The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

- Celebrated on Dec. 8.
- We honor Mary who was **conceived without sin.**

- In 1954 Pope Pius IX declared: "From the first moment of her conception, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, by a unique grace and privilege of God in the view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved from all stain of Original Sin."
  - With his statement, Pope Pius made this teaching a "Dogma" (an official teaching of the Church), but the belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception had been passed down from the early Church. (So it was already an important and long-standing belief of Catholics, but Pope Pius made it official.)

- Many people mix up the Immaculate Conception with the feast of the Annunciation! (When the angel Gabriel came to Mary to "announce" that Jesus would be born to her.) Part of the reason they get confused is because we heard the gospel story of the Annunciation when we go to Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Why is that?
  - Remember, Saints Anne and Joachim aren't in the Bible, so they can't read a story about when Mary was born!
  - When the Angel Gabriel greets Mary by saying she is "**full of grace**", he is proclaiming Mary's holiness. Remember, Adam and Eve fell from God's grace. We are born <u>without God's grace due to original sin</u> but receive grace through Baptism and then the other sacraments. Mary was already "full of grace" at a time before the sacraments existed!
  - Mary's **trust** in God and her **yes** to God are a result of her holiness and purity.
  - Mary's "yes" brought to fulfillment God's plan to send a **savior** for his people.
  - In order for Mary to carry God within her, we believe that she had to be pure and holy. God couldn't have a dwelling place that was anything but perfect!

- Remember: We celebrate the birth of the Blessed Mother on **September 8**, **nine months** after we celebrate the Immaculate Conception.
- The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a **holy day of obligation.**
  - There are **6** holy days of obligation in the Church in the United States:
    - The Solemnity of Mary Mother of God - January 1

- - - Ascension Thursday - 40 days after Easter
      - The Solemnity of the Assumption - August 15
      - All Saints Day - November 1
      - The Immaculate Conception - December 8
      - Christmas Day - December 25
  - Easter is a Solemnity and is one of the most important days on the Church calendar, but there is already an **obligation** to attend Mass <u>each Sunday.</u> (The holy days of obligation are the days we're supposed to go to Church in <u>addition</u> to going to Mass every Sunday.)
  - **Obligation** means something you are <u>morally bound</u> to do. "Duty" is a synonym for "obligation."

- Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is revered as the **patroness** of:
  - the United States
  - the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

- Remember: Solemnities are big celebrations in the Church!
  - For most of Lent and Advent, we don't sing or say the Gloria at Mass since they're penitential seasons.
  - We also don't normally say or sing the Gloria at "normal" weekday Masses throughout the year, just on Sundays.
  - Solemnities are the exception to this! For the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception during Advent, the Gloria is sung or recited. (The Solemnity of St. Joseph usually takes place during Lent. It's not a holy day of obligation, but it you went to Mass on that weekday, you would likely hear the Gloria then, too!)
  - (You don't need to know this last section for a test - It's just extra information for your knowledge. 😉)

- For the 6th grade:
  - At the Mass for the Immaculate Conception, the first reading is about Adam and Eve and Original Sin.
  - We learned in the last chapter about how Mary is sometimes referred to as "The New Eve." Through Eve (and Adam), sin entered the world. Mary was part of God's response to this. Through Mary (the "new Eve"), God is able to carry out his plan to <u>redeem the world</u> through His son Jesus Christ. (sometimes called "the new Adam".)

Mass readings for the day:
https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/120823.cfm