

Calendar

Monday

DECEMBER 10

Advent Weekday

Is 35:1–10

Lk 5:17–26

Tuesday

DECEMBER 11

Advent Weekday

Is 40:1–11

Mt 18:12–14

Wednesday

DECEMBER 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Zec 2:14–17 or Rv 11:19a;

12:1–6a, 10ab

Lk 1:26–38 or

Lk 1:39–47

Thursday

DECEMBER 13

St. Lucy,

Virgin and Martyr

Is 41:13–20

Mt 11:11–15

Friday

DECEMBER 14

St. John of the Cross,

Priest and Doctor

of the Church

Is 48:17–19

Mt 11:16–19

Saturday

DECEMBER 15

Advent Weekday

Sir 48:1–4, 9–11

Mt 17:9a, 10–13

Sunday

DECEMBER 16

Third Sunday

of Advent

Phil 3:14–18a

Phil 4:4–7

Lk 3:10–18

Dear Padre,

Why doesn't the word *immaculate* also refer to Jesus' birth?

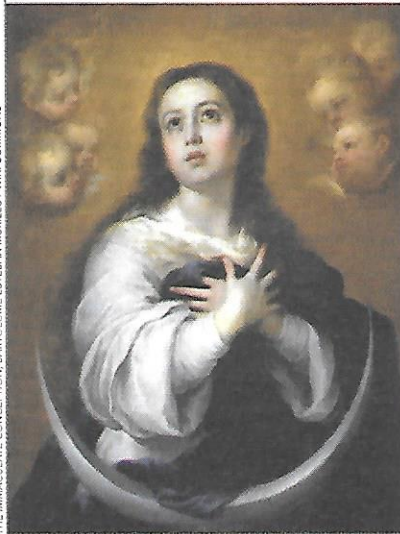
According to Webster's Dictionary, *immaculate* comes from the Latin *immaculatus*, which breaks down further into *in* (meaning "not") and *maculatus* (meaning "spotted"). It means "without stain or blemish" and is commonly associated with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was solemnly defined as a dogma of the Catholic faith in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. The dogma states that Mary was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin.

Catholics sometimes mistakenly think that this doctrine refers to Jesus' birth and not to the conception of Mary in the womb of her mother. In a way, it refers to both. Everything about Mary ultimately leads to her Son—including the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. How so? The Church argues both from Scripture and tradition that God deemed it proper and

fitting that humanity's Redeemer should enter the world through a womb totally unblemished by sin. Mary, in other words, was free of the effects of original sin so she could be a proper dwelling place for the birth of the Son of God.

That is not to say, however, that Mary herself was not in need of redemption. On the contrary, the dogma clearly states that she was conceived without the stain of original sin *in anticipation* of the fruits of Christ's redemptive action manifested in his passion, death, and resurrection.

—Fr. Dennis J. Billy, CSSR
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THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO / WIKICOMMONS



A Word From Pope Francis

The Immaculate Conception leads us to contemplate Our Lady who, by unique privilege, was preserved from original sin from the very moment of her conception. Even living in a world marked by sin, she was not touched by it: Mary is our sister in suffering, but not in evil or in sin.

—Angelus, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2015