

The Sower

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Every December 8, we celebrate a very important event in the life of the Blessed Mother, her Immaculate Conception. This Catholic doctrine teaches that Mary was conceived in her mother's womb (St. Anne's) without original sin and thus, immaculate. Why was her conception immaculate? Because Mary is "full of grace" according to the address given her by the archangel Gabriel during the Annunciation. In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed this dogma: "The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin." (Catechism, 491).

Here are two things about the Immaculate Conception that you and your family can do a research on:

- Find out the story of St. Bernadette, to whom in 1858 the Blessed Mother identified herself as, "I am the Immaculate Conception."
- Find out the story of St. Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal, also known as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception.



WHEN DOES CHRISTMAS END?

As Catholics, we not only celebrate Christmas Day but also the Christmas Season. Like Easter, Christmas is a very significant event in the history of salvation, that its celebration covers an **octave** (eight days), beginning with the Christmas Vigil and ends with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Since the birth of Jesus was not a secret, we acknowledge His public manifestations. Jesus came into the world and chose to belong to the Family of Joseph and Mary, thus, the Feast of the Holy Family (first Sunday after Christmas). And Jesus' coming was also made known to Gentiles, thus, the Feast of the Epiphany (second Sunday after Christmas). Lastly, the beginning of His public ministry, thus, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (third Sunday after Christmas), which marks the end of the Christmas Season. The Baptism of the Lord falls on January 9.



Do you have a crèche at home? Consider following the events in the life of Jesus as they unfold during the Christmas Season. Read and take cues from the Gospel readings. Wait until Christmas eve to add Jesus to the crèche. Wait until the Epiphany to add the magi.

Saint Patrick's Church
Victor, NY 14564
September 2021

Authentic faith,
Welcoming,
Engaging

WE PRAY, WE BELIEVE.

- Dec 3—St. Francis Xavier
- Dec 6—St. Nicholas
- Dec 8—Immaculate Conception (Obl.)
- Dec 13—St. Lucy
- Dec 14—St. John of the Cross
- Dec 26—Holy Family
- Dec 27—Saint John, evangelist
- Dec 28—Holy Innocents

THE DOMESTIC CHURCH IN A TIME OF WAITING AND COMING

We know that Christmas is near when we see an Advent wreath in church and/or at home! This symbol of Advent not only guides us through the four weeks of Advent but also reminds us of the beauty of our Catholic faith.

The wreath is a circle to remind us of God who has no beginning nor end. The ever-green points to the undying love of God and the eternal life that Jesus brings us. You may add laurel leaves to your wreath; laurel symbolizes Jesus' victory over suffering and death, and also, holly, which symbolizes Jesus' sacrifice for us. The four candles, that we light one candle per week, mark our journey through the four weeks of Advent. Purple is the color of hope, for we not only wait for the Messiah, we know that Jesus is coming. Pink is the color of joy: lit on the third week (Gaudete Sunday or Rejoice Sunday), we have made it half-way through our Advent journey. And of course, the flame of the candles reminds us of Jesus who is the light of the world!



Dear God, thank You for the season of Advent. Make this time filled with prayer and hope. Amen.

...for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming.

- Catechism, 524

CHRISTMAS TREE BLESSING:

Lord our God, we praise You for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise You for the light of Israel: the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures. We praise for Jesus Christ, Your Son: He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of Your love.

Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

POINTER TO HEAVEN: INCENSE



“...on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They magi prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” - Matthew 2:11

After the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel in Exodus 24, God laid down specific instructions for proper worship in the following chapters. In Exodus 30, God gave instructions for the preparation of incense. From the beginning,

incense took on a very significant meaning: proper worship of God by His people.

When the magi brought the Baby Jesus incense, they were acknowledging that the baby boy whom they were prostrating was indeed God! Also, king for the gold, and one who would sacrifice His life for us for the myrrh.

“Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones.” - Revelation 5:8 (Also, see Psalm 141:2)

What about incense that made it associated with worship? The smoke of burned incense rising is a reminder of prayers rising to God. Also, its fragrance is a reminder of how God is pleased to receive our prayers.

Be observant at Mass. Take note when incense is used. Why is the Crucifix incensed, and the Book of the Gospel? Why the offerings of bread and wine? Why the priest, and the people?