

# THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on December 8. Many people believe that the feast celebrates Jesus' conception, but in fact it celebrates *Mary's* Immaculate Conception; the fact that Mary was, from the very first moment of her existence (her conception), without sin, and chosen to be the Mother of Jesus.

As today's feast is a holy day of obligation, all Catholics should participate in Mass. If your school is planning to celebrate a Mass in the school, you will find suitable Readings, songs/hymns and prayers on pages 2-4 of this booklet. If your school is planning to mark the day with a Prayer Service, suggestions for this are offered on pages 5-6 of this booklet. Some activities for children are also provided as part of this booklet (pages 7-10). These can be done in preparation for the Mass/prayer service, or as a follow-up activity.



## PRAYER SERVICE

### You will need:

- Ten children to read

### Sacred Space:

- White or blue cloth
- Bible, open at Luke 1:26-38
- An advent wreath, see page 39
- Cross/Crucifix
- Statue or image of Mary
- Rosary beads
- Flowers

### Opening Song:

- *Mary, Our Mother (Alive-O 3, 4, 5 and 6)*

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us begin with our Morning Prayer:

**All:** Father in heaven, you love me,  
you are with me night and day.  
I want to love you always  
in all I do and say.  
I'll try to please you, Father.  
Bless me through the day. Amen.

**Leader:** We gather together today to celebrate a very special feast day – the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The words ‘Immaculate Conception’ tell us that from the very moment that Mary was born – and even when she was still growing in her mother’s tummy – she was free from sin. Imagine that! Mary never hurt or upset anyone. She was never mean or dishonest. She always lived in the way God wanted. Mary was perfect, because God chose her to be the mother of his only Son, Jesus. That is why we say that she is ‘full of grace’ and ‘blessed among woman’. Let us listen to the story of how Mary found out that she had been chosen by God for this special job:

**Reader 1:** *A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (1:26-38)*

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King

David. The angel greeted Mary and said, **Reader 2:** 'You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you.'

**Reader 1:** Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary,

**Reader 2:** 'Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end.'

**Reader 1:** Mary asked the angel,

**Reader 3:** 'How can this happen? I am not married!'

**Reader 1:** The angel answered,

**Reader 2:** 'The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!'

**Reader 1:** Mary said,

**Reader 3:** 'I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said.'

**Reader 1:** And the angel left her. The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**Leader:** What words would you use to describe Mary? What kind of things can we say about her? (*Invite children to think in silence or to answer aloud, whichever is most appropriate.*) Mary did what God wanted her to do, so she was faithful or obedient. She was loving and caring, because she looked after the baby Jesus and helped him to grow. Mary was also certainly 'holy'. Let's think about times when you acted like Mary. (*Play Reflective Music*)

Close your eyes for a moment. Think of a time when you said 'Yes' when you were asked to do something. Maybe you did some chores at home, or maybe you did what your teacher asked. At those times when you were faithful and obedient, you were acting like Mary. (*Pause*)

Now imagine a time when you showed love to your family or friends. Think about one time when you did a nice thing, like sharing something or giving someone a hug. At those times when you were loving and caring, you were acting like Mary. *(Pause)*

Lastly, think about a time when you stood by someone who needed help. Maybe someone was being picked on in the yard, and you stood up for them. Maybe someone was left out, and you included them. Mary was with Jesus to the very end of his life. At those times when you stood by others, you were acting like Mary. *(Pause)*

When you are ready, you can open your eyes. Together, let us give thanks to God for Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The response to each prayer is 'Thank you, God, for Mary.'

**All:** Thank you, God, for Mary.

**Reader 4:** Mary said 'Yes' to God, to be the Mother of Jesus. *(Response)*

**Reader 5:** Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. *(Response)*

**Reader 6:** Mary and Joseph cared for Jesus. *(Response)*

**Reader 7:** Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to be blessed. *(Response)*

**Reader 8:** Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple when he was lost. *(Response)*

**Reader 9:** Mary and Jesus went to the wedding at Cana. *(Response)*

**Reader 10:** Mary was with Jesus when he died on the cross. *(Response)*

**Leader:** Together, we pray:

**All:** Hail Mary .../ 'Sé do bheatha, a Mhuire ...

**Leader:** Let us pray:

Loving God,

We thank you for the example of Mary,

whom you chose to be the mother of your only Son, Jesus.

She lived her life with love for you and for others.

Help us to do the same.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Closing Song:** *Magnificat (Alive-O 8)*

## MASS

### You will need:

- Seven children to read

### Sacred Space:

- Blue cloth
- Bible, open at Luke 1:26-38
- Candle
- Cross/Crucifix
- Statue or image of Mary
- Rosary beads
- Flowers

### Opening Song:

- *Mary, Our Mother (Alive-O 3, 4, 5 and 6)*

### First Reading: A Reading from the Book of Genesis (*Genesis 3:9-15, 20*)

The Lord called out to the man and asked, "Did you eat any fruit from that tree in the middle of the garden?" "It was the woman you put here with me," the man said. "She gave me some of the fruit, and I ate it." The Lord God then asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The snake tricked me," she answered. "And I ate some of that fruit." So the Lord God said to the snake: "Because of what you have done, you will be the only animal to suffer this curse – for as long as you live, you will crawl on your stomach and eat dirt. You and this woman will hate each other; your descendants and hers will always be enemies. One of hers will strike you on the head, and you will strike him on the heel." The man Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all who live.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98

**Response:** Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
His right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm. *Response.*

The Lord has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel. *Response.*

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise. *Response.*

**Gospel Reading:** A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (*Luke 1:26-38*)

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end." Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!" Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

### **Prayer of the Faithful**

1. Mary was the Mother of Jesus. We pray for all mothers. Lord hear us.
2. Joseph helped Mary to take of Jesus. We pray for all fathers. Lord hear us.
3. Mary's parents were named Anne and Joachim. They were Jesus' grandparents. We pray for all grandparents. Lord hear us.
4. Mary did as God asked her to. We pray that we will be able to do the same. Lord hear us.
5. Jesus was born on Christmas Day. We pray that we will prepare well for this holy day during the season of Advent. Lord hear us.

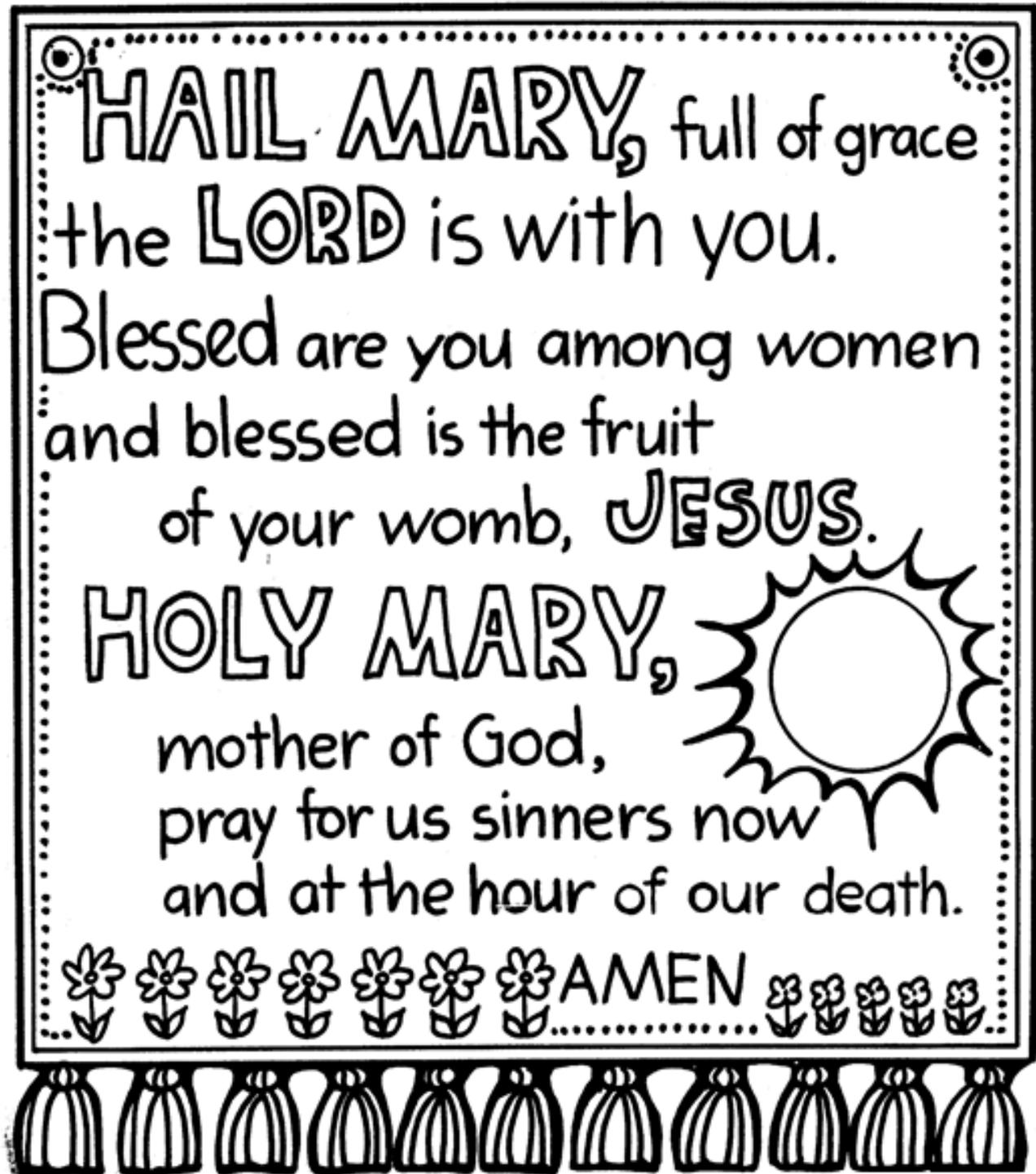
**Closing Song:** *Magnificat (Alive-O 8)*



**H** \_\_\_\_\_ **M** \_\_\_\_\_

**Blessed are you among women!**

This banner below shows the words of the Hail Mary. Colour it, cut it out and put it in an important place in your home, like in your bedroom or on the fridge in the kitchen. Pray the Hail Mary with your family often.



## Activity for Third/Fourth Classes

On December 8, we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception. On this day, we remember that Mary was conceived without sin, and so was chosen from the very first moment of her life to be the mother of Jesus. The Angel Gabriel told Mary, "God has blessed you more than any other woman."

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Answer these questions about Mary. Circle the correct answer.

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Mary lived in Jerusalem.                                   | True / False |
| 2. Mary married Joseph.                                       | True / False |
| 3. The angel Geraldine told Mary that she would have a baby.  | True / False |
| 4. Mary's sister was called Elizabeth.                        | True / False |
| 5. Jesus was Mary's only child.                               | True / False |
| 6. Mary is the only woman who never sinned in her whole life. | True / False |
| 7. The Church honours Mary in a special way in May .          | True / False |
| 8. Mary's mother's name was Amelia.                           | True / False |
| 9. Mary's baby was born on November 25 <sup>th</sup>          | True / False |
| 10. Mary is sometimes called the Queen of Heaven              | True / False |

### PREPARE!

Just like us, Mary had to prepare for the birth of Jesus. Make a list of all the things that Mary had to do below.

In what ways are you preparing for Jesus' birth at home, in school and in the parish community? Write them below.

## Activity for Fifth/Sixth Classes

On December 8, the Church celebrates one of the most important feasts of Our Lady, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is the day when we remember and celebrate that God chose Mary to be the Mother of Jesus from the very first moment of her being; the moment of her conception.

There are other feast days on which we celebrate the life of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Do some research to help you to match these feast days with the dates on which they are celebrated.

FEAST DAYS	DATES
The Feast of the Assumption	January 1
The Feast of the Annunciation	February 11
The Feast of the Immaculate Conception	March 25
The Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary	August 15
The Feast of Mary, the Mother of God	August 21
The Feast of our Lady of the Rosary	September 8
The Feast of our Lady of Knock	October 7
The Feast of our Lady of Lourdes	December 8

### PRAYERS TO MARY

Unscramble the following to show prayers that we pray to Mary. Choose one of the prayers, find the words of it in your *Alive-O*, and write it in your religion copy.

heT nAeslgu  
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lHia Myra  
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eTh roasRy  
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laHi loyH enuQe  
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