



SAINT MARY'S
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH

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Welcome to Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception Parish! I am grateful to God for leading you here.

Christ tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33)! So that is what we do at Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception. **This parish exists to get you to heaven!** There is nothing greater to seek. Of course, the path that leads to eternal life is a narrow one (Mt 7:14). And walking it consists of daily choosing to carry our crosses with the Lord so that we might grow in His grace and become true friends of God. Admittedly, this isn't easy. But as the late Pope Benedict XVI declared, “you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness!” **Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception is here to help you enter through the narrow gate and become a great saint.** Borrowing from Pope Saint John Paul II, we are here to help you live the “wonderful adventure” that is a “life with Christ.”

We accomplish this goal by prioritizing the worship of God. To worship God is to acknowledge His greatness and to place ourselves at His service. While God made all things good and properly ordered, sin has inverted the Creator-creature relationship. Remember how Satan tempted Adam and Eve by promising them “you will be like gods” (Gen 3:5). To resist this temptation toward pride, by God's grace, we must be humble, like St. John the Baptist, who acknowledged: “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). Humbly acknowledging God's infinite greatness inspires our worship, which reaches its climax at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Christ gave us the Mass to worship God “in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24) and to apply the infinite merits of His Sacrifice to you and me today. Such an immense gift must be handled with care. As such, we carefully offer the Mass according the rubrics of the Roman Missal to facilitate, not obstruct, your worship of the triune God.

Because God is utterly self-sufficient, the worship we give him redounds upon us. “From His fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace” (Jn 1:16). We cannot save ourselves. We can only be saved by grace. And God is generous in bestowing upon us His grace, which transforms our lives through faith and works. At Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception, we put a premium on the following indispensable sources of divine grace: assisting at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days (and on weekdays whenever possible), worthy reception of Holy Communion, frequent Confession, Marian devotions and other traditional devotional prayers, and daily personal prayer (especially before the Blessed Sacrament during Eucharistic Adoration). By prioritizing the Sacraments and prayer, we will grow in holiness.

Technically speaking, grace is a participation in the life of God. This participation changes the way we live, allowing us to witness to the love of God in our families, among our friends, and in the world. Our Lord tells us, “I am the light of the world.” (Jn 8:12). But He also says, “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14)! Our parish desires to equip you to radiate the light and love of Christ by performing works of mercy, such as visiting your lonely neighbor, caring for the sick, and feeding the hungry. At Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception, we are also particularly concerned with assisting Catholic parents who are mindful of their responsibility to share the light of Christ with their children by forming their virtue and cultivating their Catholic faith. As such, we offer an integral education at Saint Frances Cabrini School, support homeschool families, and provide opportunities for Catholics of all ages to be formed in the Catholic faith.

At Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception, worshipping God, growing in grace, sharing Christ all are ensconced within a strong, supportive, and joyful community of Catholics who want to become saints. In the world around us, we increasingly observe loneliness, anxiety, and despair, which are the consequences of individualism, materialism, and secularism. Everything we do at Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception confronts these unfortunate trends by bringing meaning and purpose to our lives. If you are looking for this meaning and purpose, then Saint Mary's Immaculate Conception Parish is here to point you to God, to His infinite love for you, and to eternal life with the angels and saints.

I pray that you will join us as we journey toward eternity. The journey will often be hard going, but with God, and with one another, it will be beautiful. It will be a true “adventure in fidelity!”

See you this Sunday!
In Christ,

Father Jacob Strand

In the Heart of Barton