



**WELCOMING  
CHILDREN  
in WORSHIP**

**THE CATHOLIC  
UNIVERSITY  
OF AMERICA**



# **Immaculate Conception December**

## **Adaptive Activities for Children**



**National Catholic  
Partnership on Disability**

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# Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your ministry that serves the liturgical formation of children for their participation in the Eucharist, the “source and summit of the Christian life.” This resource is provided by the Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD). It aims to offer an adaptive catechetical opportunity for all who have a heart for disability ministry to reflect on the liturgical year. We welcome you to this virtual community and hope you find this resource beneficial.

Here you will find reflections to guide children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or diverse learners, through the current liturgical season with adaptive catechesis to help them to participate fully. Each offering includes prayer, Scripture, activities and more that incorporate the senses and take into consideration the needs of all learners. We invite you to gather children around the table of the home or the table of the classroom as preparation for their participation at the sacred table of the Eucharist.

**Each monthly edition incorporates the following:**

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Sacred Scripture**
- 3. Reflection**
- 4. Faith in Action**
- 5. Activities**
- 6. Saint**
- 7. Resources/Bibliography**

## Prayer

Leader: Today we are going to learn about the Immaculate Conception. The Immaculate Conception refers to the fact that Mary, Jesus' mother, was perfect and born without original sin. Mary is a powerful person for us, so today we are going to learn what the words we say in the Hail Mary prayer mean. Then we will pray the Hail Mary prayer together and ask Mary to pray for us! Let's begin. Repeat after me:

Leader: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

All: **Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.**

Leader: Great job. This means that God is close to Mary and she is VERY good! Okay, let's learn the next line. Repeat after me: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: **Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.**

Leader: Great. This means that Mary is more special to God than all other women and that her son, Jesus, is very special too. Now, let's learn the last line. Repeat after me: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

All: **Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.**

Leader: Perfect. Here we are asking Mary to always keep us in her prayers. And that's the end of the prayer, so now we say Amen.

All: **Amen.**



The Virgin with Angels by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Leader: Great job. We learned that Mary and her son, Jesus, are very, very special to God and that when we pray the Hail Mary, we ask Mary to pray for us. All of us. Who are some people that you want to pray for today? We are going to practice saying the Hail Mary all together after we say our intentions (let everyone say who they want to pray for).

*Begin with the Sign of the Cross.*

Leader: Blessed Mother Mary, we lift all of these intentions to you, as well as the intentions we hold in our hearts. Together, let us pray the Hail Mary....

**All: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

*Close with the Sign of the Cross.*

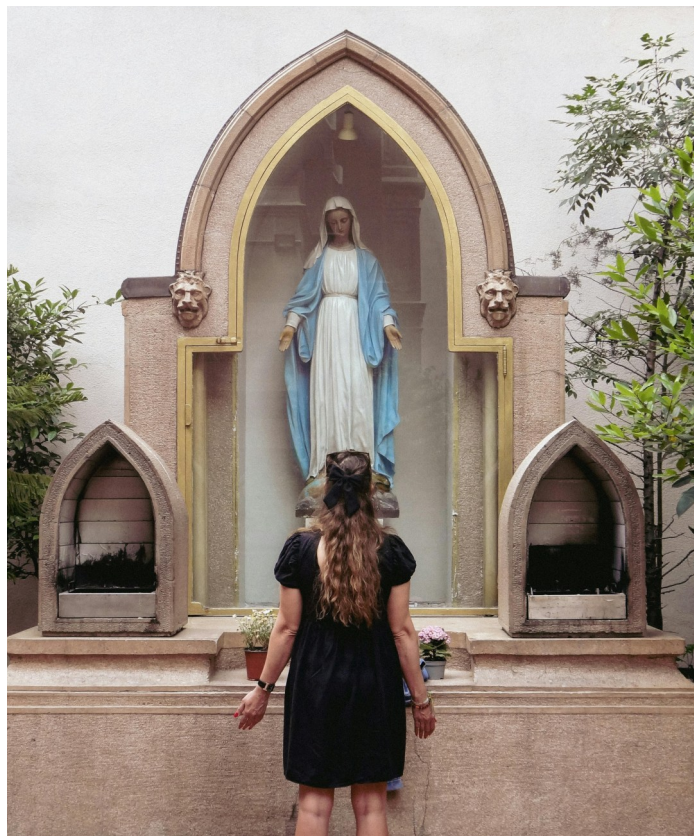


Photo by Necip Duman at Pexels



## Reading of Sacred Scripture

Luke 1:26-30

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



Annunciation by El Greco, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Gospel Reflection

We celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day when we are expected to attend Mass even if it is a weekday, on December 8th. Why is this feast day so important?

Mary was a very special woman and is now a very special saint. She was picked by God to be the mother of Jesus and take care of Jesus and raise him while on earth. Out of all the women who have ever existed, Mary is the only person given this honor. God chose Mary even before she was born and this holy day recognizes the uniqueness of the fact Mary was born without the stain of original sin. On December 8th we take time to remember how special Mary is to God and to us.

Mary is our Mother in heaven and sometimes we call her Mother Mary. In fact, Mary goes by a lot of names, so many names that you might not realize all of them are the same Mary, Jesus' mother. One name, Our Lady of Lourdes, comes from when a teenager saw Mary in the city of Lourdes, France many times over a few weeks. Some of the names are related to why we are asking Mary to pray for us. For example, when a loved one dies you might call Mary, Mother of Sorrows. Still other names, like Our Lady of Charity, are used to reflect Mary's connection to the values of the Church.



Mother of Sorrows statue by Nheyob, CC BY-SA 4.0, via  
Wikimedia Commons

## Faith in Action

### *Celebrating the Immaculate Conception: Growing Faith Through Mary's Yes to God*

Mary was born without sin to her mother Anna. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception reminds us of Mary's unique grace: from the first moment of her existence, she was preserved from sin so she could freely say "yes" to God's plan. Her openness to God's Word brought Jesus, the Word made flesh, into the world.

When we honor Mary's Immaculate Conception, we celebrate:

- ◇ God's saving love at work from the very beginning.
- ◇ Mary's example of trust and obedience to God's Word.
- ◇ Our call to live in grace and respond to God with faith.

This feast invites families to reflect on how we, like Mary, can welcome God's Word and let it shape our lives.

#### **Word Connection Activity:** Listening with Mary's Heart

- ◇ During Mass for the Immaculate Conception, listen closely for a word or phrase from the readings or Gospel that speaks to you.
- ◇ After Mass, each family member can share their word or phrase and why it touched them.
- ◇ Connect this to Mary's openness to God's Word and how we can imitate her trust.

Adaptations: Children who cannot share verbally can point to a Marian image, gesture, or hold up a card with a symbol like a lily (purity) or a heart.



Immaculate Conception by Sebastiano Conca, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



### Family “Mary Said Yes” Project: Living Grace Today

- ◇ Choose a verse from the day’s readings, such as Luke 1:38: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”
- ◇ Write or decorate the words to this verse and display them at home.
- ◇ As a family, discuss one way you can say “yes” to God this week (e.g., helping someone, praying together, forgiving).

Adaptations: Use large print or tactile letters for accessibility. Children can draw symbols like a lily, heart, or rays of light.

### Sacred Space for Mary: A Place of Grace

- ◇ Create a small prayer space with an image or statue of Mary, a candle, and a Bible.
- ◇ Each family member can place a word or symbol that reminds them of Mary’s trust in God.
- ◇ Return to this space during the week to pray and ask Mary to help you live in grace.

Adaptations: Include textured objects (rosary beads, smooth stones, flowers) for sensory engagement.



Image by Jerzy from Pixabay

### Family Prayer Card: Carry Mary’s Yes Home

- ◇ Make a prayer card with Mary’s words: “May it be done to me according to your Word.”
- ◇ Bring it to Mass and hold it during the readings.
- ◇ At home, place it somewhere visible as a reminder to follow Mary’s example of faith.

Adaptations: Use bold print, tactile decorations, or audio recordings for children with visual or reading challenges.



## Activities with Children

Let's talk: Talk with your child about the Immaculate Conception of Mary and why it is important. Let's break it down:

- ◇ What is it: Mary was conceived without original sin in her mother's womb, saved from it by a special gift from God.
- ◇ Why is this important: Mary was born free of all sin, even original sin! God knew she would say yes to being Jesus' mother and his gift made her relationship with God stronger so she would be ready to be Jesus' mother and support him through his life and death and resurrection.
- ◇ Talking points:
  - ◆ When Mary, leading a holy life, was your age, what do you think she would do in her free time?
  - ◆ How do you think Mary's mom and dad felt about that?
  - ◆ What is a way you can live more like Mary?



The Girlhood of Mary Virgin by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Let's Read: While the Bible does not explicitly state that the Immaculate conception happened, we hear about it throughout the Bible. Let's take a look:

- ◇ Luke 1:28 The angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary, "Hail, full of grace" is a unique and special status, not one that could be earned but one that was given to her from the beginning by God.
- ◇ Jeremiah 1:5: The Lord says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." This tells us God had a plan for Mary's life from conception and knew she would be Jesus' mother, just as he knows who we are and what he made us to do.

### Let's Create: Making our own Rosary to Pray with and to Mary

- ◇ What you need: Pipe cleaner, Crucifix, beads (including a larger "Our Father" bead and 10 smaller "Hail Mary" beads).
- ◇ How to do it:
  - ◆ Attach the crucifix to one end of the pipe cleaner by threading the pipe cleaner through the crucifix's hole and twisting the ends together.
  - ◆ Add the larger "Our Father" bead to the pipe cleaner.
  - ◆ Add 10 smaller "Hail Mary" beads to the pipe cleaner.
  - ◆ Create more decades by repeating the pattern of one "Our Father" bead followed by 10 "Hail Mary" beads.
  - ◆ You can then secure the ends by twisting them to prevent beads from falling off.

Sensory Bin: Sensory bins can help children with hands-on learning. This month use items that focus on the Nativity to remind us that Mary was created with a special gift because she was going to be Jesus' mother! She was going to bring him into the world and raise him and keep him safe while he was little. Use this bin to retell the birth of Jesus and remember how special Mary is!

For this sensory bin you will need: Rice or beans; a play Nativity set with baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and 3 wise men; star (can be a cookie cutter); angel (can be a cookie cutter); animals; blocks to build the stable





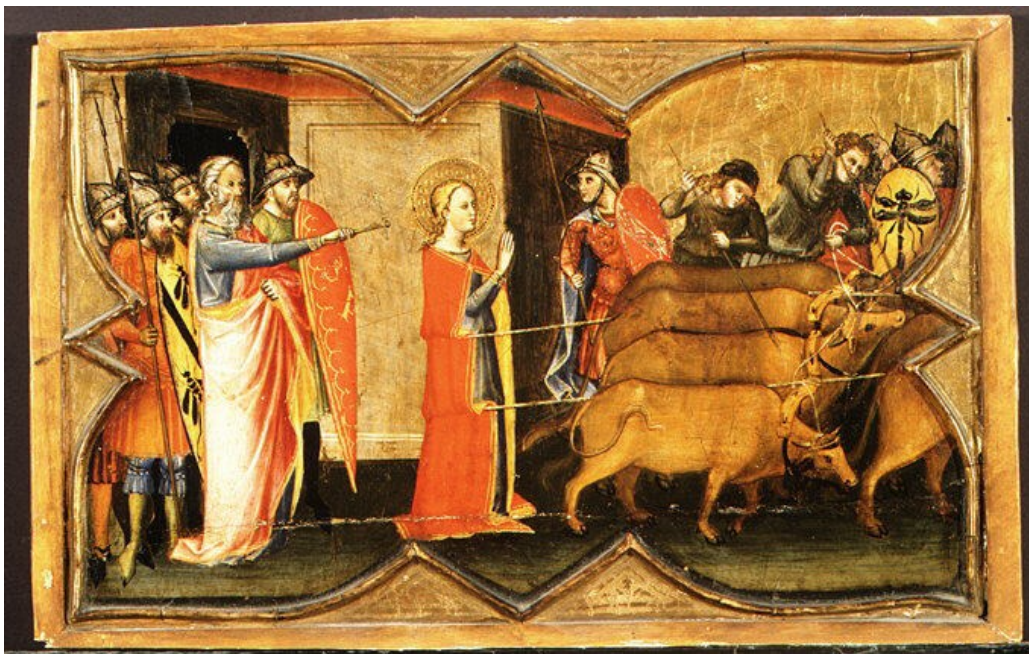
# Saint for December

## Saint Lucy

Feast Day December 13

Lucy lived in Sicily less than 300 years after Jesus was born. She loved Jesus very much. Lucy prayed every day and wanted to give her whole life to God. Lucy's family was rich, but Lucy cared more about helping people than having fancy things. She gave food and help to people who were poor. She wanted to share God's love.

Lucy promised to stay close to Jesus forever. She said, "I belong to Jesus." Lucy's mother was sick and arranged for Lucy to marry a man who did not believe in Jesus. Lucy encouraged her mom to visit a holy site, and her mom was cured of her illness! Lucy helped her mom decide to give away her riches, but the man Lucy was supposed to marry did not like that. He and his supporters tried to hurt Lucy because she loved Jesus. Lucy was very brave. She never stopped loving God, even when it was hard and she was being hurt because of her belief in God. Lucy died because of her faith. She gave her life for Jesus. Today, we call her Saint Lucy. Her name means "light." She reminds us to let Jesus' light shine in our hearts.



Saint Lucy resisting efforts to move her by Giovanni di Bartolomeo Cristiani, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

## St. Lucy as Patron Saint

St. Lucy is the patron saint of the blind and persons with eye problems. People pray to her for help with eyesight and to see God's light clearly in their lives.

## Symbols of St. Lucy

- ◇ Candle or lamp- because her name means "light."
- ◇ Palm branch - a sign of victory and faith.
- ◇ Sometimes she is shown holding a plate with eyes, showing her care for persons who cannot see.

Dear St. Lucy,

Help me love Jesus like you did.

Help me be brave and kind.

Help me to let Jesus' light shine in my heart.

Amen.

## Celebrating St. Lucy Around the World

In Sweden: Children dress in white robes with red sashes (symbolizing purity and martyrdom). A girl often wears a crown of candles to represent light. Families serve special saffron buns called "Lussekatter." The word means "Lucia cats" and the buns are sweet and shaped like the letter S.

In Italy and Sicily: People honor St. Lucy with processions and share food with the poor. Some families eat simple meals without bread to remember a famine that ended through her intercession.



Fallaner, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons



## December Resources

Catholic Icing. *Authentic Swedish Recipe for Lussekatter (St. Lucy Bread)*. <https://www.catholicicing.com/how-to-make-saffron-buns-for-st-lucia-day/>

Catholickids.com *Celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception with your kids*. <https://www.teachingcatholickids.com/celebrate-the-feast-of-the-immaculate-conception-with-your-kids/>

EWTN. *My Time with Jesus – Ep. 32 – The Immaculate Conception of Mary*. <https://youtu.be/TBTKMfEuVL0?si=X27VLkDcpiiwpen5>

My Catholic Kids. *The Immaculate Conception: Full of Grace*. <https://mycatholickids.com/immaculate-conception-full-grace/>