



Immaculate Conception of Mary is essential to God's plan for salvation

I thought that the Immaculate Conception was about the conception of Jesus, but people tell me it is about the conception of Mary. Can you clarify this?

In God's salvific plan, before Jesus could be born, God needed a suitable mother who would not only be willing to bear God's Son in her womb, but also be spiritually prepared for this unique, grace-filled event.

Mary was chosen to be the mother of the savior because she was uniquely prepared by God for this vocation. She was filled with the virtues—especially humility, simplicity and faith. She was of woman of prayer who dedicated herself to loving service of her neighbor. She was unique in that she was preserved from all stain of sin by God through her Immaculate Conception. These qualities prepared her to be the mother of Jesus.

Nowhere in Scripture, though, will one find the phrase, "Immaculate Conception of Mary." There is not a record of it in Scripture; the Gospel for the feast of the Immaculate Conception (celebrated Dec. 8) is the Gospel account of the Annunciation. This Gospel proclaims Mary's Immaculate Conception and explains its purpose. As the angel Gabriel enters Mary's home, he declares to her, "Hail, favored one (literally full of grace), the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28).

This declaration by Gabriel that she is full of grace is applied to no one else in the Scriptures. It bears witness that no sin is blocking her from receiving all from her relationship with God. Since she is full of God's grace and favor, she has been chosen by Him to be the mother of God's Son, Jesus. Mary humbly realizes her vocation from God and the many blessings He has bestowed on her. She quickly says yes to the angel.

Since Mary was immaculately conceived in the womb of St. Anne, she became the bearer of the Incarnate Word, Jesus. Incarnate is a word meaning "embodied in flesh." This is what Christ did in the Incarnation. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity humbled Himself and became a human person. On Christmas, the feast of Christ's birth, we meditate with Mary and Joseph on the great mystery of salvation that, in order to save us, God would become one of us.

Mary's calling to be Jesus' mother was no coincidence. It was part of God's plan of salvation. Part of her preparation to assume such an office was that God preserved her from the stain of sin in her Immaculate Conception. Such a step by God gave the world its savior by Jesus becoming flesh, or incarnate, in Mary's womb.

Father Mayo is pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Warrenton.



MASSES FOR FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Tuesday, December 8, is The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and is a Holyday of Obligation. Mass times at St. Francis Xavier are Monday, Dec. 7 at 5:15PM and Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 12:00PM and a Spanish Mass at 8:00PM.

MASS TIMES FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS AT ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Christmas Masses:

Thursday, December 24, 4:00PM and 7:00PM and Bilingual Mass at 9:00PM

Friday, December 25, 9:00AM

New Years Masses:

Thursday, December 31, 5:15PM and Friday, January 1, 8:15AM

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY BAPTIZED

Thomas Bernard Ross and Michael Francis Ross, sons of Cory & Brittany Ross
Colter Lee Beck, son of Daniel Beck & Rebecca Collier

ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS FOR THE ALTAR IN CHURCH

An envelope has been provided for placing your order for Poinsettias. Your intention can be for someone living or deceased. Each intention will be \$15 and we need specific information (please check In Memory Of or In Honor Of on envelope) and donor. Please have this information turned in by December 18, so it is included in the special flyer. Thank you for your support to make our Altar and Church look beautiful for Christmas.

YEAR OF MERCY

Throughout the month of December we will be selling an AWESOME booklet from Magnificat for the Year of Mercy inaugurated by our beloved Holy Father Pope Francis. Please make sure you get a copy for yourself and your family members. This is truly a wonderful Christmas gift for everyone in your family. With a year worth of reflection that is bound to change your spiritual life for good. At a VERY REDUCED cost of \$3 per booklet. You can get a copy after Mass or stop by the parish office. Happy jubilee Year of Mercy to you and loved ones.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER SCHOOL NEWS

- * Thursday, December 10,--B team basketball tournament at Sikeston.
- * Friday, December 11,--B team basketball tournament at Sikeston.
- * Saturday, December 12,--A & B team basketball tournament in Poplar Bluff.
- * Thursday, December 17, at 6:30PM --St. Francis Xavier School Christmas program.
- * December 19 - January 3--Christmas vacation.

LIGHTHOUSE CATHOLIC MEDIA

Week #4— Prepare the Way of the King

Dr. Scott Hahn reveals what scholars now know about the shepherds, the mysterious Magi, and King Herod. Your journey will take on new meaning as you prepare your heart for the birth of our Lord.

NOTRE DAME CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Notre Dame will perform a free Christmas Concert on December 13, at 7PM at the Old St. Vincent's Church. A performance by Matt Palisch and the Choir of St. Paul Lutheran entitled "Festivals of Lessons and Carols" will be December 18, at 7PM at the Old St. Vincent's Church. Asking for a Free Will Offering.