

PASTOR'S CORNER

Of all the saints in the Catholic Church, none is honored more than the Blessed Virgin Mary. This should not be a great surprise as she was the only human being who was born without original sin and never committed any personal sin. All but two months in our calendar have at least one celebration of Mary. In the next eight days we have one solemnity and one feast in honor of our Lady.

This coming Thursday, December 8, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a Holyday of Obligation. Mass times to fulfill the obligation of this holyday are Wednesday evening, December 7, at 5:30 p.m. at Holy Name, Thursday morning, December 8, at 8:00 a.m. at Holy Name, and Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. at St. Mary – Oxford.

The Immaculate Conception is often confused as Jesus' conception which took place at the Annunciation of the Lord, March 25. However, the Immaculate Conception has to do with Mary's conception in the womb of her mother St. Anne. This celebration originated in the seventh century as the feast of the "Conception of Mary by St. Anne." It was not until 1708 that Pope Clement XI made this day a Solemnity of Obligation with a Collect or Opening Prayer that declared: "God prepared a worthy dwelling place for [His] Son through the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, preserving her from all sin in view of the foreseen Death of His [Son]." In 1854 Pope Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception as a dogma of Faith, which all Catholics are required to believe, with nearly identical words of the Liturgy (found in the Collect/Opening Prayer). This holyday has special meaning for us as Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception is the Patroness of the United States as well as the Diocese of Wichita. Our cathedral in Wichita which is often referred to as St. Mary's Cathedral is more properly named, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

On Monday, December 12, the Blessed Mother is honored with the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This again is of special significance to us as Mary by the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe was declared Patroness of the Americas by Pope Pius XII. This feast recalls the apparitions of Mary at the hill of Tepeyac near Mexico City, from December 9-12, 1531, to the native convert Juan Diego who was canonized in 2002. His feast day is Friday, December 9. The Blessed Virgin Mary left an image on the cloak (tilma) of Juan Diego in which she is blocking out the sun and standing on a darkened moon. The message of the Patroness of the Americas is that all should serve the Lord of Lords. To the Spaniards who were occupying Mexico the message was that all persons are equal in God's eyes. The tilma has been miraculously preserved and is on display at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

This year the parish will celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day at the 8:00 a.m. Mass. The school children will be present at Mass and fulfill the ministries of altar server, lectors, and gift bearers. As in the past a special choir will sing songs in Spanish. If you would like to participate in the choir call Bob Carrillo at 222-2073. There will be a special procession of roses to the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as well as a reproduction of the tilma which will be displayed in the front of the church. I hope all who are available will participate in this Mass.

May these celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary help us to follow Our Lady's example of humble obedience as we continue the holy season of Advent in preparation for the coming of her Son, Jesus, at the end of the world and this coming Christmas.