

## Faith Formation Families :

As we continue our Faith Formation journey together, this I have decided rather than a weekly reflection on the Gospel reading. I would reflect on Our Blessed Mother Mary as the month of May is dedicated to her. The question I ask is Why is Mary so important to us as Catholics. Our devotion to Blessed Mother Mary leads us always to her Son, our Lord.

First of all, Catholics do not worship Mary. We honor her because she is the mother of Jesus. God himself honored Mary, by finding her worthy to be the mother of His only son. God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her: 'Hail, **Mary**, full of grace! The Lord is with you. **Do** not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God.

When speaking to the children in the program about the Blessed Mother it stressed the importance of praying to the Blessed Mother. I ask the children, if you are hurting, who do they go to and the response is their mothers. The children are told that if they pray to Jesus, then they should pray to Mary as she intercedes for us to her Son, We honor the Blessed Mother, because God Himself honored her. He was He that chose her to bear His Son out of all women.

Out of her great love for humanity, the Mother of God has returned to earth several times to call us to turn back to God with all our hearts. **Our Lady appears** as the people of each time and place need to see her.

There are many long-standing traditions associated with the month of May devoted to Mary. In our Parishes. We place a statue of the Blessed Mother before the altar and crown the statue of Mary. For the past few years, our First Communion children bring a blue carnation to be added to the single white rose, for the Mary, which is then placed before the statue of the Blessed Mother to honor her as our Mother. We look at Mary as the greatest Saint of our Church as she said yes to God.

There are many different images of the Blessed Mother and each has a different meaning. I had the opportunity to visit Poland with Fr. Arthur in 2019 with a group of people. He took us to the Shire of Our Lady of Czestochowa also known as the Black Madonna. It was amazing to see all the number of people from all over Poland make a pilgrimage to the Shire. At night when the picture is veiled, there were so many people praying together. And to see our pastor as Mass before Our Lady of Czestochowa was moving. It was an honor for him and us. I have included the picture of Fr. Arthur saying the Mass .

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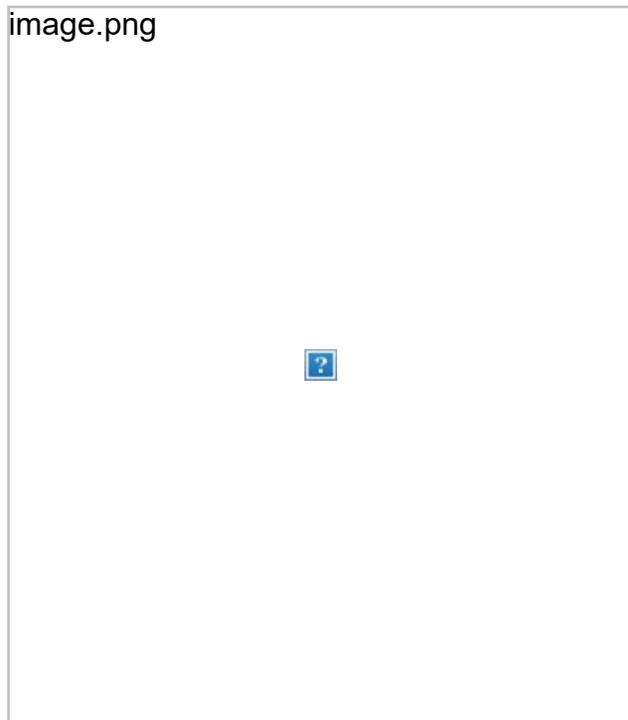
There are also a number of statues of the Blessed Mother. Some more known is Our Lady of Fatima; Our Lady of Grace; Our Lady of Guadalupe; Our Lady of Lourdes; Our Lady of Medjugorje; Our Lady of the

Miraculous Medal; Our Lady of Perpetual Help; Immaculate Conception; Immaculate Heart, Madonna & child; Undoer of Knots: Rosa Mystica; Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Good Counsel and Our Lady of the Rosary .

I have included an activity for the families to try and associate the statute with the Blessed mother. See how many you as a family can get. The answers will be in next week email

This week I wish to reflect on 2 of the images of the Blessed Mother. The first of course is Our Lady of Czestochowa (I'm sure that Father Arthur could do a better job here) and the second is Our Lady of Grace.

As I noted above, I was truly blessed to actually see the Shire of Our Lady of Czestochowa also known as the Black Madonna. There is a long history behind the painting. There are 2 slashes on the cheek of the Blessed Mother and one on the throat. History notes that these were caused by the Hussites throwing the ground when one of the Hussites drew his sword and slashed the image twice causing the deep gashes. The 2 slashes on the cheek and the one on the throat have always reappeared after artistic attempts have tried to fix them. There is a beautiful image now hanging at Sacred Heart/St Mary's Our Lady of Czestochowa Father Arthur had commissioned. Once our Churches are open, please come to see this beautiful piece of art honoring our Lady of Czestochowa.



The second Image is Our Lady of Good Counsel. This image of the Blessed Mother can be found at St. Patrick's/ St. Anthony's. This was recently restored by Brenda Fancett. She is extremely talented and did a wonderful job in her restoration. The devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel is associated with the story of a miraculous icon found in the Church of Genazzano Italy. While the Church was under restoration in 1467 . That same year, the resident of the town heard a beautiful melody coming from heaven. When they looked up they saw a white shining cloud that descended on the Church of the Mother of God Counsel. The cloud gradually vanished, revealing a beautiful painting of Our Lady tenderly holding her Divine Son in her arms, Immediately, Mary began to cure the sick and granted countless graces.

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Prayer is such an important part of our Catholic faith. Prayer is communicating with God. We as Catholics pray to Mary for the same reason we pray to Jesus, for her help and assistance.

For those who wish to do a daily devotion to the Blessed Mother please refer to the website of Catholic News Agency.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/prayers/devotions/to-the-blessed-virgin-mary/month-of-mary-may-devotions> . There wonderful reflections daily to the Blessed Mother.

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Attached you will find correspondence from the Office of Faith Formation ways families can continue their Family Faith journey's together during this difficult time.

I also want to remind families that if you are able, please continue to make weekly contributions to the Parishes. Every amount will help Father Arthur pay the bills.

In the next few weeks, I will be completing a survey for families to complete. This will help me plan for the upcoming Faith Formation year. Please try and complete once received. Thank you.

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