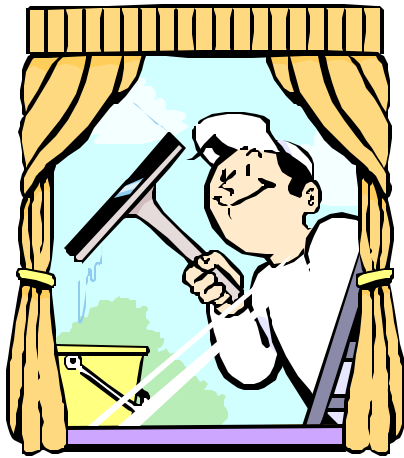


## Why do we celebrate the Immaculate Conception??

One very important feast in our Church calendar this month is the feast of the Immaculate Conception. But a lot of people misunderstand why we celebrate this day. First of all, what do these words mean? The word *immaculate* also means "clean," or "spotless."



Imagine the way a window looks after you've just cleaned it with window cleaner...How the light is able to shine through that window so clearly, as if it were brand new! The word *conception* means the moment that life begins for a baby inside its mother's womb, the moment that God puts a soul and breathes life into that tiny body. So putting these words together, another way we can say "immaculate conception" means "a clean start to life." It's

important to remember that because of *original sin*, none of us human beings have a "clean start" to our lives, because our souls are stained by original sin. The sin of Adam and Eve has been passed down through every generation of the human race, and leaves a stain on our souls until we are baptized. Imagine the way light shines through a dirty window...Sometimes you can only see dust and cob webs. In the same ways, God's light can't shine through us if our souls are stained with sin. But in the sacrament of baptism, we receive a "new start" to our lives as God's children, and our souls are made squeaky clean by his grace!

What's amazing about Mary, though, is that her soul was squeaky clean from the moment her life began in St. Anne's womb. Mary never had the original sin that the rest of us had before our baptism! God



knew from the beginning of time that he wanted her to be the mother of his Son, so he prepared her from the moment of her conception to fulfill this important role in salvation history. He made the window of her soul squeaky clean, so that the Light of the World could shine perfectly unto all, through her. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8<sup>th</sup>) we honor Mary for her sinlessness and perfect obedience to the Father. Why do we celebrate December 8<sup>th</sup>? Because it's exactly nine months before the day that we celebrate her birthday, on September 8<sup>th</sup>!



Do you own a miraculous medal? What do the words around the front of it say? The words around the front of it remind us of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and the power that Mary has to pray for us in heaven!

“O M \_ \_ r \_ \_ ,  
 c \_ \_ n c \_ \_ \_ v e \_ \_  
 w \_ \_ t h \_ \_ u t s \_ \_ n , \_ \_ \_ a y  
 \_ \_ o r \_ \_ \_ w \_ \_ o \_ \_ a v e  
 r e \_ \_ o \_ \_ r s \_ \_ \_ o \_ \_ \_ e e .”