

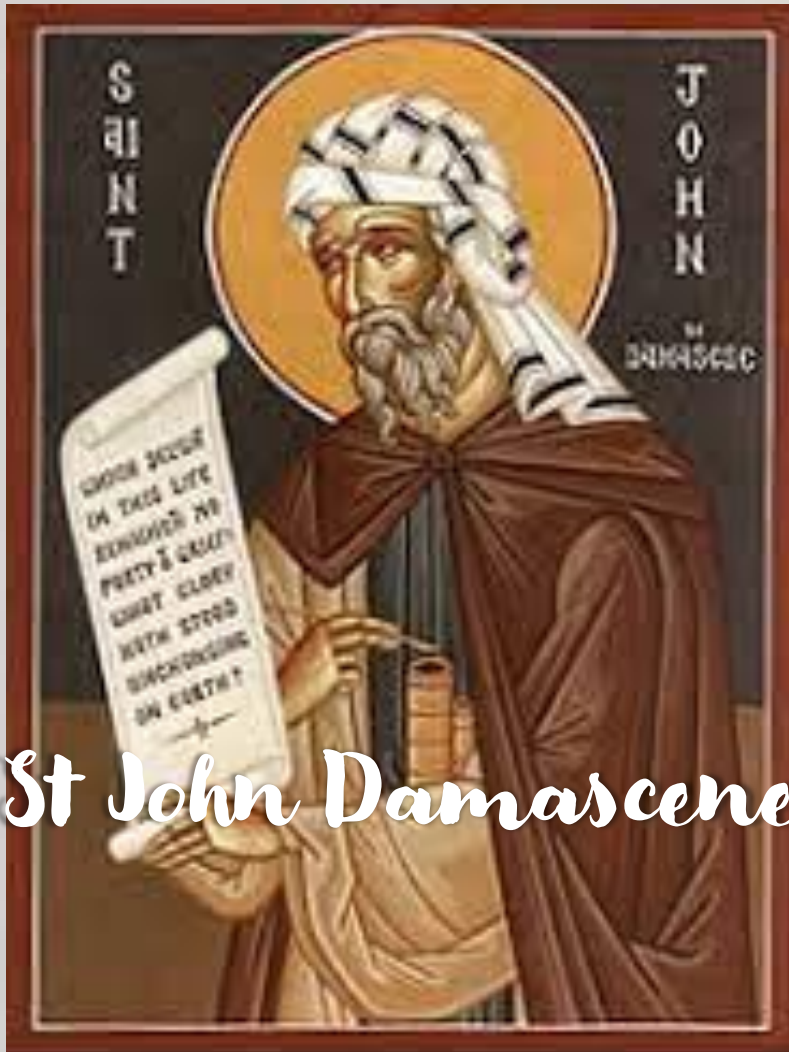


Advent
*A Season of Hope
& Expectation*

WEEK BEGINNING 4TH DECEMBER

*Prayers for the
Week Ahead*

Monday 4th December



St John Damascene

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John spent most of his life in the Monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem, and all of his life under Muslim rule, indeed protected by it. He was born in Damascus, received a classical and theological education, and followed his father in a government position under the Arabs. After a few years, he resigned and went to the Monastery of Saint Sabas.

He is famous in three areas:

First, he is known for his writings against the iconoclasts, who opposed the veneration of images. Paradoxically, it was the Eastern Christian emperor Leo who forbade the practice, and it was because John lived in Muslim territory that his enemies could not silence him.

Second, he is famous for his treatise, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, a summary of the Greek Fathers, of which he became the last. It is said that this book is for Eastern schools what the *Summa* of Aquinas became for the West.

Third, he is known as a poet, one of the two greatest of the Eastern Church, the other being Romanus the Melodist. His devotion to the Blessed Mother and his sermons on her feasts are well known.

John defended the Church's understanding of the veneration of images and explained the faith of the Church in several other controversies. For over 30 years, he combined a life of prayer with these defenses and his other writings. His holiness expressed itself in putting his literary and preaching talents at the service of the Lord.

Our Father ...

Tuesday 5th December



Blessed Philip Rinaldi

Philip met Don Bosco at age 5, and apparently instinctively understood the importance of the future saint. Though he felt a call to a religious vocation, Philip was torn, and was seriously considering marriage when he decided to become a disciple of Don Bosco at age 22. The Christian Brothers immediately saw something in him, and made him an assistant novice master even before he took his vows as a Salesian on 13 August 1880. Though he had no intention to become a priest, his superiors, who saw his potential better than he did, ordered him to study and take the tests, and he was ordained on 23 December 1882.

In addition to his work as novice master, Philip was placed in charge of the "late" vocations, those like himself who came to the Order as adults. As director of the Salesian community of Sarriá, Spain in 1889 he opened several new houses, and brought in many new vocations. He was the Salesian provincial director in Spain from 1892 to 1901 and he began publication of *Lecturas Catolicas* in 1895.

Philip founded centres to minister to the daily and spiritual needs of young women and he helped found the World Federations of Past-Pupils, and assisted the Salesian Sisters. With Zelatrici di Maria Ausiliatrice he helped found the group that would evolve into the Volunteers of Don Bosco.

Philip was the Rector Major of the Salesians in 1922 and the third successor to Don Bosco, and the last one to have been personally trained by him. From that position he worked to bring Don Bosco's vision to the 20th century, and the 20th century to the vision, doing all he could to spread Salesian spirituality and trust in God. He sent many young Salesians to learn foreign languages and customs so they would become more effective missionaries, and he asked Pope Pius XI to grant the "indulgence for sanctified work". He travelled extensively, preaching, encouraging vocations and the spiritual life of the laity. During his tenure the number of Salesians went from 6,000 to 10,000, there were 250 new houses and centres opened, and his teacher Don Bosco was recognized as a saint.

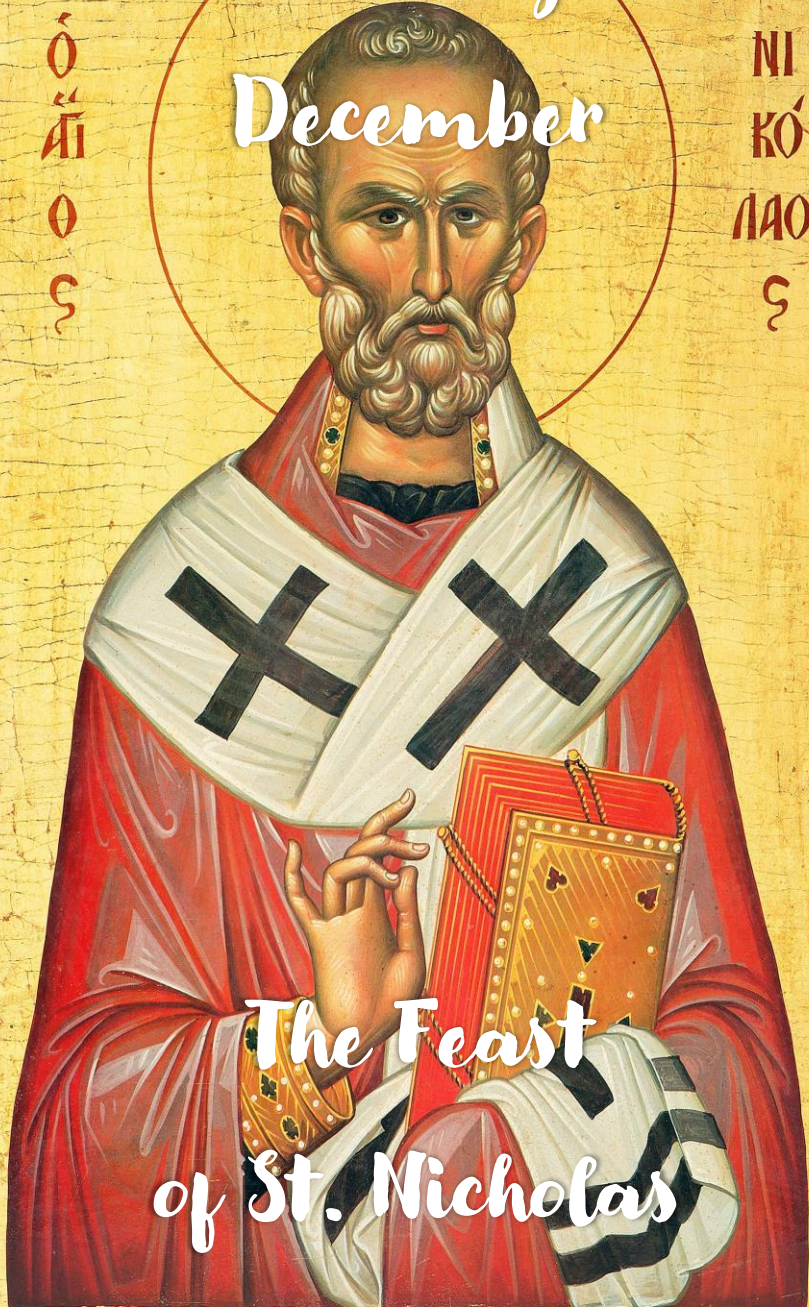
Our Father...

Wednesday 6th

December

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The Feast
of St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas of Myra was a 4th Century bishop famous for his generosity to the poor. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, and his love for children. Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds.

*O good St. Nicholas, you who are the joy of the children,
Put in my heart the spirit of childhood,
Which the gospel speaks, and teach me to seed happiness around me.
We thank you God for the example of St. Nicholas,
Who fed the hungry, brought hope to the imprisoned,
Gave comfort to the lost, And taught us the truth to all.
May we strive to imitate him. By putting you first in all we do.
Give us the courage, love and strength
Of St. Nicholas, so that, like him,
We may serve you through loving
Our brothers and sisters.
Amen.*

Thursday 7th
December



The Feast of
St. Ambrose

Saint Ambrose, also known as Aurelius Ambrosius, is one of the four original doctors of the Church. He was the Bishop of Milan and became one of the most important theological figures of the 4th century. It is believed by many that when Ambrose was just an infant, a swarm of bees landed on his face and left behind a drop of honey. To his father, this was a sign that Ambrose would become someone great with a wonderful sense for speaking. As bishop, he donated all of his land and gave his money to the poor. This made him widely popular and often times more politically powerful than even the emperor. St. Ambrose was generous to the poor. He considered them not a group of outsiders, but rather those of the united people. To him, giving to the poor was just a repayment of God's resources, which were intended for everyone equally.

O God,

You give blessed Ambrose to Your people as a minister of eternal salvation; grant, we pray You, that as on earth he was a teacher of supernatural life, so we may deserve to have him as our intercessor in heaven.

You made St. Ambrose an outstanding teacher of the faith.

We are in awe of him and so we ask that you pray for us.

Pray for us, that we will always seek truth.

Help us, St. Ambrose, to live our lives seeking truth and wisdom.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, you Son,

Who lives and reigns with you

In the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever,

Amen.

Friday
8th December



The Feast of
The Immaculate
Conception

On December 8, we honour Mary, our Mother. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a Catholic feast celebrating Mary's conception without sin. Even though this feast day occurs in the liturgical season of Advent, which prepares for the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Mary in the womb of her mother, St. Anne. From the first moment of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of Mankind, kept free from all stain of original sin. The observance of this feast began with a Papal encyclical by Pope Pius IX, when he formally defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854. Several years later, in 1858, the Blessed Mother gave her name to St. Bernadette at Lourdes stating, "I am the Immaculate Conception".

A Prayer for the Feast of The Immaculate Conception

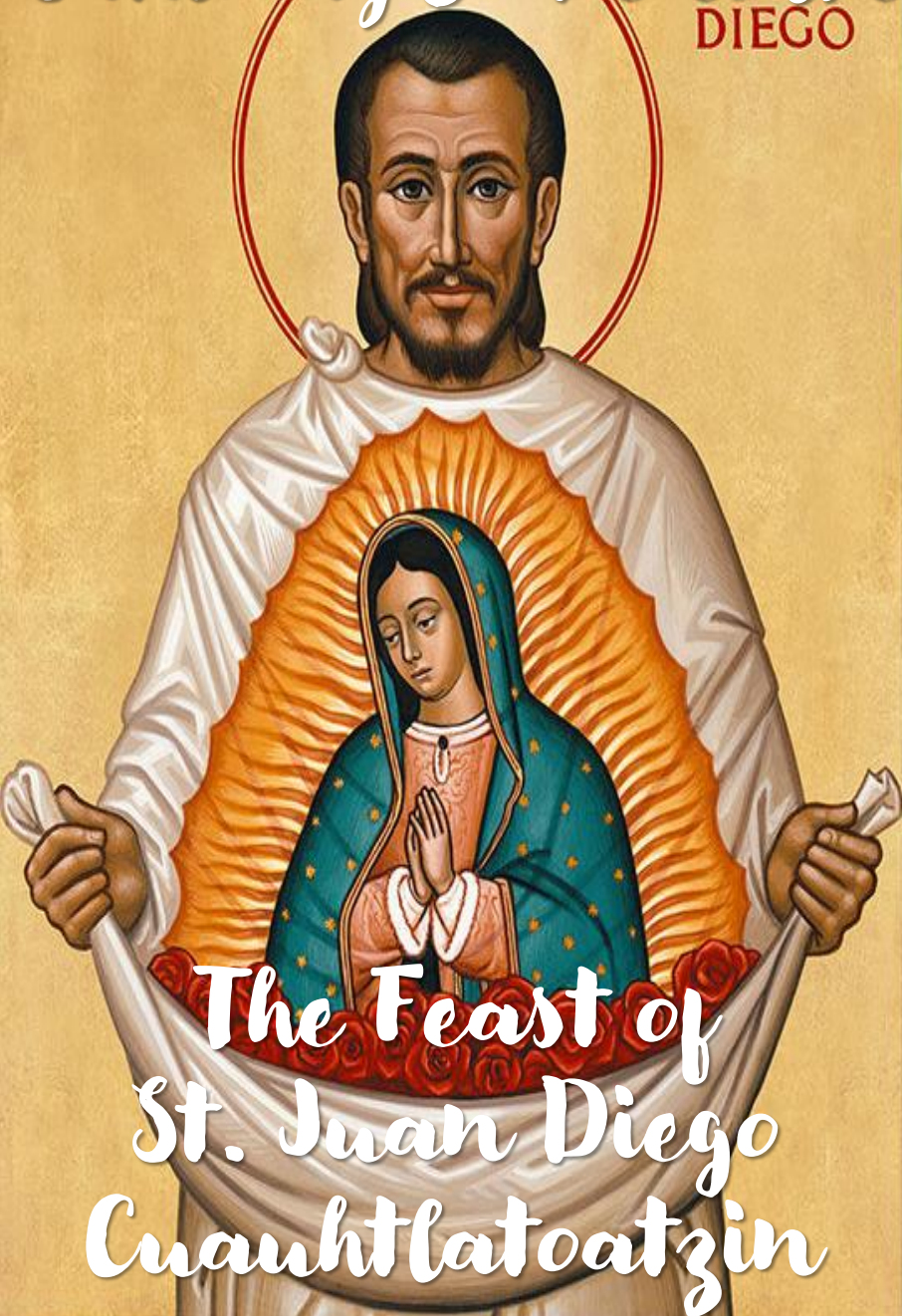
O most Holy Virgin, immaculate in body and spirit, look kindly on me as I implore your powerful intercession.

O most Holy Mother, receive my prayers as I present them to God. O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, you intercede for us with your Son.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Amen.

SAN **Saturday 9th December** JUAN **DIEGO**



Saint Juan Diego was born in 1474 as Cuauhtlatoatzin, a native to Mexico. He became the first Roman Catholic indigenous saint from the Americas. He was recognised for his religious fervour, his respectful and gracious attitude toward the Virgin Mary. When a group of twelve Franciscan missionaries arrived in Mexico in 1524, he and his wife, Maria Lucia, converted to Catholicism and were among the first to be baptised in the region. On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego was in a hurry to make it to Mass and celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. However, he was stopped by the beautiful sight of a radiant woman who introduced herself, in his native tongue, as the "ever-perfect holy Mary, who has the honour to be the mother of the true God." St. Juan Diego was beatified on May 6, 1990, by Pope John Paul II and canonized on July 31, 2002. His feast day is celebrated on December 9, and he is the patron saint of Indigenous People.

Beloved Juan Diego, show us the way that leads to the Virgin Mary, that she may receive us in the depths of her heart, for she is the loving, compassionate Mother who guides us to the true God.

Amen.