



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

510 N. Prospect Ave. • Alma, MI 48801
Office (989)463-5370 • Fax (989)463-1369

MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

605 S. Franklin St. • St. Louis, MI 48880
Office (989)681-5080 • Fax (989)681-2887



Dear Parish Family,

December 5, 2010

This Wednesday, December 8, is a Holy Day of Obligation, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This is also the patronal feast of St. Mary's Church. The schedule of Masses for the Holy Day are:

Tuesday	7:00 pm	St. Mary
Wednesday	9:00 am	Mt. St. Joseph
	12 noon	St. Mary
	7:00 pm	St. Paul the Apostle (Ithaca)

This Monday at 5:30 pm will be the annual Santa Supper. The Advent Family Night has been merged with this event, as well as a visit from St. Nicholas.

This Thursday December 9th at 6:30 pm there will be a meeting for all parents of confirmation candidates. Confirmation will be February 1, 2011 this year. All parents of students being confirmed, please plan to attend.

Next Monday, our regional celebration of the Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe concludes with Mass at St. Paul the Apostle in Ithaca at 7:00 pm.

The series *Boundaries* begins January 5 at 6:45 pm, ending on the first Wednesday of March. The movie *The 13th Day* will be February 11 at 7:00 pm. Both events will be at St. Mary's and are free of charge.

Engaged couples - it is *your* responsibility to meet with me at *least six times* before your wedding date. If you do not complete the wedding preparation, you will have to postpone your wedding until you have done so.

Let us continue our prayers for each other especially during the Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Advent season. God bless you!

Fr. David

NOVENA PRAYERS TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

First Day: Dearest Lady of Guadalupe, fruitful Mother of holiness, teach me your ways of gentleness and strength. Hear my humble prayer offered with heartfelt confidence to beg this favor . . .

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Second Day: O Mary, conceived without sin, I come to your throne of grace to share the fervent devotion of your faithful Mexican children who call to you under the glorious Aztec title of Guadalupe. Obtain for me a lively faith to do your Son's holy will always: May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Third Day: O Mary, whose Immaculate Heart was pierced by seven swords of grief, help me to walk valiantly amid the sharp thorns strewn across my pathway. Obtain for me the strength to be a true imitator of you. This I ask you, my dear Mother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Fourth Day: Dearest Mother of Guadalupe, I beg you for a fortified will to imitate your divine Son's charity, to always seek the good of others in need. Grant me this, I humbly ask of you.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Fifth Day: O most holy Mother, I beg you to obtain for me pardon of all my sins, abundant graces to serve your Son more faithfully from now on, and lastly, the grace to praise Him with you forever in heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Sixth Day: Mary, Mother of vocations, multiply priestly vocations and fill the earth with religious houses which will be light and warmth for the world, safety in stormy nights. Beg your Son to send us many priests and religious. This we ask of you, O Mother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Seventh Day: O Lady of Guadalupe, we beg you that parents live a holy life and educate their children in a Christian manner; that children obey and follow the directions of their parents; that all members of the family pray and worship together. This we ask of you, O Mother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Eighth Day: With my heart full of the most sincere veneration, I prostrate myself before you, O Mother, to ask you to obtain for me the grace to fulfill the duties of my state in life with faithfulness and constancy.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Ninth Day: O God, You have been pleased to bestow upon us unceasing favors by having placed us under the special protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Grant us, your humble servants, who rejoice in honoring her today upon earth, the happiness of seeing her face to face in heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Mary Immaculate

By Father Kenneth Baker, S.J.

We live in a world abounding in sin and sinners. But it is a world that denies the existence of sin. Why is that? Because sin is an offense against God, and many do not believe in God. Therefore, if there is no God, there cannot be any sin. But we are surrounded by sin and read about it and see it in the news media every day—murder, adultery, abortion, sodomy, theft, lies and so forth. Because of original sin and concupiscence, in various ways we all offend God, some mortally and some venially. Today, however, we celebrate the feast of one of us, one woman, who never committed a sin—Mary of Nazareth, the Immaculate Mother of God.

What is the meaning of the term, “Immaculate Conception”? It does not mean the conception of Jesus. It refers to the conception of Mary in the normal way through the marital embrace of her parents, St. Anne and St. Joachim. Because of the first sin of Adam and Eve, all human beings are conceived without sanctifying grace, the life of the soul. Since the coming of Christ, we can attain grace through baptism, but we are conceived and born without God's grace. The Church teaches that God endowed Mary's soul with grace from the first moment of her creation, so she was never under the power of original sin.

“Immaculate” means without stain. Since sin is a “stain” on the soul, which should be pure in the sight of God, the Church believes that Mary was conceived without the “stain” of original sin, which means the lack of God's grace. One proof of this is taken from the greeting of the angel Gabriel to Mary, “Hail, Mary, full of grace...” (Luke 1:28). Because she was full of grace, Mary was most pleasing to God in all she was and did.

The prayers of today's Mass stress that Mary was “preserved” from sin. Jesus died on the Cross, rose from the dead and accomplished our redemption. He is the fountain of supernatural life for us. We partake of that through faith, baptism and the sacraments. So the Church teaches that Mary was preserved from original sin by the foreseen merits of Jesus, her son and her redeemer. Mary is, therefore, the first redeemed, the first Christian; she is perfectly redeemed in every way—in soul and body and emotions.

Mary had a special mission in the redemption of mankind. So God created her as a “fitting dwelling place”

for his son Jesus, who crushed the head of Satan (Gen. 3:15); Satan never had any power over him. He was to be born of a woman who was totally free from sin, never under the power of the devil. Just as God prepared a sinless paradise for Adam and Eve, so Mary is a “second” sinless paradise where the Son of God will dwell nine months before his birth in Bethlehem.

The Fathers of the Church compare Mary with Eve. In their view, which is based on divine revelation in the Bible, Eve is the mother of all the living—she gave us both life and death. Mary is the true mother of all the living—those who live spiritually forever through her son. That is why she is also called “Mother of the Church.”

We were all conceived by our parents with original sin. Only Mary was immaculately conceived. In a sense, this phrase sums up the total reality of Mary and implies our whole Catholic faith in Jesus—Son of God and Savior.

When little Bernadette asked the beautiful lady at Lourdes her name, she said, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” The poet got it right when he summed up the reality of Mary in five words: “Our tainted nature's solitary boast.”

Because she gave birth to the Savior, Mary is our mother in the order of grace. In every way she cooperated with God in the redemption: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Thus she was totally open to God, available, humble and obedient.

Children naturally tend to imitate their parents. We see in Mary all the virtues of a perfect Christian. We should strive to imitate her, since she is our mother. We should strive to imitate her faith, her hope and her love—her love for Jesus and her willing cooperation in his work of redemption, even to offering him to the Father on Calvary.

We should strive to imitate her sinlessness by avoiding all mortal sin and all deliberate venial sins. We should ask her to obtain for us the grace to avoid all deliberate sins—so we can be a “fitting dwelling place” for divine grace.

In the New Testament Mary's last recorded words at Cana are, “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). If we love God, we should try to do that. When we receive God's Son and Mary's son in Holy Communion today, let us say to him: “Be it done to me as you desire.”

*“O Mary, conceived without sin,
pray for us who have recourse to thee.”*

