

December 8th
ITALY

Saint Immacolata's day

The **Feast of the Immaculate Conception** celebrates belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is celebrated on 8 December, nine months before the Nativity of Mary, which is celebrated on 8 September. It is the patronal feast day of the United States. It is celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church as well as a few other closely related Christian churches.

The Western Christian Church first celebrated a feast of the Conception of the Most Holy and All Pure Mother of God on December 9th perhaps as early as the 5th century in Syria. By the 7th century it was widely known feast in the East. In the same century the doctrine of Mary's spotlessness was included in the Koran. However, when the Eastern Church called Mary *achrantos* (spotless or immaculate), it did not define exactly what this meant. Today the majority of Orthodox Christians would not accept the Scholastic definition of Mary's preservation from original sin before her birth that subsequently evolved in the Western Church after the Great Schism of 1054.. After the feast was translated to the Western Church in the eighth century, it began to be celebrated on December 8th. It spread from the Byzantine area of Southern Italy to Normandy during the period of Norman dominance over southern Italy. From there it spread into England, France, Germany, and eventually Rome.



Prior to Pope Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception as a Roman Catholic dogma in 1854, most missals referred to it as the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The festal texts of this period focused more on the action of her conception than on the theological question of her preservation from original sin. A missal published in England in 1806 indicates the same collect for the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary was used for this feast as well. The first move towards describing Mary's conception as "immaculate" came in the eleventh century. In the fifteenth century Pope Sixtus IV, while promoting the festival, explicitly tolerated those who promoted it as the Immaculate Conception and those who challenged such a description, a position later endorsed by the Council of Trent.