

POINTS OF INTEREST

Maronite Christian Formation. Will be meeting this Sunday in the church hall from 9:00 AM – 9:45 AM.

Family Movie Night. Join us for the movie night on Friday May 22 from 7.30 PM – 9.00 PM

Garage Sale. Our Garage sale this year will be for two days:
- **Friday June 5:** only for our parishioners from 3-7 pm
- **Saturday June 6:** the General Public from 9-3 pm

Lebanese Food Festival. Our *food festival* will take place on **June 13** at the Hudson Shores Park in Watervliet from **11.00 AM – 5.00 PM.** We are looking for **Volunteers** to help prepare the food, advertise and men to help organize and set up the equipment. **There is a Job for everyone.** For more information call Betty KARRAT at (518) 434-1535.

Bus Trip to Yankee Stadium on July 18th to attend the New York Yankees v/s Seattle Mariners game. The cost is \$100 per person. For more info, contact Mike Rezey 339-9468; Al Patnode 225-3335 or Richard Peters 272-2934.

Memorials. Memorials for the offerings used in the sanctuary as part of the Divine Liturgy are available for a donation of 60\$ / month. You can arrange for a memorial by calling father Elias during the office hours.

Liturgy Intentions. If you like to offer a Divine Liturgy intention for your loved ones, call the parish office. In preparing your will, you might wish to arrange for the celebration of Divine Liturgies for yourself and your family.

Verse Of The Week

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.”

(Luke 6:43-44)

St Rita of Cascia

St. Rita was born at Spoleto, Italy in 1381. At an early age, she begged her parents to allow her to enter a convent. Instead they arranged a marriage for her. Rita became a good wife and mother, but her husband was a man of violent temper. In anger he often mistreated his wife. He taught their children his own evil ways.

Rita tried to perform her duties faithfully and to pray and receive the sacraments frequently. After nearly twenty years of marriage, her husband was stabbed by an enemy but before he died, he repented because Rita prayed for him. Shortly afterwards, her two sons died, and Rita was alone in the world. Prayer, fasting, penances of many kinds, and good works filled her days. She was admitted to the convent of the Augustinian nuns at Cascia in Umbria, and began a life of perfect obedience and great charity.

Sister Rita had a great devotion to the Passion of Christ. "Please let me suffer like you, Divine Savior," she said one day, and suddenly one of the thorns from the crucifix struck her on the forehead. It left a deep wound which did not heal and which caused her much suffering for the rest of her life. She died on May 22, 1457. She is the patroness of impossible cases. Her feast day is May 22.

Saint's Quote

“From Mary we learn to surrender to God’s will in all things. From Mary we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary we learn to love Christ her Son and the Son of God!”

Saint John Paul II

What is the Immaculate Conception?

The Immaculate Conception refers to the condition that the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from Original Sin from the very moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne. We celebrate the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8; nine months before is December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In the Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX wrote that "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."

The Blessed Virgin's "freedom from sin was an unmerited gift of God or special *grace*, and an exception to the law, or *privilege*, which no other created person has received."

The Immaculate Conception represents Christ's saving grace operating in Mary in anticipation of His redemption of man and in God's foreknowledge of Mary's acceptance of His Will for her.

In other words, the Immaculate Conception was not a precondition for Christ's act of redemption but the result of it. It is the concrete expression of God's love for Mary, who gave herself fully, completely, and without hesitation to His service.

Development of the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception

Because of the doctrine of Original Sin, some in the West began to believe that Mary could not have been sinless unless she had been saved from Original Sin at the moment of her conception (thus making the conception "immaculate"). Others, however, including St. Thomas Aquinas, argued that Mary could not have been redeemed if she had not been subject to sin—at least, to Original Sin.

The answer to St. Thomas Aquinas's objection, as Blessed John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) showed, was that God had sanctified Mary at the moment of her conception in His foreknowledge that the Blessed Virgin would consent to bear Christ. In other words, she too had been redeemed—her redemption had simply been accomplished at the moment of her conception, rather than (as with all other Christians) in Baptism.

Promulgation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception

On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX officially declared the Immaculate Conception a dogma of the Church, which means that all Christians are bound to accept it as true. As the Holy Father wrote in the Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."