

**HOMILY OUTLINE FOR CONFIRMATION AND
FIRST HOLY COMMUNION
2020-2021**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

- I. We should strive to be saints, which is not so far off or impossible as we might think.
 - A. Several months ago, I had the privilege of meeting the daughter of a canonized saint: Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, the daughter of St Gianna Beretta Molla, who was a physician, a working mom, a professional woman, and a loving wife.
 1. In 1961, Gianna became pregnant with her fourth child. Toward the end of her second month of pregnancy, Gianna began experiencing severe pain. Her doctors discovered she had developed a fibroma in her uterus, meaning she was carrying both a baby and a tumor.
 2. Ruling out abortion as a way to save her own life, Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, “If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child. I insist on it. Save the baby.”
 3. On April 21, 1962, her daughter, Gianna Emanuela Molla, was successfully delivered by Caesarean section. The doctors tried many different treatments and procedures to ensure both lives would be saved. However, on April 28, 1962, a week after the baby was born, Gianna passed away from a severe infection. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized as a saint on May 16, 2004. Her husband and their children, including Gianna Emanuela, attended her canonization ceremony, making this the first time a husband witnessed his wife's canonization.
 4. In 2019, I rode from the airport in Sacramento to Napa in a van with Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, the daughter of St. Gianna Beretta Molla. It was very touching to hear her talk about how she prayed every morning to her “Saint Mom.”

- B. I thought of my own mother, who was a saintly person, even if not officially canonized a saint.
- C. In my lifetime I have actually met two canonized saints: Pope St. John Paul II and St. Theresa of Calcutta. Meeting the daughter of a canonized saint also brought home to me very clearly that becoming a saint is not as impossible to achieve as we may think.
- D. Even if we are never officially canonized as a saint by the Pope, we can still become saints in fact, thanks to God's grace which leads us to eternal life in heaven.
- E. I pray that St. Gianna Beretta Molla will intercede for all of us to become saints!

II. What does this have to do with Confirmation and First Eucharist?

- A. Jesus gave us the Sacraments as a way to receive the graces needed to be holy, that is, to become a saint.
- B. We need those graces early in life to resist the temptations of this world.
- C. That is why we are implementing the Restored Order for the Sacraments of Initiation in our diocese.
 1. The "restored order" refers to receiving the Sacraments of Initiation in the original sequence practiced by the Church for centuries, namely, first Baptism, which is strengthened with the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation, which is completed with the reception of Holy Communion.
 2. The original sequence of the Sacraments of Initiation is like climbing a mountain: Baptism is the start of the climb at the base of the mountain; Confirmation is the boost needed to continue the ascent; and Eucharist is the summit at the top of the mountain.

3. The “restored order” also provides for our young people to receive the graces of these sacraments around the age of reason.

(Read from selected questionnaires)

III. Since our goal is to become saints and live forever with God in heaven, it is good for us to reflect on the question: what will heaven be like?

A. The answer to that question is suggested in a movie I saw a few months ago entitled, "I Can Only Imagine."

1. The movie tells the story of Bart Millard and the Christian band known as MercyMe.
2. Growing up in Greenville, Texas, Bart suffered at the hands of his abusive father, Arthur.
3. His problems were made worse when his mother ran away from her apparently violent husband and left Bart with his abusive father.
4. Years later, Bart's father became a Christian after he was diagnosed with cancer. After Arthur's death, Bart discovered his Dad's journal in which he wrote his reflections about heaven. On each page, Arthur wrote, "I can only imagine." This inspired Bart to write a song by that name. It became the best-selling Christian song of all time.

I can only imagine what it will be like
When I walk by your side
I can only imagine what my eyes will see
When your face is before me
I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine, I can only imagine

I can only imagine when that day comes
And I find myself standing in the sun
I can only imagine when all I will do
Is forever, forever worship you
I can only imagine, yeah, I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine, yes, I can only imagine¹

- IV. Since our goal is to become saints, just imagine how awesome it would be to live forever with God in heaven!

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Songwriter: Bart Marshall Millard, © ESSENTIAL MUSIC PUBLISHING, For non-commercial use only.