Mary’s life should be for you a pictorial image of virginity. Her life is like a mirror reflecting the face of chastity and the form of virtue. Therein you may find a model for your own life... showing what to improve, what to imitate, what to hold fast to. – Saint Ambrose of Milan

This Month’s Devotion

The Immaculate Conception

In the Constitution Ineffabilis Deus of 8 December 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.”

It’s important to understand what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is and what it is not. Some people think the term refers to Christ’s conception in Mary’s womb without the intervention of a human father; but that is the Virgin Birth. Others think the Immaculate Conception means Mary was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit,” in the way Jesus was, but that, too, is incorrect. The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about according to the normal way, was conceived without original sin or its stain—that’s what “immaculate” means; without stain. The essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace, and its stain is a corrupt nature. Mary was preserved from these defects by God’s grace; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace and was free from the corrupt nature original sin brings.

When discussing the Immaculate Conception, an implicit reference may be found in the angel’s greeting to Mary. The angel Gabriel said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). The phrase “full of grace” is a translation of the Greek word kecharitomene. It therefore expresses a characteristic quality of Mary.

Nor did justice endure that that vessel of election should be open to common injuries; for being far exalted above others, she partook of their nature, not of their sin. – St. Cyprian

What does Advent mean?
What does the Church celebrate during Advent?
Advent (ad-venio in Latin or “to come to”) is a time of waiting, expectation, and preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ, the world’s savior, on Christmas Day.

Advent is the beginning of the Church’s liturgical year and is comprised of the four Sundays before Christmas culminating on Christmas Eve and marked by special seasonal devotions. Advent is also known as “little Lent” and is a time of penance and fasting in preparation for the coming of Christ. During Advent we are called to prepare for the birth of Christ into the world, His final coming at the end of the world, and His coming into our hearts today. There are lots of ways to prepare for Advent this season with your family and loved ones. Some popular Advent activities and devotions are the lighting of the Advent wreath each Sunday and using a daily Advent calendar for children. Advent prayers are also a popular way to join with the Church in prayer during this special liturgical season.

The word Advent is from the Latin adventus for “coming” and is associated with the four weeks of preparation for Christmas. Advent always contains four Sundays, beginning on the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, (November 30) and continuing until December 24. It blends together a penitential spirit, very similar to Lent, a liturgical theme of preparation for the Second and Final Coming of the Lord, called the Parousia, and a joyful theme of getting ready for the Bethlehem event.

Since the 900s Advent has been considered the beginning of the Church year. This does not mean that Advent is the most important time of the year. Easter has always had this honor.

The traditional color of Advent is purple or violet which symbolizes the penitential spirit. Religious traditions associated with Advent express all these themes.

Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place. – Edward Hays

The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.
Christmas

“The Word became Flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we have seen His glory: The glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love.” (John 1:14)

The actual date of Christ’s birth is unknown. The Gospels do not record it and there is not any early tradition to identify it. Scholars identify the approximate year as sometime between 8 - 5 BC and the season as probably early spring. The feast day was placed where it was, in all likelihood, to supplant the practice of the winter solstice festival among pagan converts by pointing to Christ as the true light who comes into the world. The Western Church emphasizes the celebration of the Nativity or Birth of Jesus on December 25, while the Eastern Church celebrates His manifestation to the Magi on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6.

The word Christmas was derived from the Old English Cristes Maesse or “Mass of Christmas.” Over the centuries it has become a comprehensive word including both the religious traditions and the secular traditions.

In North America, the early immigrants brought their different Christmas traditions. The Germans brought the Christmas tree, the Irish contributed the lights in windows of homes, Catholic immigrants brought Midnight Mass and everyone had their own Christmas carols.

For most, Christmas is over by December 26 and life has resumed its normal activities. The Church, on the other hand, observes an Octave of Christmas until January 1 (after the Jewish practice of an 8 day celebration) and an extended Christmas time until January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. (It is now celebrated on the Sunday between January 2 and January 8.)

During Christmastime, there are feasts of three martyrs: St. Stephen on December 26, who represents those who went to their death willingly; St. John the Evangelist on December 27, who represents those who were willing to die but were not put to death; and, the Holy Innocents on December 28, representing those who were put to death without their choice. On the Sunday between Christmas and January 1, the Church celebrates the Holy Family. This feast is especially important today as many families today face struggles and challenges in living their Faith.

(http://www.ewtn.com)

At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern. – Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Our Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of December

For the Elderly.

This month we pray that the elderly, sustained by families and Christian communities, may apply their wisdom and experience to spreading the Faith and forming the new generations.

The next altar servers’ meeting will take place in January. It will meet on the third Friday of the month from 11:30 – 1:30. This is for returning and new servers.

If you are interested in joining this ministry, please be sure to attend the meeting.

This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God, is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one. – St. Origen

Advent Traditions

Advent Wreath

“Customarily the Advent Wreath is constructed of a circle of evergreen branches into which are inserted four candles. According to tradition, three of the candles are violet and the fourth is rose. However, four violet or white candles may also be used” (Book of Blessings 1510).

The rose candle is lit the third Sunday of Advent, for this color anticipates and symbolizes the Christmas joy announced in the first word of the Entrance Antiphon: “Rejoice” (Latin, Gaudete). For this reason, the Third Sunday is also called Gaudete Sunday, and rose color vestments are permitted.

The Advent Wreath represents the long time when people lived in spiritual darkness, waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the Light of the world. Each year in Advent, people wait once again in darkness for the coming of the Lord, His historical coming in the mystery of Bethlehem, His final coming at the end of time, and His special coming in every moment of grace.

Advent Calendar

A personal calendar can be made for the four weeks before Christmas. On the calendar, a person can mark the Advent Calendar with personal goals of preparation or acts of service to be done for others.

Advent House

This is a popular rendition of the Jesse Tree. It has windows to be opened each day during Advent, each displaying a feature of the coming of the Christ Child. On December 24, the door is opened, revealing the Nativity scene.

The Nativity

The tradition of having a nativity scene or “crèche” was made popular by St. Francis of Assisi. It is a reproduction of the cave in Bethlehem with Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in a manger, with shepherds, angels, and animals. Each night during Advent, children are encouraged to place in the manger one piece of straw for each good deed done that day by a family member. This Advent tradition combines the spirit of conversion and the coming of Jesus. There is a blessing ceremony provided by the Church in the Book of Blessings for the creche.

Jesse Tree

During Advent, biblical persons representing the ancestors of Jesus, either in faith or bloodline, are gradually added onto a tree or branch, named after the father of David. The symbols such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesse, David, Solomon, Joseph and Mary can be drawn, cut out or purchased.

At the beginning of a new yearly cycle, the liturgy invites the Church to renew her proclamation to all the peoples and sums it up in two words ‘God comes.’ These words, so concise, contain an ever new evocative power. – Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Advent Wreath

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The Advent Wreath represents the long time when people
What’s Happening in Catechism

The month of November has been a busy one in our classrooms and for the catechism program. Our Year 7 class continues to be active with large and small group learning. They have discussed topics such as: being a friend like Jesus, growing in personal faith, and seeing more than the eye can see.

We also held our Pre-Commitment Mass for the pre-Confirmation students. This was a time to learn about their journey towards and culminating in their receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. They celebrated Mass with Fr. Reinhold and made their commitment to complete their Confirmation faith formation. They all received Bibles and the YouCat, as well.

Our Year 5 class celebrated All Saints’ Day by dressing up as their favourite saint. They shared information about their saint during Mass and even joined Father around the altar during Consecration.

The Year 8 students attended their first Confirmation Retreat. They heard talks about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, how the Holy Spirit works in their lives, and even experienced a guided prayer session led by Fr. Reinhold.

The catechists continued their faith formation with a presentation about artwork in the Church, especially about icons.

Let Mary’s soul be in each of you to proclaim the greatness of the Lord. Let her spirit be in each to rejoice in the Lord. Christ has only one mother in the flesh, but we all bring forth Christ in faith. Every soul receives the Word of God if only it keeps chaste, remaining pure and free from sin, its modesty undefiled. The soul that succeeds in this proclaims the greatness of the Lord, just as Mary’s soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. – From a commentary on Luke by Saint Ambrose

Advent Prayer

O Lord, who art ever merciful and bounteous with Thy gifts, Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a wonder at the wisdom and power of Your Father and ours. Receive my prayer as part of my service of the Lord who enlists me in God’s own work for justice.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a hunger for peace: peace in the world, peace in my home, peace in myself.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a joy responsive to the Father’s joy. I seek His will so I can serve with gladness, singing and love.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me the joy and love and peace it is right to bring to the manger of my Lord. Raise in me, too, sober reverence for the God who acted there, hearty gratitude for the life begun there, and spirited resolution to serve the Father and Son.

I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose advent I hail.

Amen.

“Hail, full of grace.” By these words the angel shows that she was altogether excluded from the wrath of the first sentence, and restored to the full grace of blessing. – Saint Augustine

Lectors’ Roster

December 2017

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Prayers of the Faithful</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 December</td>
<td>Aedan Menezes</td>
<td>Celine Khoury</td>
<td>Hannah Lopez</td>
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<td>8 December</td>
<td>Diya Gracias</td>
<td>Mark Araujo</td>
<td>Sophia Khoury</td>
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<td>15 December</td>
<td>Kyra Mascarenhas</td>
<td>Dea Tjahyadi</td>
<td>Skyler Sudhakaran</td>
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<td>22 December</td>
<td>Grethel Aguiar</td>
<td>Nadia Tjahyadi</td>
<td>Melissa Coelho</td>
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<td>29 December</td>
<td>Aeden Menezes</td>
<td>Verity Raymont</td>
<td>Ashley Brown</td>
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For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given. Isaiah 9:6

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Luke 2:9

Away in a Manger

Lector Schedule

Christ is Born!

Worship the King!

Joy to the World!

A Star Led the Way!