



First Sunday in Advent

What Is the Immaculate Conception?

An essential part of God's plan for the mother of his Son was that she be conceived free from Original Sin. "Through the centuries the Church became ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception" (CCC, no. 491).

In anticipation that she was to bear the Son of God, Mary was preserved from the time of her conception from Original Sin. We call this the Immaculate Conception. No sin would touch her, so that she would be a fitting and worthy vessel of the Son of God. The Immaculate Conception does not refer to the virginal conception and birth of Christ, but rather to Mary's being conceived without inheriting Original Sin.



The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on December 8.



Prayer for the First Sunday of Advent

Mary,
Virgin of expectation and Mother of hope,
revive the spirit of Advent
in your entire Church,
so that all humanity may start out anew
on the journey towards Bethlehem,
from which it came,
and that the Sun that dawns upon us
from on high
will come once again to visit us,
Christ our God, Amen.

(Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Dec. 1, 2007)

Saint of the Week

Juan Diego

Feast Day—December 9

1474–1548

Baptized at 50, this Indian was walking to Mass on Dec. 9, 1531, when Mary appeared to him on Tepeyac Hill, near Mexico City. She asked him to petition the bishop for a shrine to be built there. But the bishop asked for a sign. On Dec. 12, Juan returned to Tepeyac; Mary told him to pick flowers blooming atop the hill and put them in his cloak to take to the bishop. When Juan opened the cloak, the flowers fell out and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe adorned his garment. This miraculous image is preserved in the famous basilica in Mexico City. Juan lived out his days as a hermit near the first chapel built there; he was canonized in 2002.