

## CCE meets Sunday, 12/8, Tues, 12/10, and Wed, 12/11.

Our special lesson on Advent offers ideas of how to celebrate this season of preparing our hearts to receive the Lord Jesus at Christmas. **\*\*NEXT WEEK, on December 15, 17, and 18,** we cover the lesson entitled “Circle of Grace” which teaches students about appropriate personal boundaries, safe and unsafe behavior, and trusted adults. **Parents are invited to preview this lesson at [www.st-mm.com/cce-class-schedule](http://www.st-mm.com/cce-class-schedule).**\*\*

### Breaking Open the Word for Families for **The Second Sunday of Advent** and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

By Ginger Herrington



**Reading 1: *Isaiah speaks of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit bestows special gifts upon us: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord. *Wisdom* is the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit because it perfects the theological virtue of faith. Through wisdom, we come to value what we believe through faith. Through *understanding*, we gain a certitude about our beliefs that moves beyond faith. Through *counsel*, we judge how best to act almost by intuition, and the Holy Spirit guides us in defending the truths of our Faith. *Fortitude* gives us the strength to follow through on the actions suggested by the gift of counsel. *Knowledge* is aimed at our actions in this life; in a limited way, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life the way that God sees them so that we choose wisely. *Piety* is the willingness to worship and serve God out of love for Him, not merely as a duty. *Fear of the Lord* arises from love; it gives us the desire not to offend God, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace that we need in order to keep from offending Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to grow in one of these gifts this Advent.

**Reading 2: *Endurance, encouragement, and hope.*** St. Paul teaches that we must endure in doing good and avoiding evil; the Scriptures were written to encourage us and to give us hope. Read a passage from the Bible every day, asking God to help you to understand what you are reading. Refer to the Catechism of the Catholic church when you need enlightenment, or ask a priest to help you. The Holy Spirit will not fail to encourage you in the Faith, to inspire you with Hope, and to inflame your hearts with Love. These are the theological virtues infused in us by the Holy Spirit; when we cooperate with these virtues, they grow and strengthen within us.

**Gospel: *Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.*** John the Baptist speaks the truth: when you repent, when you are truly sorry for your sins, your heart will convert. Your change of heart will be obvious to everyone as your conversion produces sweet fruit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. These are the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and fire: fire to burn away all that inclines us to evil, and the fire of love to animate our good actions.

In the **Feast of the Immaculate Conception**, we praise God for the wonders He worked for the Blessed Virgin Mary in preserving her soul from Original Sin. Jesus saved her from the moment she was conceived in her mother’s womb. How great is our God that He saved His mother before she was born – before His Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven saved the rest of us. No wonder she proclaimed the greatness of the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. Yes, Jesus saved His mother just as surely as He saved us.



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