

# A Joyful Word

News from the Office of the Director of Religious Education

December 2023

## Advent: The Church's New Year

Happy New Year! Wait...what? It's not January 1 you might say. However, with the start of Advent, the Catholic Church begins a new liturgical year.

Advent is one of two seasons in the Church where it is a time of waiting, preparation, and penance. Lent is the other season.

During the four weeks of Advent, we eagerly anticipate and prepare for the birth of Jesus.

The season of Advent is joyous and hopeful as we light candles, finding warmth in the cold, dark winter days.

There are many traditions that we have during Advent including, but not limited to, the Advent wreath.

The first Sunday of the Advent we light the first purple candle on the wreath, which represents hope. We hope in anticipation of the birth of Christ but also celebrate the beginning of a new liturgical season.

Purple, the primary color of Advent, symbolizes royalty, the royalty of the king who will soon come.

The second Sunday of Advent we light the second purple candle, representing peace. This candle reminds us of Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem before Mary gave birth to Jesus.

The third Sunday of Advent we light the pink candle, symbolizing joy. It is also called "Gaudete Sunday" meaning rejoice or praise. As we continue to approach Christmas, our joy grows more and more in anticipation just like the shepherds who journeyed to see Jesus in Bethlehem even before the wise men.

The last Sunday of Advent we light the final purple candle representing love, the ultimate love of God that He might send His only Son for us.

Often times we also see an Advent wreath with a white candle in the center. This candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins. His birth was for his death and his death was for our birth.

As we enter this new year, and the season of Advent, may we do so with hope, peace, joy, and love for all that awaits us in the birth of the Jesus Christ, Our King.



# Youth Remembering Others

*And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

*- Matthew 25:40*

In the last several months the school and parish youth have taken Matthew's Gospel to heart with their helping hands, thoughts, prayers, and support of others. They've been remembering others who are in need with several different activities.

In October, Sarah Jansen of the Women's Choice Center presented a program to our Confirmation Prep students on Real Truth: Sanctity of Life. The students, along with the 6th grade CCD students collected diapers and baby wipes for the Center to give to mothers and babies in need.

Pennies for Life was another way our youth were involved in the life of the parish and social justice. The school students and CCD students participated in collecting change to help the various pregnancy resource centers that the parish supports.

Meanwhile, The Rock Youth Ministry students made Halloween/All Saints' Day cards to send to the homebound parishioners to let them know that the St. Malachy Community is thinking of them and praying for them.

In November, The students in St. Malachy School and CCD, Confirmation Prep and youth ministry programs also collected food to be donated to the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry in memory of Father Pakula.

In December, The Rock and Oasis students are partnering with the Food Pantry again and will be purchasing Christmas presents to be given to families in need this Christmas.

We are so blessed to have students who truly have servant hearts.



# Mary's Role in Our Salvation

On December 8, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – a feast that recognizes Our Lady’s unique role in our salvation history.

Even though this feast day occurs in the liturgical season of Advent, which prepares for the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it’s really about Mary’s conception in the womb of her mother, St. Anne.

The Church teaches that Mary, from the moment of her conception, was immune from original sin. Therefore, this is a day of hope, marking that moment that Our Lady was conceived free from sin and the beginning of God’s great plan of redemption for all humanity.

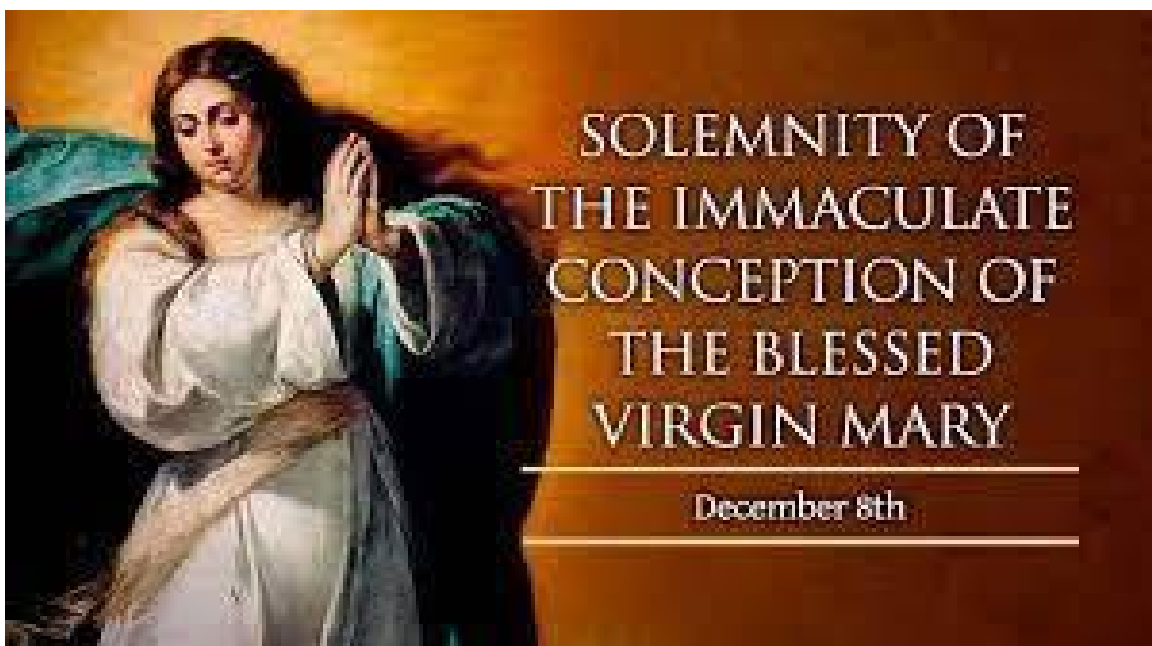
This doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed on Dec. 8, 1854, by Pope Pius IX. He proclaimed that the Immaculate Conception is a “dogma of the Catholic Church maintaining that from the moment when she was conceived the Blessed Virgin Mary was kept free of original sin and was filled with the sanctifying grace normally conferred during baptism” (Ineffabilis Deu).

Since Mary was conceived and born sinless, she became the great vessel of which the Holy Spirit would use her to be a fitting and worthy to become the Mother of the Son of God and therefore, our Mother.

As we celebrate the beautiful Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, may Mary's holiness encourage us to seek her help and continued protection in our own efforts to overcome sin and lead holy, sanctified lives.

Remember the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is one of the Holy Days of Obligation within the Church.

St. Malachy will have Masses on Thursday, Dec. 7 at 5:45 pm for the Vigil and 8 am and 9:15 am on Dec. 8.



# Save Important Dates

Dec. 3 - 6th Grade CCD, Confirmation Prep

Dec. 6 - CCD, Oasis, Adore

Dec. 7 - The Rock Shopping Trip 4:30-8 PM

Dec. 8 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day)

Dec. 10 - 6th Grade CCD, Rite of Election 8/9th Graders 10:30 AM Mass; Confirmation Prep

Dec. 13 - CCD, Oasis

Dec. 16 - Advent Caroling & Happy Birthday Jesus Party 1-4 pm (Meet in Parish Hall) All are invited.

Dec. 17 - 6th Grade CCD, Confirmation Prep

Dec. 20 - CCD, Oasis Christmas Party

Dec. 21 - No Rock Youth Ministry; School Christmas Program

Dec. 24 - No 6th Grade CCD or Confirmation Prep

Dec. 25 - HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!!!

Dec. 27 - NO CCD

Dec. 28 - No Rock Youth Ministry

Dec. 31 - No 6th Grade CCD or Confirmation Prep



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