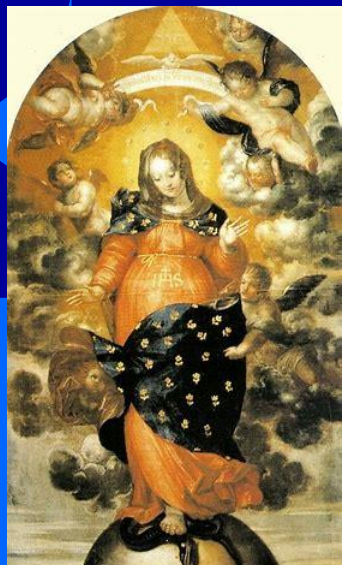


OLV Rel. Ed. Newsletter



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December Dates to Remember

- December 1: First Sunday of Advent
- December 5: OLV Religious Education Class 4, 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- December 6: Feast of St. Nicholas, First Friday
- December 7: First Saturday
- December 8: Feast of the Immaculate Conception; Second Sunday of Advent
- December 9: Feast of St. Juan Diego
- December 11: Feast of the Humility of Our Lady
- December 12: Religious Education Class 4 snow date; Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- December 13: Feast of St. Lucy
- December 14: Rorate Caeli Mass, OLV, 6:30 a.m.
- December 15: Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday)
- December 18 (Feast of Our Lady of Expectation), 20, 21: Winter Ember Days
- December 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent
- December 24: Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord
- December 25: Nativity of Our Lord
- December 27: Feast of St. John the Apostle
- December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents

December is graced with many special days of celebration as we await the coming of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Advent, while certainly a time of joyful anticipation, is also a penitential season. We ready our souls to welcome Christ through purifying our hearts. We attend Confession, and offer prayers of reparation, much like we do at Lent. The beauty of this time is that, in making sacrifices, emptying ourselves of sin so that we might instead fill ourselves with Christ, we come to know a greater love. These winter days are not days of scarcity, but plenty. Our days of waiting are filled with song and prayer. So much grace lies in patience, in looking ahead, and preparing ourselves to be illuminated with the Light of Christ. On December 18, we celebrate Our Lady of Expectation. Throughout Advent, we await Christ with Our Lady. She carries the Christ Child within her, close to her heart, which looks ahead to time spent in the light of His great love. We follow St. Lucy, saint of light, through the Ember Days (the dates of which are chosen based on when St. Lucy's feast day falls), days of fasting and penance, who helps guide us to the light. Just ten days before the Feast of Our Lady of Expectation is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which is celebrated annually on December 8. Some may believe that this feast day is dedicated to the conception of Christ, but in actuality, it honors Our Lady, conceived without sin. Christ was conceived when the Holy Spirit was overshadowed by Our Lady, but He was begotten, not made; He came forth from God the Father, taking on flesh (a phenomenon called the "Incarnation") through His Mother. Christ is fully human and fully divine, but Our Lady is not divine, making her immaculate conception, her identity as a totally sinless human being, filled with every grace from God, all the more miraculous. Only one with a totally sinless, pure heart could give birth to the Savior. Ten is the number of happiness; no small wonder, then, that the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception and the Expectation of Our Lady, respectively, are ten days apart. At the beginning of the month, the thoughts of our heart are on the advent of Our Lady, as we thank God for her immaculate conception, and look ahead to celebrating her birthday on September 8. We then more fully honor Our Lady for what she was born to do: to be the Mother of Christ. We carry Christ in our own hearts, striving to be more like Jesus and Mary, in the childlike wonder, purity, and innocence they hold in their Hearts. Consequently, we are prepared to celebrate Christmas with the greatest joy, embracing all of God's miracles, the wonders He works in love for us, from the depths of His Heart. Christ, the Divine Child, the fullness of time, holds us all in His hands, and in His bright eyes that behold all things with the wisdom of a child who sees the heart of the matter, true beauty and simplicity. Christ wants us all to come to Him as children, and so, He came to us as a Child. As we walk towards Christmas, as though with candles in our hands, on a procession to join Christ in Bethlehem, the house of bread where we are nourished by His Presence, may we know peace, joy, love, and hope, the eyes of our souls seeing the beauty of every precious sight in this sacred season, so resplendent with signs of God's tender mercy all around us. May we receive it humbly in this season, accepting the hand of friendship Christ holds out to each of us, inviting us to a deeper union with Him, a unity of hearts. Our Lady wants to bring Christ more deeply into each of our hearts. Our heavenly Mother, filled with every grace, wants to share graces with us through Her Son, so that we all may come to new life in Him. This Christmas, may hearts be renewed by Christ's saving love, a love that never fails, a love that uplifts and purifies in every season of life.

Jubilate Deo,

Katie Sadakierski, Director of Religious Education
sadakierski.olv@gmail.com

Immaculate Conception Prayer of the Roman Missal

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Saint Spotlight: St. Juan Diego

When Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego in his native country of Mexico during the 1530s, both St. Juan Diego personally, and more broadly, his countrymen, were facing challenges. As St. Juan Diego cared for his dying uncle, many in his country were still adhering to past ways of believing that did not follow the teachings of the Church. These souls did not yet know Jesus, and in the face of sin, put their souls at risk of dying. Mary, who is our Mother, came to guide these souls with a mother's love, choosing St. Juan Diego for a special mission to help touch hearts with the mercy of Jesus. Our Lady called St. Juan Diego to build a chapel in his village. When St. Juan Diego visited his bishop with the request to build the chapel, the bishop questioned him, asking him to bring a sign to prove that the apparition of Our Lady was real. Returning to the hill where Our Lady had appeared, St. Juan Diego found flowers blooming, despite the fact that it was winter. After picking the flowers and placing them in his cloak, he presented them to the bishop. Amazing as the flowers were, the greater sign was the image of Our Lady miraculously imprinted on the cloak. Naturally, this was all the proof the bishop needed! Once the request to build the chapel had been fulfilled, many conversions of heart would occur, with the prayers of souls like St. Juan Diego being answered. Millions of Mexican people would come to Christ, entering Mother Church, to be delivered into the welcoming arms of Our Lady. Further, St. Juan Diego's uncle was healed of his illness, given the opportunity to live anew through the intercession of Our Lady. The patroness of the unborn, Our Lady watches over every soul, helping us all to develop spiritually, to grow in greater love for God through all of life's stages. To these seasons, Our Lady brings her healing presence. As usual, it was demonstrated that through seeds planted by Our Lady, flowers of faith will blossom. This Advent, as we await the Nativity of Our Lord with Our Lady, she offers us her guiding hand, inviting us to more fully know and love Christ, as she does. She extends a hand to present us with many gifts, gifts to bless the heart, where we may treasure Christ with the joy that she does, now and always. Like St. Juan Diego, may we continue returning to Our Lady, carrying the flowers she picks for us on our journey to answer God's call. As we pray the Holy Rosary, may we remember that Our Lady connects all of us, nurturing us into true unity with Christ through humility, repentance, and hope in God's mercy, a light that shines so brightly, as to drive out any shadow.



Marian Chant of the Season:
Alma Redemptoris Mater

Chaplet Spotlight: **Chaplet of St. Andrew**

Other recommended devotional chaplets:

- Franciscan Crown (the Seven Joys of Our Lady)
- Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary (Dominican)
- Chaplet of the Immaculate Conception
- Chaplet of the Infant of Prague

