by Pastor: Dear Loving Sisters, Brothers and Children in Christ!

Instruments of the Good Shepherd

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters

them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.” John 10:11–13.

Today, on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday. It is a day when we reflect upon the tender image of Jesus as the Shepherd of us all. It is also a day set aside to pray for more shepherds within our Church who will shepherd God’s flock with the Heart of Christ.

Our Gospel passage comes from John 10 which, in part, is a commentary on the previous chapter that includes the long and detailed story of the healing of the blind man. Recall that Jesus healed this man who was blind from birth. He did this healing “so that the works of God might be made visible through him.” As a result of this man’s healing, the Pharisees cast the blind man out of the synagogue, not believing that Jesus’ healing was from God. After the man was cast out of the synagogue, Jesus spoke with him again and he professed his deep faith in Jesus, the true Shepherd. The healed blind man said, “I do believe, Lord.” Then he worshiped Jesus. Thus, the greater healing of this man was that he became a member of God’s flock, accepting Jesus as his true Shepherd.

Our Gospel today is Jesus’ commentary upon the actions of the Pharisees in contrast to His own. The Pharisees, as religious leaders, were not shepherds. They were “thieves and robbers” who came to “steal and slaughter and destroy.” Jesus, however, came so that those who listened to His voice “might have life and have it more abundantly.”

The Gospel passage quoted above explains why the Pharisees were not true shepherds. It was because they “work for pay” and have “no concern for the sheep.” Think about that statement as it applies to the Pharisees and their treatment of this man who was blind from birth. First of all, the “pay” that these Pharisees worked for was their own self-importance - a fleeting and worldly reward. They saw themselves as the true teachers and interpreters of the Law and saw anyone who did not follow them as a threat. The Pharisees clearly perceived Jesus as such a threat to them. For that reason, they took their envy out on this humble and simple blind man. They were not shepherds to him. They did not encourage him, support him, point him to God or act in any way as an instrument of God’s grace. Instead, they condemned this innocent and holy man out of their pride.

Though God shepherds us today through His sacred pastors, we are all called to participate in this shepherding of the Good Shepherd in our own unique way. We are called to lead those within our families, at work, at school, within our neighborhoods, social circles and in every other societal context. But too often we imitate these Pharisees by allowing our own selfishness and desire for self-importance to interfere with our ability to put others first and love them with the Shepherd’s heart.

Reflect, today, upon the calling you have received to lay down your life for others in imitation of the Good Shepherd. In order to imitate this love in the Heart of Christ, we must love without seeking love in return. Laying our lives down is an act of sacrificial love that enables us to look only at the needs of those around us. Pride and selfishness must disappear, and the good of the other must become our only goal. Reflect upon how well you do this, and pray that the Good Shepherd will use you to shepherd those in your life who need it the most.

Divine Shepherd, You came to lay down Your life for us all so that we might have life and have it to the fullest. Like the blind man You cured, I profess my belief in You and worship You. Help me to receive and imitate Your love so that I will lay my life down for others, leading them to You, their holy Shepherd. Jesus, my Good Shepherd, I trust in You.

St. Margaret's Bulletin

Sunday, April 28, *Community Baby Shower for mothers in need*, co-hosted by St. Margaret's Church and Geraldine Community Church. The items donated will go to agencies in Lewistown and Havre that help young mothers and their children. New items or gently used items sized newborn to size 5 are welcomed. You can drop your items off at the Community Church any time.

All Items donated will be on display Sunday, April 28 at 1:00 pm. Please stop by and see the assortment of items received. Several people in the community that crochet and knit make a large assortment of beautiful clothes and blankets worth checking out.

Reflection by Trish—Nature's Cathedral

Most of us have not had the opportunity to visit the great cathedrals of Europe. A number of years ago, while visiting family, we took our children to see the St. Paul Cathedral in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was the biggest church they had been to. Our grade school and junior high age children were in awe at the church, which was so different from the little church they were accustomed to in our small, rural community in Montana.

The Cathedral had taped organ music playing as people toured the church. We marveled at the large columns, small side altars, statues, votive candles, and the wonderful architecture. Many of our senses were engaged as we toured the building. A sense of awe seemed to fill everyone.

It is springtime here in Montana. We are presently watching the earth turn green around us. The trees in our yard are full of songbirds each morning. The birds fill the air with joyful sounds. The trees are beginning to bud. My daffodils are beginning to show their

bright yellow blooms. The outdoors is God's wonderful natural Cathedral. Everywhere you look you find reminders of the Loving Creator.

As I walk outdoors, I experience a sense of awe as I smell the fresh scent of spring, see the new plants emerge, and see those that were dormant come to life. The ponds are full of water for wildlife to enjoy. The extended hours of daylight are so enjoyable and seem to increase my energy. There is new life. The natural world has experienced a resurrection from the dark months when many plants appeared dead.

Spending time in nature can fill us with wonder and gratitude as we marvel in this vast cathedral. The Divine Holy One surrounds us and shows itself in all of creation. Spending time outdoors can be a powerful healthy experience as well as a spiritual one.

If we make a regular habit of spending time in nature's sacred space, we can see benefits over time. Being mindful of all we see, the small and the large, increases our sense of gratitude. Our minds are calmed. Depression and anxiety can be decreased in the sacred space. We may sleep better as result of the fresh air and sunlight. We may find we enjoy walking or exercising more frequently surrounded by nature. Practicing and being mindful in nature over and over gives many health and spiritual benefits.

Continuing to practice recognizing all the gifts from the Divine heightens our ability to experience the presence of the Gracious Loving Creator. Just as visiting a building dedicated to the Great Mystery, a cathedral or church, can quiet our inner mind from racing and give us a sense of peace, so too can being mindful of all that is present in the outdoors.

As we watch the earth awaken, birds and animals appear more frequently, the greening and blooming of the plants, let us know that it is a reflection of the Great Mystery, the One who never stops beckoning us to join in the love with an open heart.

Giver of Life and the One who Sustains us,

Help us to be reminded of you as we see all

the wonders of the natural world around us.

