



DECEMBER

Month of the Immaculate Conception

DEVOTION OF THE MONTH

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Chosen before time to be the Mother of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, God created Mary perfect and full of grace, preserving her from the stain of Original Sin. Mary Immaculate is the most beautiful fruit of the work of redemption accomplished by her Son, thereby making her the perfect model of holiness for all Christians.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF SAINTS

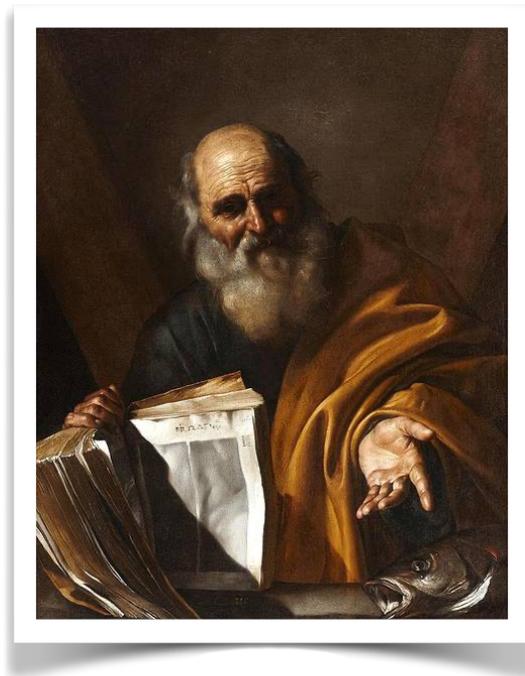
“If we approach with faith, we too will see Jesus ... for the Eucharistic table takes the place of the crib. Here the Body of the Lord is present, wrapped not in swaddling clothes but in the rays of the Holy Spirit.”

— St. John Chrysostom

SAINT ANDREW CHRISTMAS NOVENA

One of the most beloved novenas of all time is called the “St. Andrew Christmas Novena” or simply “The Christmas Novena.” This beautiful novena, which is over 100 years old, is begun on St. Andrew’s feast day (November 30) and ends on Christmas Eve. Unlike other novenas, this one is prayed not once a day, but 15 times a day. The beauty and sweetness of this short prayer will unfold for you through its daily recitation, allowing you to meditate more fully on the profound mystery of the Incarnation.

It is piously believed that whoever prays this novena will obtain the favor they request. So when you pray this novena, choose an intention that is very close on your heart.



“Hail, and blessed
be the hour and moment
at which the Son of God
was born of a most pure Virgin
at a stable at midnight in Bethlehem
in the piercing cold.
At that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee,
to hear my prayers and grant my desires.
(Mention your intentions here)
Through Jesus Christ
and His most Blessed Mother.
Amen.”



December 25th is the feast of the **Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, the greatest Christian holy day after Easter. “Christ Mass” is the Eucharistic feast celebrating the birth of Christ, the Incarnation of Second Person of the Holy Trinity in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who came to suffer and die on a cross to save us from our sins. Three Masses are celebrated at Christmas: Midnight Mass, or “The Angel's Mass”; Mass at Dawn, or “The Shepherd's Mass”; and Mass during the Day, or “The King's Mass.” The octave of Christmas lasts from December 25th until January 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. In the current Roman Catholic calendar the Christmas season continues until the feast of Jesus' baptism on the Sunday following Epiphany; on the ancient liturgical calendar Christmastide continues until Candlemas, or the Presentation of Jesus on February 2nd.

ON RECEIVING COMMUNION

By the power of the Holy Spirit and through the hands of the priest, God changes the bread and wine into the Real Presence of Christ. I present these points about the proper way to receive Holy Communion.

- We are supposed to observe a one-hour Eucharistic fast. This means that we do not eat or drink anything except water or medicine for one hour before receiving Holy Communion. There should be no gum chewing; we should get rid of gum before we enter church. Also, coffee cups and the like, other drinking containers, and other items of the sort are not appropriate to bring into church.
- If you are receiving the Body of Christ in the hand, one hand is to be underneath the other, with both hands flat (not curled up) and hands up held up high. We do not grab the Host. Hands should be clean. Gloves are not to be worn.
- If you have received the Body of Christ in the hand, with your right hand **immediately** place the Host in your mouth; do not begin to walk away with it. Proper reverence for the Sacred Species demands that it be consumed **immediately** and not carried around. We do not bless ourselves with the Host or any other act of personal devotion. While I am sure well intentioned, this is a sacrilege. It goes **immediately** into your mouth. In addition, if you see someone walking around with a Host, say something.
- Holy Communion is not a “take-home” and it is not to be kept on your person or brought back to the pew or worse brought outside and left on the windshield of a car (yes, this has happened). If you see this, say something.
- If you are receiving the Body of Christ on the tongue, you must tilt your head back slightly, open your mouth and stick out your tongue, and close your eyes. Do not expect the minister to have to maneuver to place the Host in your mouth - please stick out your tongue. Also, let the minister place the Host on your tongue; do not bite it or grab it with your lips. Do not move your head - you should not be a moving target.

I write these as a reminder and in some cases an instruction on the proper and reverent way to receive Holy Communion.

"Let every knee bend before Thee, O greatness of my God, so supremely humbled in the Sacred Host. May every heart love Thee, every spirit adore Thee and every will be subject to Thee!"

— St. Margaret Mary