

- This past week we enjoyed what I call the “Marian interlude” of Advent, which is a series of feast days all dedicated to Our Lady. Last Monday was the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception; Wednesday, December 10th was the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto; and last Friday was the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. These days teach us so much about Mary.
- The great solemnity of the Immaculate Conception shows forth Mary’s purity and uniqueness. That feast tells of God’s own preparations for the coming of the Savior.
- Before Christ could become man, there had to be a worthy vessel to bear Him, and thus Mary was preserved free from all taint of sin from the first moment of her conception so that she could be that worthy vessel.
- As for the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto, it calls to mind Mary’s hidden life with Jesus and Joseph in Nazareth: her life as a wife and mother, lived in perfect harmony with God’s will.
- As Pope St. John Paul II put it: Loreto is “the first temple, the first church on which shone the light of the maternity of the Mother of God.”
- And Friday’s Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is about Mary’s power to overcome evil!
- In the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we see Mary’s power against evil exercised against the demonic culture in which she appeared, a culture that practiced human sacrifice among other unspeakable evils.
- Yet, in less than a decade after Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego, more than 9 million people converted to Catholicism, leaving behind that religion of death and doom, and proving her power to crush the head of satan.
- Thus, the feasts of this Marian interlude in Advent call us to focus our attention on Mary. We are to see in her immaculate purity and perfection all that we are called to be. We are to see in her indispensable role in salvation history her perfect adherence to God’s will.
- We are to see in her hidden life as wife and mother the loving attention she gives to all who call her mother. And we are to see in her power over evil our sure refuge in times of temptation and suffering.
- Even more importantly, these feasts call us to imitate Our Lady in her virtues, especially as we prepare to receive her divine Son, both in the mystery of the Incarnation which we will celebrate at Christmas, but especially in His 2nd coming at the end of time.
- As Advent repeatedly tells us, the Christ is coming, and we must be well prepared. We must prepare our hearts for his coming as an infant born in a lowly stable, and we must prepare our souls for His coming again in power at the end of time.
- And Our Lady shows us through all of her actions that she is a woman of perfect and unsurpassed virtue. Our Lady is humanity perfected, for she alone is without sin. She alone fulfilled the will of God perfectly throughout the entirety of her life.
- At no point in her earthly life did the Blessed Virgin Mary ever waver from the will of God in the slightest degree. She chose always to say yes to what she knew He was asking of her.
- As I mentioned in my homily on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, doing God’s will is the path to becoming holy. We must say yes to whatever God asks of us, no matter what the cost, trusting that God’s will is the best thing that can happen to us.
- Indeed, this is the basic vocation of every Christian distilled down to its barest bones: doing the will of God in each and every situation life brings to us.

- While, as I mentioned on Monday, this requires humility, courage, love for God, and confidence in His mercy and grace, it also requires the good old-fashioned virtue of patience.
- Think about what we hear from the Letter of St. James, who counsels us to be patient until the coming of the Lord. St. James tells us that, just as a farmer waits patiently for his crops to grow, we too must be patient.
- And we must be patient not only for the coming of the Lord, but also for our own growth in virtue! Sometimes, growing in holiness can seem like an unattainable goal – something that takes an impossibly long time to accomplish.
- Our sinful proclivities and habits can weigh us down. In looking at our sins, it's easy to think that we'll never gain the requisite holiness for gaining admittance into Heaven. Yet, that's not how our Lord wants us to see things.
- First, we must remember that while growth in holiness requires our cooperation with God's grace and our earnest striving for virtue, it is God who makes us holy. And He can raise any of us to the heights of holiness as quickly as He wishes.
- So, while we must be firm in practicing virtue and avoiding sin, while we must be absolutely steadfast in prayer, we must also be patient in allowing the Lord to work on us as He will.
- When I speak of patience here, I do not mean the simple capacity to wait for something to happen. The virtue of patience is deeper than that.
- St. Augustine defines patience as: "the enduring of evils with an equable mind, lest through an evil disposition we should give up that good which brings us to our greatest good."
- What is this greatest good? It is the working of sanctifying grace in our souls that leads us to exercising charity, the highest of all the virtues. In fact, charity is strengthened, vivified, and even perfected by patience.
- Indeed, patience keeps our virtue in check in time of trial. As St. Cyprian states: "Patience is not only the keeper of good but the preventer of evil, repelling whatever is adverse to good."
- We see the virtue of patience perfected in the Virgin Mary, who waited patiently for the coming of the Christ Child, enduring with equanimity the insult of bearing her divine son in a cave with only a feeding trough for a crib.
- Our Lady was patient through the years of life in Nazareth, tending to her family's needs. She was patient as Christ began His public ministry, and supremely patient as He was unjustly condemned, treated with utter contempt, and shamelessly executed.
- And we can only imagine the patience it took to endure the long years after her Son's death and resurrection for her own reunion with Him in Heaven.
- So, as we rejoice on this Gaudete Sunday with knowledge that our Lord is near, let us seek to grow in patience so that the great virtue of charity can be perfected within us, and so that we might avoid the evil temptations that threaten the life of grace within us.
- Like Our Lady, may we be patient in all things, with absolute trust that, if we seek the will of God in all things and strive to do it as perfectly as possible, and if we are steadfast in our prayer and uncompromising in our faith, the Lord will come and make us holy.
- Our Lady, model of patience and of every virtue, pray for us!