

## FAITH IN 5

Advent W.2

Ages 8+

- 1. Who do we read about this Sunday?** We read about John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1-12. **How does the gospel reading describe him?** John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance in the desert. He had an unusual appearance! The bible tells us he wore camel hair clothing and he ate bugs! **How does John the Baptist react when the Pharisees and the Sadducees approach him?** He has a sharp warning for them. They want to rely on their faith and lineage in Abraham to save them, but John the Baptist says "Produce good fruit as a sign of your repentance." Our culture today is as wild and unruly as any wilderness. St. John the Baptist, please help us to repent! Help us to prepare to meet Jesus. We can't only rely on our belief, we must also produce good fruit in the way we live our lives.
- 2. What famous and beloved Saint do we celebrate on December 6th?** St. Nicholas is celebrated on November 6. St. Nicholas was born in 270 in the country now known as Turkey. His wealthy parents left him a lot of money. Instead of spending it on himself, he lived a life of radical generosity. He gave his money to families in need. **What else did St. Nicholas do?** St. Nicholas had an adventurous life! When he traveled on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a dangerous storm struck his ship on the return trip. St. Nicholas prayed for the storm to cease and it did. He also prayed over a seemingly dead sailor and he survived! Another very famous story about St. Nicholas was the time he rescued three sisters who wanted to marry but could not afford a dowry. The family of these three sisters were so poor that if they could not get married, the father would be forced to sell them. When St. Nicholas heard of their plight and threw gold coins through the window where they landed in a pair of shoes. He provided the dowry for all three girls. This is where the tradition of setting shoes out on St. Nicholas' feast day originates from. He was once exiled and imprisoned under the Christian persecution of Emperor Diocletian. He became Bishop of Myra at only 30 years old, without even being a priest first! His mission was to protect and care for poor children. As Bishop he was part of the Council of Nicea where he defended the divinity of Christ. **What is the connection between St. Nicholas and Santa Claus?** Devotion to St. Nicholas spread throughout the world and to honor him, people recreated his generous ways by gift giving. Santa Claus comes from the Dutch name "Sinterklass." It has become most common to remember St. Nicholas on Christmas as Santa Claus, but many cultures and families celebrate on his feast day this Tuesday.
- 3. Why is this Thursday, December 8, a Holy Day of Obligation?** We are celebrating the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary! **What does that mean?** Immaculate means pure, perfect, and without stain. Conception is the

very beginning of something. God chose Mary and created Mary without original sin. She is the beginning of the work of Redemption. It is fitting that Our Lord should be carried in a pure and perfect womb. **What must we do on a Holy Day of Obligation?** We need to attend mass just like a Sunday. **How else can we celebrate this special day?** Sing the hymn "Immaculate Mary" as a family. Have something pure and white for dinner and dessert- white fish, white pasta or white cauliflower, white ice cream or whipped cream!

4. **Apologetics- Was Mary sinless?** Protestants challenge this Church teaching- saying that Mary called God her Savior so she must have sinned. God DID save Mary. She was saved by God just like all of us but her salvation was singular, or unique. God saved Mary by giving her a special grace to preserve her from sin. The angel Gabriel said "Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28) Full of grace means to be without sin. The rest of humankind is not saved by preservation like Mary, but by liberation from our sins through Jesus Christ. So, yes! The Blessed Mother was sinless! Both from original sin (the sin we inherit from Adam and Eve, that we are born with) but also from actual sin as Pope Pius XII states in his encyclical, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, Mary was "free from all sin, original or personal" by the grace of God her whole life long.
5. **Catechism- What is the Fourth Commandment of the Church?** The Fourth Commandment of the Church is to receive the Holy Eucharist during Easter time. This may seem like an incredibly easy commandment! **Why only during Easter?** In the past, The Holy Eucharist was not as easily received as it is today. There have been periods where Christians have been persecuted and would need to go to Holy Mass in secret. Sometimes a parish may be very, very far away or there were not many priests available to bring the Eucharist. This is still the case in some areas today. In most areas now though, we are very blessed to have easy access to Holy Communion. To receive during Easter is the minimum, but to live out the faith optimally, receive the Holy Communion as often as possible!

**REVIEW QUESTION: What colors do we see in Advent?** Just like in Lent, we see the color purple. The color purple is a royal color, used for kings and emperors, so it is most fitting for Christ the King's arrival. Also, the purple color signifies repentance. **Why would we repent during Advent too?** We repent during Advent to prepare our hearts to receive the newborn King! We want our hearts to be a pure stable, a warm manger, full of charity and love for the baby Jesus.