

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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December 8



**Our Lady of Fatima Parish**  
2010 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
[www.ourladyoffatimaaltoona.com](http://www.ourladyoffatimaaltoona.com)  
**Rectory Office Hours:**  
**Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM**  
**Parish Office: 814-942-0371**

**Our Lady of Fatima Mass Schedule**  
**Sunday: 10:30 AM - Holy Days: 6:00 PM**  
**Rosary: 10:05 AM - Rosary: 5:40 PM**

**Our Lady of Fatima Parish Administrator**  
**Reverend Monsignor Robert C. Mazur**

**Parish Secretary**  
**Carol Z. Smith**  
**Secretary's Assistant**  
**Ellen Kelly**

**Eucharist for the home bound - weekly:**  
**Patty Flanagan 942-0371 for arrangements.**

**Our Lady of Fatima Church is open**  
**Monday through Friday: 9AM - 6PM**  
**for visits before the Blessed Sacrament.**

**Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals will be held**  
**at Our Lady of Fatima.**

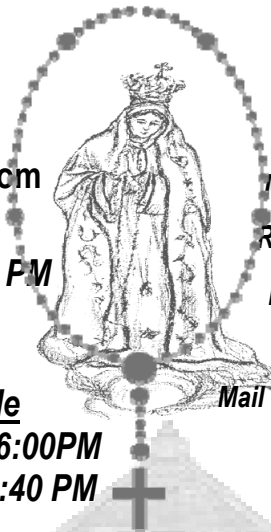
**Preparation for Baptism, and Weddings will be held at**  
**the Cathedral. 944-4603**

**Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick**  
**Parishioners wishing to receive the sacrament of**  
**healing may call the Cathedral Parish Office to**  
**make arrangements. 944-4603**

**OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH IS A RESULT OF THE**  
**MERGER BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES**  
**OF SS. PETER & PAUL AND ST. LEO THE GREAT IN 1995.**

**Our Lady of Fatima**

*Pleaded that we pray the Holy Rosary  
before Sunday Mass and  
privately from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm daily.*



**DECEMBER 3, 2017**

**Be watchful! Be alert!**  
**You do not know when the**  
**time will come.**

— Mark 13:33

**Cathedral Church Office: 814-944-4603**  
**One Cathedral Square**

**Most Reverend Mark L. Bartchak, Bishop**  
**Reverend Monsignor Robert C. Mazur, Rector**

**Rev. Father Dennis M. Kurdziel, Parochial Vicar**  
**Christian Initiation Team: 944-4603**  
**Catholics returning Home: 944-4603**

**Mail Ministry to Elderly, Homebound, Seriously Sick**  
**and Grieving - 944-4603**

**HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**Web: [www.holytrinitycatholic.school](http://www.holytrinitycatholic.school)**  
**Altoona Campus (Pre-K thru Grade 4) - 381-7011**  
**Hollidaysburg Campus (Pre-K thru Grade 4) - 695-6112**  
**Middle School Campus (Grades 5 thru 8) - 942-7835**

**Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School:**

**Web: [www.bishopguilfoyle.org](http://www.bishopguilfoyle.org) – 944-4014**

**Directors of Religious Education:**  
**Chris Laraia – Pre-K thru 8 - 312-7317**  
**Jean Koury – 9 thru 12 – 949-2777**

**Religious Education Office: Sundays – 943-7424**

**Director of Music Ministry**  
**Leslie C. Thayer, MM, CAGO**  
**Music Ministry Office - 944-2044**  
**E-Mail: [ltayer@dioceseaj.org](mailto:ltayer@dioceseaj.org)**

**Reconciliation @ Cathedral: 7:00 PM Wednesday**  
**12:30 PM Saturday**

**Religious Education @ Cathedral: Pre-K through 11**  
**Sacramental Formation @ Cathedral: First Reconciliation**  
**First Communion**  
**Confirmation**

**Sacramental Formation @ the Cathedral: Baptismal Prep**  
**Marriage Prep**  
**Christian Initiation**

**Hospital Visitation: Call the Cathedral: 944-4603**

**Cathedral Eucharist:**

**Sunday: 5:00 PM (Vigil) Holy Days: 5:30 PM (Vigil) Weekdays: 6:45 AM**

|            |            |                   |
|------------|------------|-------------------|
| 8:00 AM    | 8:00 AM    | 8:00 AM           |
| 10:00 AM   | 12:00 Noon | 12:00 Noon        |
| 12:00 Noon | 5:30 PM    | Saturday: 8:00 AM |
| 5:00 PM    |            | 12:00 Noon        |



**DECEMBER 3, 2017**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**GOD HAS A DIFFERENT PLAN**

**We begin the season of Advent with a heartfelt call for our own repentance. We remember God's faithful love for us, and call upon God to help us to turn back. For "behold, you are angry, and we are sinful" (Isaiah 64:4). In the first reading and in the psalm, we recall God's promises and lament our unfaithfulness and our guilt. We call upon God's might and power in order to save us. With Isaiah, we ask God to "rend the heavens and come down, / with the mountains quaking before you" (Isaiah 63:19).**

**Yes, God is faithful to us, because we are the work of God's hands. God is the potter, we are the clay. And yet, our concept of how God will come to save us is rooted in our own expectations of a warrior God who crushes mountains and thunders into our lives with great noise and glory. But God has a different plan: the Incarnation.**

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**TREASURES FROM OUR TRADITION**

**Advent calendars appear now in many homes, and newfangled formats are even available on line. Children have fun opening the doors and windows keyed to the days counting down to Christmas. Behind each door is a picture related to the Christmas mystery, perhaps a scripture verse or saying, but more and more these days something totally unconnected to religious life, like a small toy or a chocolate treat, appears instead. The Advent calendar is not very old as traditions go. We can trace it back to German-speaking Christians, both Protestant and Catholic. Lutherans might have originated the custom by placing chalk marks on doors starting December 1, lighting candles every day, or placing a new religious picture on the wall each day during Advent. The oldest known hand-made calendar goes back to 1851, and the first printed ones appeared in 1908 in Germany with Bible verses behind the doors. By far the most interesting calendar is a building, the town hall (Rathaus) of Gengenbach in Germany's Black Forest. Every year the townspeople invite an illustrator of children's books to create twenty-four paintings or motifs for each of the twenty-four main windows of the building. Every night the people gather to see a new window opened and illuminated.**

**Very few commercial Advent calendars pay much attention to the core values of our liturgical calendar: the pivotal place of Sunday, the importance of Advent feasts like Saint Lucy and Saint Nicholas, and the clear shift in tone on December 17 from Advent longing and preparation toward imminent hope in Christ's coming. That kind of creativity is left up to you!**

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

**LIKE A CHILD**

**One who aspires to the grace of God must be pure, with a heart as innocent as a child's.**

—St. Nicholas

**1st Sunday of Advent (Dec 3)**

**As the Church begins a new liturgical year, we are reminded in today's Gospel that we are nothing more than servants, stewards of our Master's possessions, but who do not know when our Master will return. We have been given the responsibility of sharing our gifts in order to build up the Master's kingdom. May we be awake and alive in our faith when He comes again in glory!**

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 3, 2017**

**10:30 AM**

**CATHEDRAL MASS INTENTIONS**

**OUR LADY OF FATIMA MASS INTENTIONS**

Readings: Is 63:16-17, 19, 64:2-7; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mk 13:33-37

**December 3, First Sunday of Advent**

**Sophie Kostalik, (Barbara Wozniak)**

Readings: Gn 3:9-15, 20; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38

**December 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception (6 PM)**

**Vanessa Burr, (Stanley Krish Family)**

Readings: Is 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Pt 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8

**December 10, Second Sunday of Advent**

**Clementine Kawtoski, Ann., (Family)**

**December 4, Monday: St John Damascene, Pr. & Dr.**

Readings: Is 2:1-5; Mt 8:5-11

6:45 AM Barry Betz (Cathedral Parish)

8:00 AM Health of David Seidel (Davis & Christine Behe)

12:00 PM Prayer and Thanksgiving (Grove Family)

**December 5, Tuesday: Advent Weekday**

Readings: Is 11:1-10; Lk 10:21-24

6:45 AM Marian Clemens (Jane Davidson)

8:00 AM Anna Mercer (Paul & Family)

12:00 PM Rose Ciavarella (Dave & Helen Gingerich)

**December 6, Wednesday: Saint Nicholas, Bishop**

Readings: Is 25:6-10; Mt 15:29-37

6:45 AM Marianna Mignogna Moffa (Estate)

8:00 AM Leroy & Irmira Helfrich (Estate)

12:00 PM M. Virginia Jones (Christian Mothers)

**December 7, Thursday: Saint Ambrose, Bp. & Dr.**

Readings: Is 26:1-6; Mt 7:21, 24-27

**\*6:45 AM Vincent Farabaugh, Sr. (Jeanne & Family)**

**\*8:00 AM Jerry Smith (Wally & Connie Tomassetti)**

12:00 PM Betty McCabe (Patti Feather & Jean Morris)

**Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary**

Readings: Gn 3:9-15, 20; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38

**Vigil - 5:30 PM Pat Geis (Kathy Grove)**

**December 8, Friday: Immaculate Conception**

**Holy Day of Obligation**

Readings: Gn 3:9-15, 20; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38

8:00 AM Catherine Nagle (Mary Conti Smithmyer Fam)

12:00 PM Rose Himmelein (Cathedral Parish)

5:30 PM Joe Tomlinson (Frank & Betty Seymore)

**December 9, Saturday: St. Juan Diego Cuauhtiatatzin**

Readings: Is 30:19-21, 23-26; Mt 9:35-10:1, 5, 6-8

8:00 AM Maureen Ann Wolf, Anniv. (Kathy Ford)

12:00 PM Deacon John Rys, Birthday (Family)

**Vigil: December 10, Second Sunday of Advent**

Readings: Is 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Pt 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8

5:00 PM John Bauer (Murray Family)

*Please Remember Our Sick and our Shut-ins in your Daily prayers.*

**DECEMBER 3, 2017**

***Scripture Reflection***

The readings on this First Sunday of Advent express well the meaning of the season. The Latin word *adventus* means “a coming” or “an arrival.” Theologians use its Greek equivalent, *parousia*, to refer to the Second Coming of Christ. This season of the liturgical year is not only about getting ready to celebrate Jesus’ birth, but also about anticipating the arrival of God’s Kingdom in fullness at the end time.

Jesus is on a rescue mission. That is the major theme of Mark’s entire Gospel, which we will be reading on most Sundays in the new liturgical year that begins on this First Sunday of Advent. The end of the age was near, and God sent the Son to save Israel from the coming calamity. Mark packs his narrative with action. Blind beggars, sick children, grieving parents and demon-haunted madmen take center stage. As Jesus delivered each one, he progressively revealed himself to be the savior of anyone who believed in his power.

In today’s Gospel passage, that message is clear: “Watch! May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping!” We wait, like Mark’s community, for the coming of the Son of Man. We know to be alert for Christ at the end of our natural lives. As we begin another Advent, it is also important to remember that Christ appears suddenly in our life every day. Like the characters of Mark’s Gospel, we can easily miss his arrival. If Mark were writing today, he would perhaps use other symbols for that spirit of distraction. “Be watchful! Be alert! May he not find you obsessing over trivia, lusting after images on the internet, preoccupied with your phone or indulging in hate, fear or greed.” May we use these weeks before Christmas to put away our distractions and put our faith in Christ anew.

Why must we wait when people around us are already celebrating Christmas? We know how the story ends: Jesus is born and laid in a manger! We wait because Advent is not simply about celebrating Christ’s birth centuries ago, but about connecting with our own soul’s longing for Christ’s Kingdom to come. We wait and keep watch this Advent, praying for our Lord to be born anew in our hearts, our communities and the world.

- Name those distractions that make it difficult to focus on God’s presence among us this Advent.

LORD, 2018 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, pg. 19. *AMERICA MAGAZINE*, “He Is Coming”, Michael R. Simone, S.J., November 26, 2017.

### Sacramental Prep Confirmation...

All 9th Grade High School Students - Baptismal Retreat  
Saturday, December 16, 2017 - 1:30 - 4:30 Cathedral Hall  
Followed by 5:00 PM Mass.

### FIRE CLASSES for December...

December 3, 2017 Class will be held in the Hall at 6:15 PM.

December 7 2017 We will gather in Church for Evening Prayer 6:30 PM.

### CLASS SACRAMENTS

The class Sacraments will be offered at two locations this January. Msgr. Robert Mazur will be teaching a 6 week course (2 ½ hour classes) beginning Monday January 8 from 6:30-9:00 PM at Cathedral, Seton Suite, Altoona and Fr. Timothy Grimme will be teaching an 8 week course (2 hour classes) from 6:30-8:30 PM beginning Tuesday January 9 at St. Michael Church Hall, St. Michael. The cost of the course which includes registration and all materials is \$65. Participants will explore the history of the sacraments and the post Vatican II Theology of the Sacraments within the context of Christology, Ecclesiology and Ministry. For further information and registration forms visit [www.dioceseaj.org/lay-ecclesial-ministry](http://www.dioceseaj.org/lay-ecclesial-ministry) or contact the Office of Adult Enrichment at 814-361-2000. All are welcome!

### St. Joseph in Williamsburg: Fuel Oil Raffle

Tickets are now on sale for a Fuel Oil Raffle at St. Joseph Parish in Williamsburg. The cost is \$10 per ticket. Winners receive \$500 in Martin's Fuel Oil or \$500 in cash. Winning numbers are based on the 7:00pm PA Lottery Drawing on the December 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Please contact Jim Foreso for tickets at 832-2139

**2018 CALENDARS** are available on the back tables.

**PLEASE ONLY ONE PER FAMILY.**

**SUNDAY, DEC. 17TH AFTER THE 10:30 AM MASS WE WILL BE DECORATING OUR CHURCH FOR THE ARRIVAL OF BABY JESUS. PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS.**

**CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE FOR OLF is as follows:**

Sunday, Dec 24th (4th Sunday of Advent) 10:30 AM

Monday, Dec 25th (Christmas Day) 10:30 AM

Sunday, Dec. 31st (Feast of the Holy Family) 10:30 AM

Monday, January 1st, (No Mass at OLF.)

**Christmas Flower Memorial Offering is \$10.00 per individual family, (M/M), (Siblings, Grandparents, Aunts, etc.,) should have a separate Cmas Flower envelope with a \$10.00 donation. Envelopes are on heating units.**



*Happy Birthday!*

|       |                  |
|-------|------------------|
| 12/06 | Gretta Levine    |
| 12/08 | Connie Andros    |
| 12/08 | Ray Kelly        |
| 12/09 | John Kasun, Sr.  |
| 12/10 | Diana Hencherick |

|                           |          |               |
|---------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Nov 26, 2017              | Env used | 63/147        |
| Weekly                    |          | 1480.15       |
| Cmas Club                 |          | 10.00         |
| Christmas                 |          | 100.00        |
| Votives                   |          | 65.00         |
| Children's                |          | 7.50          |
| <u>Catholic Charities</u> |          | <u>267.00</u> |
| Total Dep                 |          | 1929.65       |

12/06 Denise and Dan Smith



**December 3 Mark 13:33-37**

Today's gospel tells us to "Be watchful." This comes natural to families. Parents are watchful of their children's health, grades and friends. Children are watchful of parental moods. Today's gospel encourages us to use this ability to see God acting in the innocence, tenderness, love and forgiveness of your family. "Be watchful," the Lord is already with you.

### **NOVEMBER WINNERS**

|       |     |                |       |       |     |                  |       |       |     |                  |       |
|-------|-----|----------------|-------|-------|-----|------------------|-------|-------|-----|------------------|-------|
| 11/1  | 893 | Rick Summers   | \$50  | 11/11 | 551 | Bryan Starr      | \$50  | 11/21 | 350 | Joe Masic        | \$50  |
| 11/2  | 537 | Paul Masic     | 50    | 11/12 | 621 | Sally Seymore    | 50    | 11/22 | 692 | Doug Cruse       | 50    |
| 11/3  | 595 | Tom Sral       | 50    | 11/13 | 866 | Chester Mosey    | \$100 | 11/23 | 371 | Randy Clemens    | \$100 |
| 11/4  | 024 | Pete Colledge  | 50    | 11/14 | 016 | Bonnie Frederick | 50    | 11/24 | 037 | Robert Summers   | 50    |
| 11/5  | 493 | Paul Masic     | 50    | 11/15 | 091 | Chris Keagy      | 50    | 11/25 | 414 | Colleen Douglass | 50    |
| 11/6  | 635 | Misty Finnegan | \$100 | 11/16 | 593 | Ray Kelly        | 50    | 11/26 | 576 | Shirley Riley    | 50    |
| 11/7  | 923 | Ken Lauer      | 50    | 11/17 | 571 | Ray Kelly        | 50    | 11/27 | 800 | Janice Jorkasky  | \$100 |
| 11/8  | 684 | Paul Masic     | 50    | 11/18 | 966 | Misti Feathers   | 50    | 11/28 | 554 | Christine Raia   | 50    |
| 11/9  | 912 | Gary Keagy     | 50    | 11/19 | 771 | Kevin Miller     | 50    | 11/29 | 543 | Kalee Harten     | 50    |
| 11/10 | 295 | Erin Shuma     | 50    | 11/20 | 906 | Gladys Leighty   | \$100 | 11/30 | 800 | Janice Jorkasky  | 50    |

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***Liturgical Reflection...***

*Throughout this Year of Grace 2018 the weekly liturgical inserts will look at the Church's rites at death and review the Church's teachings on the proper placement of the cremated remains of the deceased. Hopefully, these reflections will give us a clear understanding of the Church's practice at the time of death. Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.*

**Order of Christian Funerals, 1998/1989, General Introduction, Number 5.**

2017, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Liturgy office, 925 South Logan Boulevard, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania 16648

**HOLY TRINITY CHRISTMAS PLAY is coming up!**

**Join us for a festive evening while watching the children perform various Christmas songs and readings. Hollidaysburg Campus is December 10th at 4:00 PM. Altoona Campus is December 11th at 7:00 PM, and the Middle School Campus is December 14th at 7:00 PM.**

**HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL RAFFLE TICKETS are being sold. Tickets are \$2.00 per ticket. Cash prizes are \$1,000.00, \$750.00, and \$500.00. Please purchase tickets from a Holy Trinity Student or by calling 814-942-7835. Prizes will be drawn on December 14, 2017 at the Middle School Christmas show.**

**FIRST RECONCILIATION, WEDNESDAY, December 6, Seton Suite, 6:30 PM., parents and children.**



The advertisement features a central banner that reads "FUND RAISING Coupon Tab Booklet". Above the banner, it says "DONATION \$5.00" and "BUY ONE GET ONE FREE". Below the banner, it says "ALL NEW 2018!". To the left of the banner, there is an illustration of two children playing musical instruments. To the right, there is an illustration of a child jumping. Below the banner, there is an illustration of a child holding a coupon. At the bottom, it says "Altoona And Nearby Communities". On the left side, there is a vertical strip showing a coupon for "Over \$175.00 Value" and "46 Money Saving Coupons".

**Fund Raising Coupon Tab Booklet—\$5.00 with 46 coupons...**

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**Choose the Tab Coupon Booklet. A way of getting the best values in your community and supporting your local area groups at the same time. And here is how they work: Simply go to any of the participating merchants, tell them you have a Buy One Get One Free Coupon . Buy any offer listed and receive your FREE ITEM of equal or lesser value.**

**One coupon per visit. Must present coupon book with purchase. Not valid with any other offer or discount.**



## Communal Penance Services

During the season of Advent, Catholics are encouraged to seek God's healing and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The following is a schedule of Communal Penance Services at various parishes throughout the Diocese. Please consult individual parishes for other Reconciliation opportunities leading up to Christmas.

### December 3

3:00 p.m. – Holy Spirit Parish, Lock Haven  
4:00 p.m. – Saint John the Evangelist Parish, Altoona  
4:00 p.m. – Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Bedford  
5:00 p.m. – Saint Joseph Parish, Bellwood

### December 4

6:30 p.m. – Holy Rosary Parish, Altoona

### December 5

6:00 p.m. – Saint Stephen Parish, McConnellsburg

### December 6

6:30 p.m. – Saint Joseph Parish, Renovo

### December 10

1:30 p.m. – Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown  
2:00 p.m. – Saint Bernard Parish, Hastings

### December 11

7:00 p.m. – All Saints Parish, Boswell  
7:00 p.m. – Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Altoona  
7:00 p.m. – Prince of Peace Parish, Northern Cambria  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Matthew Parish, Tyrone  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Ashville

### December 12

6:30 p.m. – Church of the Transfiguration, Conemaugh  
7:00 p.m. – Good Shepherd Parish, Port Matilda  
7:00 p.m. – Queen of Peace Parish, Patton

### December 13

7:00 p.m. – Queen of Archangels Parish, Clarence  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Clement Parish, Johnstown  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Nicholas Parish, Nicktown

### December 14

5:30 p.m. – Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Altoona  
7:00 p.m. – Basilica of Saint Michael the Archangel, Loretto  
7:00 p.m. – Most Holy Trinity Parish, Huntingdon  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Benedict Parish, Carrolltown  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Patrick Parish, Johnstown

### December 16

10:00 a.m. – Saint Therese of the Child Jesus Parish, Altoona

### December 17

2:00 p.m. – Holy Name Parish, Ebensburg  
2:00 p.m. – Our Lady of Victory Parish, State College  
4:00 p.m. – Saint Mary Parish, Hollidaysburg  
5:00 p.m. – Saint Benedict Parish, Johnstown

### December 18

6:30 p.m. – Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Johnstown  
5:30 p.m. – Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Johnstown  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Altoona

### December 19

6:30 p.m. – Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, Johnstown

### December 20

6:30 p.m. – Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona  
7:00 p.m. – Saint Demetrius Parish, Gallitzin  
7:00 p.m. – Immaculate Conception Parish, Dudley

### December 21

5:30 p.m. – Sacred Heart Parish, Altoona  
7:00 p.m. – Saints Peter & Paul Parish, Philipsburg

### December 22

7:00 p.m. – Saint Aloysius Parish, Cresson



**OUR LADY URGES US TO PRAY THE HOLY ROSARY FOR  
PEACE AND OFFER  
SACRIFICES BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!**

**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

*Many people mistakenly believe that the Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Jesus Christ. Jesus' conception was most assuredly immaculate—that is, without the stain of sin—but the Immaculate Conception does not refer to Jesus at all. The Immaculate Conception is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church in regards to Mary, Jesus' mother. The official statement of the doctrine reads, "The blessed Virgin Mary to have been, from the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of Mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin" (Pope Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus, December 1854). Essentially, the Immaculate Conception is the belief that Mary was protected from original sin, that Mary did not have a sin nature and was, in fact, sinless.*

*Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 8. Within Eastern Orthodoxy, December 9 is the date of the Feast of the Conception by St. Anne of the Most Holy Theotokos. (Anne is Mary's mother, according to tradition.) The Eastern Church does not hold to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, although they do consider Mary "all-holy," that is, she never committed a sin.*

*The Immaculate Conception is not a virgin birth. Catholics believe Mary was conceived the normal way, but God made her immune from imputed or inherited sin. For as long as she's been in existence, Mary has been free of sin. This allowed her to be the "second Eve" to give birth to the "second Adam" (see 1 Corinthians 15:45). Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), Mary was a pure and holy "ark," fit to carry the Son of God. As the ark of the Lord in Moses' day carried the elements of the Old Covenant within it, so Mary carried the Author of the New Covenant within her.*

*The Roman Catholic Church bases its teaching of the Immaculate Conception on tradition along with a couple passages of Scripture. One is Genesis 3:15, the protoevangelium. There, God speaks to the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers." Catholics point to the fact that the conflict between the serpent and the woman is equal to the conflict between the serpent and the woman's Offspring, and they explain this by saying the woman (Mary) must be as equally sinless as her Offspring (Christ). The other passage cited by Catholics in support of the Immaculate Conception is Luke 1:28, "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'" The Greek word translated "highly favored" can be rendered "favored with grace"; thus, according to Catholic dogma, Mary had a superabundance of grace, rendering her sinless, and that's why God chose her to bear His Son.*

*The Roman Catholic Church argues that the Immaculate Conception is necessary because, without it, Jesus would have received His flesh from one who was herself a slave to the devil, whose works Jesus came to destroy (1 John 3:8). Mary, as the mother of the Redeemer, needed for her flesh to be free from the power of sin, and God gave her that privilege. From her time in the womb, Mary was sanctified because of her special role in bringing the Son of God incarnate into the world.*

*One problem with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is that it is not taught in the Bible. Even Catholics admit that Scripture does not directly teach the Immaculate Conception. The Bible nowhere describes Mary as anything but an ordinary human female whom God chose to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary was undoubtedly a godly woman (Luke 1:28). Mary was surely a wonderful wife and mother. Jesus definitely loved and cherished His mother (John 19:27). But the Bible gives us no reason to believe that Mary was sinless. In fact, the Bible gives us every reason to believe that Jesus Christ is the only Person who was not "infected" by sin and never committed a sin (see Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).*

*The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is neither biblical nor necessary. Jesus was miraculously conceived inside Mary, who was a virgin at the time. That is the biblical doctrine of the virgin birth. The Bible never hints that there was anything significant about Mary's conception. Mary is not an exception to the Bible's statement that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). Mary needed a Savior just like the rest of us (Luke 1:47).*

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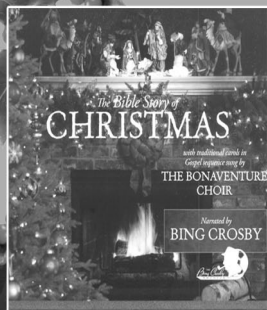


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