

# ***Immaculate Conception***

2013

1

- The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is always a good day to go over this often-misunderstood feast of Mary.
- The Immaculate Conception of Mary is, of course, NOT about the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb, but rather about the conception of Mary in HER mother's womb—her mother is traditionally known as St. Anne.
- Mary was conceived in the normal manner of her mother and father coming together...but what we celebrate, and what is unique about Mary's conception, is that she—by a unique and special act of God--was preserved free from any stain of Original Sin from the moment of her conception...preserved in *anticipation* of her role as the future mother of God.
- And she as a human being is not saved apart from the sacrifice of Christ, but rather in *anticipation* of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. That's what "prevenient grace" in our opening prayer refers to.
- Mary is created in complete purity in preparation of her motherhood of Jesus.
- And while unique, it's not like this is "hard" for God to do; as St. Paul tells us: "*In a large household there are vessels not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for lofty and others for humble use.*" (2Tim 2:20 NAB)
- Mary is the most precious vessel of the household of God.
-

# ***Immaculate Conception***

2013

2

- That is why Mary is called the “new Eve” or the “true” Eve—because Mary was what Eve was meant to be...and Mary is what we all should be, because of all humanity, she most perfectly reflects the holiness of her son.
- Many non-Catholics, of course, deny the Immaculate Conception, and say that Mary was just a woman like any other.
- But from the beginning of the Bible we hear of hints of Mary and her special place.
- The first reading from Genesis spoke of “the woman” whose child would strike at the head of the serpent.
- In the lesser sense Eve is “the woman”...but in the fullest sense, the true “woman” is Mary, and her child is, of course, Jesus.
- Jesus calls Mary “woman” at the wedding at Cana...at the beginning of his ministry...and he calls her “woman” at the end... at the foot of the cross.
- This is not an insult as it might appear in English, but rather a affirmation that Mary is true and perfect woman...who without fail loves and obeys God the Father.
- When the test of faithfulness comes, Eve failed...but Mary, in her readiness to do God’s will, simply replies: *I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.*
-

- In the book of Exodus we read how the Ark of the Covenant was of purest gold—to contain the tablets of the 10 commandments, some of the manna they ate in the desert, and the staff of Aaron the high priest—all just symbols of Christ.
- But Mary contained Christ himself...God himself—incarnate in her womb...the perfect and everlasting Covenant, and so is the TRUE Ark of the Covenant.
- It's very interesting to read the book of Revelation, where it says: *“God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars...”* (Rev 11:19-12:1 RSV)
- In that reading it seems that the greatness of first Ark of the Covenant—as great as it was—becomes overshadowed by the second and true Ark of the Covenant—the woman. Mary.
- The OT ark was so holy that the Israelites on their march were required to stay ½ mile away. So holy that when a non-priest touched the ark, he was struck dead.
- How much holier, then, is the True Ark...the Mother of God?
- And the Immaculate Conception is an article of our faith... declared as infallible doctrine by Pope Pius 9<sup>th</sup> in 1854...and soon verified by Mary herself in her apparitions at to St. Bernadette in 1858.

# ***Immaculate Conception***

2013

4

- And yet Mary...so uniquely blessed by God... is still human only. A creature...to be venerated, but never worshiped. Worship is reserved for God alone.
- For she has no power of her own. Her “power” is her prayers to God...the relationship with her Son. But how powerful her prayers are!
- Jesus obeyed the Father...AND His mother. And she is still, and will be for all eternity...His Mother, whom He is bound to obey by His own law.
- As one so beloved by Jesus, doesn't it just make sense that we honor and revere her...she who is honored and revered by Jesus Himself? She who has this unique relationship with God—daughter of the Father, but also Mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Spirit.
- So stay close to her, speaking to her in prayer...asking her intercession with her Son.
- For she is also our Mother...given to us be Jesus Himself at the foot of the cross...when He looks at Mary and says to his beloved disciple: “*Behold, your mother.*”
- Let us obey our Mother in the one and only command she gives in the scripture...her one desire: “*Do whatever He tells you.*”
- ...for in her command she echoes God the Father's command to the world concerning Jesus at the Transfiguration: “*This is my beloved Son...listen to him.*” (Mat 17:5 RSV)

# *Immaculate Conception*

2013

5

Reading 1

[Gn 3:9-15, 20](#)

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree,  
the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?”  
He answered, “I heard you in the garden;  
but I was afraid, because I was naked,  
so I hid myself.”  
Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked?  
You have eaten, then,  
from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!”  
The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me  
she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.”  
The LORD God then asked the woman,  
“Why did you do such a thing?”  
The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:  
“Because you have done this, you shall be banned  
from all the animals  
and from all the wild creatures;  
on your belly shall you crawl,  
and dirt shall you eat  
all the days of your life.  
I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will strike at your head,  
while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve,  
because she became the mother of all the living.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4](#)

**R. (1) Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.**

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
His right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm.

**R. Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.**

The LORD has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel.

# ***Immaculate Conception***

2013

6

**R. Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.**

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise.

**R. Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.**

Reading II

[Eph 1:3-6, 11-12](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has blessed us in Christ  
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,  
as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world,  
to be holy and without blemish before him.  
In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ,  
in accord with the favor of his will,  
for the praise of the glory of his grace  
that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we were also chosen,  
destined in accord with the purpose of the One  
who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will,  
so that we might exist for the praise of his glory,  
we who first hoped in Christ.

Gospel

[Lk 1:26-38](#)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David,  
and the virgin's name was Mary.  
And coming to her, he said,  
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."  
But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.  
Then the angel said to her,  
"Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God.  
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.  
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,

# ***Immaculate Conception***

2013

7

and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his Kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel,  
“How can this be,  
since I have no relations with a man?”

And the angel said to her in reply,  
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born  
will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  
has also conceived a son in her old age,  
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;  
for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word.”

Then the angel departed from her.