

## Homily Notes for December 8, 2018 The Immaculate Conception

Readings: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Psalm 98:1-4; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

**Special Note:** Let us note that the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is different from the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Immaculate Conception celebrates what the Blessed Virgin is by her nature. The festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrates one of the Appearances of our Lady, like that of Our Lady of Fatima. There have been a total of ten Appearances (Apparitions) of our Lady approved by the Catholic Church. On the Immaculate Conception see CCC490ff.

**1. Mary's prophecy** given in her *Magnificat*, "Behold all generations will call me blessed," was fulfilled when the Catholic Church declared four dogmas of Faith about her:

- 1-The Immaculate Conception,
- 2-The Perpetual Virginity,
- 3-The Divine Maternity,
- 4-The Assumption.

**2. The Immaculate Conception** is a dogma based mainly on Christian tradition and theological reasoning. It was defined in 1854 by Pope Pius IX as a dogma of Faith through *Ineffabilis Deus*.

**3. Definition:** From the first moment of her conception, Mary was preserved immune from original sin by the singular grace of God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race. (CCC #491). This means that original sanctity, innocence and justice were conferred upon her, and that she was exempted from all the evil effects of original sin, excluding sorrow, pain, disease and death which are temporal penalties given to Adam. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*).

### 4. Evidences:

(A) **From Church tradition:** The Immaculate Conception is a dogma originating from sound Christian tradition. Monks in Palestinian monasteries started celebrating the feast of the Conception of Our Lady by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The feast spread as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in Italy (9<sup>th</sup> century), England (11<sup>th</sup> century), and France (12<sup>th</sup> century). Pope Leo VI propagated the celebration, and Pope Sixtus IV approved it as a Feast. Finally, in 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma of Faith. Mary herself approved it in 1858 by declaring to Bernadette at Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception." See 2 Thess 2:15:

"Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours."

### (B) From Holy Scripture:

1) God purified the prophet Jeremiah in the womb of his mother and anointed John the Baptist with His Holy Spirit before John's birth. (Jer. 1:5 --"*Before I formed you in the womb of your mother I knew you and before you were born, I consecrated you*"). Hence, it is reasonable that God kept the mother of His Son free from all sins from the first moment of her origin.

2) The angel saluted Mary as "full of grace." The greeting means that she was never, even for a moment, a slave of sin and the devil.

3) Gen. 3:15: -- "I will put enmity between you and the woman and her seed shall crush your head." The woman stands for Mary, and the promise would not be true if Mary had original sin.

### (C)-Argument from reason:

- 1-If we were allowed to select our mother, we would select the most beautiful, healthy and saintly lady. So did God.
- 2-The All-Holy God cannot be born from a woman who was a slave of the devil, even for a moment in her life.

**5. Life messages:** 1) **We need to be pure and holy like our Heavenly Mother.** Every mother wants her children to inherit or acquire all her good qualities. Hence, our Immaculate and holy mother wants us to be holy and pure children. The original sin from which Mary was preserved is the original sin from which we have been freed. Mary is significant for us because the central factors in her life are the central factors in our own. Perhaps the lesson is that, no matter in which direction we may be facing, we need Mary Immaculate in our lives in order to remember who Christ is and who we ourselves are.

2). **We need to be thankful and humble.** Mary's sinlessness was a gift from God, given to her right from the very moment of her conception. Equally, it is by the grace of God that we have received a new heart, a new spirit and the indwelling Holy Spirit to raise us to the level of holiness that the Blessed Virgin Mary enjoyed during her earthly life. Through Faith in Jesus and through the Sacrament of Baptism, having been born again of water and Spirit, we have been adopted into the Body of Christ in the living Hope of receiving our salvation. Through our living Faith, including the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we restore the righteousness of our souls. Through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we abide in Jesus and Jesus in us, this leading us towards our salvation. [Jn 6:56]. Hence, those of us who happen to be holy, who sin less than the average sinner, should regard our holiness as basically a gift of God and not our own achievement. Our attitude should then be characterized by two basic attitudes, thankfulness to God, and humility before those who are naturally and spiritually less-gifted than we are.

3) **Like Mary, we need to say "Yes" to God:** God invites each one of us to continue Mary's "Yes" by welcoming Jesus and making room for him in our lives. Let us ask her to obtain for us the grace to respond as generously to God's call as she did, and to be as faithful in discipleship to her Son as she was. On this feast day, let us ask her to be with us, to guide us, to protect us through her prayers of intercession with her Son.

**6. Application to our Understanding:** The importance of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception shows how seriously God takes sin and that we should also take it. Sin is so corrosive and destructive that the woman who was to bear Jesus could not be tainted with it. This shows us the importance of Advent II and III. In each of these Sundays the readings always include St. John the Baptist. He came preaching a baptism of repentance from sin. The only thing that can keep us from heaven sin! How important is it to overcome sin?

**7. Anecdote:** The favorite name of explorers: In 1492, Columbus discovered America. He sailed in a ship called *Santa Maria de Conception* (St. Mary, the Immaculate Conception). He named the first Island he landed *San Salvador*, in honor of our Savior. Columbus named the second island *Conceptio* in honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception. The fearless French explorer Fr. Marquette who explored the 2300 miles long Mississippi River, flowing through ten states, called it *River of Mary Immaculate*. In fact, all the early American Catholics were so proud of the great truth we celebrate today that the American bishops in 1829 (25 years before the promulgation of the dogma, and the year before the Blessed Mother gave St. Catherine Laboure the design for the Miraculous Medal), chose *Mary Conceived Without Sin* as the patroness of the United States. Hence, this feast is the feast of the country's Heavenly patroness in the U.S.

**8, "Hold it, mother?"** The Pharisees brought the woman, caught red-handed, before Jesus for judgment, and Jesus said, "Let the person who is without sin cast the first stone." They fell silent, and then, all of a sudden, a stone came flying from the crowd. Jesus looked up, surprised and amused, and then said, "Hold it, mother? I was trying to make a point, here." This is a humorous slant to the Catholic belief that Mary was born Immaculate to lead an immaculate life.

# 3: Bishop Sheen on Immaculate Conception: “Just suppose that you could have pre-existed your own mother, in much the same way that an artist pre-exists his painting. Furthermore, suppose that you had the infinite power to make your mother anything that you pleased, just as a great artist like Raphael has the power of realizing his artistic ideas. Suppose you had this double power, what kind of mother would you have made for yourself? Would you not have made her, so far as human beauty goes, the most beautiful woman in the world; and so far as beauty of the soul goes, one who would radiate every virtue, every manner of kindness and charity and loveliness; one who by the purity of her life and her mind and her heart would be an inspiration not only to you but even to your fellow men, so that all would look up to her as the very incarnation of what is best in motherhood? Do you think that our Blessed Lord, who not only pre-existed His own mother but Who had an infinite power to make her just what He chose, would in virtue of all the infinite delicacy of His spirit make her any less pure and loving and beautiful than you would have made your own mother?”

**Introduction:** Mary’s prophecy, given in her *Magnificat*, “Behold all generations will call me blessed,” was fulfilled when the Catholic Church declared four dogmas of Faith about her: 1-Immaculate Conception, 2-Perpetual Virginity, 3-Divine Maternity, and 4-Assumption. The Immaculate Conception is a dogma based mainly on Christian tradition and theological reasoning. It was defined in 1854 by Pope Pius IX through *Ineffabilis Deus*: “From the first moment of her conception, Mary was preserved immune from original sin by the singular grace of God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, savior of the human race.” (CCC #491). This declaration means that original sanctity, innocence and justice were conferred upon her, and that she was exempted from the evil effects of original sin, excluding sorrow, pain, disease and death, the temporal penalties given to Adam (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). “God freely chose Mary from all eternity to be the Mother of his Son. In order to carry out her mission, she herself was conceived Immaculate. This means that, thanks to the grace of God and in anticipation of the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary was preserved from original sin from the first instant of her conception.” (Compendium of the CCC).

The Fathers of the Church from the fourth century believed and taught that the Blessed Virgin Mary had been kept free of all traces of sin by the grace of God because she was to become the Mother of the Lord Jesus. This belief kept company with the other beliefs about Mary: the perpetual virginity of Mary, her sinlessness, and her Divine motherhood. Church history makes known to us that, as early as the seventh century, there was a liturgical observance that proclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary to be free from sin.

**Evidences:** (A) From Church tradition: The Immaculate Conception is a dogma originating from sound Christian tradition. Monks in Palestinian monasteries started celebrating the “*Feast of the Conception of Our Lady*” by the end of 7<sup>th</sup> century. The feast spread as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in Italy (9<sup>th</sup> century), England (11<sup>th</sup> century), and France (12<sup>th</sup> century). Pope Leo VI propagated the celebration, and Pope Sixtus IV approved it as a Feast. Finally in 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma of Faith. Mary herself approved it four years later (1858), by declaring to Bernadette at Lourdes: “*I am the Immaculate Conception.*”

(B) Evidences from Holy Scripture: 1- God purified the prophet Jeremiah in the womb of his mother (Jer 1:5 --“*Before I formed you in the womb of your mother I knew you and before you were born, I consecrated*

you"), and anointed John the Baptist with His Holy Spirit before John's birth (Lk 1:44). Hence, it is reasonable that God kept the mother of His Son free from all sin from the first moment of her origin.

2- The angel saluted Mary as "full of grace". This greeting means that she was never, even for a moment, a slave of sin and the devil.

3- Gen. 3:15 -- "*I will put enmity between you and the woman and her seed shall crush your head.*" The woman stands for Mary, and the promise would not be true if Mary had original sin.

**(C)-Argument from reason:** 1-If we were allowed to select our mother, we would select the most beautiful, healthy and saintly lady. That's what God did. 2- The All-Holy God cannot be born from a woman who was a slave of the devil, even for a moment in her life.

**Additional anecdote:** St. Maximilian Kolbe and the Immaculate Conception: St Maximilian Kolbe founded the *Militia Immaculata* in 1917 with six his fellow- seminarians. "Its goal was nothing less that to bring the whole world to God through Christ under the generalship of Mary Immaculate, and to do so as quickly as possible. Fulfilling this mission through obedience to God's will, in union with Mary Immaculate, was Kobe's entire concern, his pure intention -- and he sacrificed everything for its accomplishment" [Michael Gaitley MIC, *33 Days to Morning Glory* (Stockbridge Massachusetts: Marian Press, 2015), p. 50] "In Poland, Kolbe ... founded the world's largest Franciscan monastery, which he named *Niepokolanow* ("City of the Immaculate"), and he continually urged the more than 600 friars there to become soldier saints for God under Mary Immaculate ... because among creatures, she alone does the will of God perfectly. Therefore, when our wills are united with hers, they're necessarily united to God's will" (Gaitley, p. 57). Then, "in 1941, after decades of incredibly fruitful apostolic labors in Poland and Japan, Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Before his arrest, his brother Franciscans had pleaded with him to go into hiding. He said he was grateful for their loving hearts but couldn't follow their advice. Later, he explained why: 'I have a mission -- the Immaculata has a mission to fulfill.'" In the concentration camp one of the prisoners had managed to escape. In retaliation and as a deterrent to the rest of the prisoners, ten members were chosen at random and told to step forward for execution. One of them, a man with small children wept and pleaded to be spared because he and his wife had small children. Kolbe stepped forward and asked to take this man's place, was accepted, and the group were imprisoned in a bunker to starve to death. In that bunker, Kolbe brought comfort to the others, Finally, after two weeks, the captors executed him with a lethal injection -- on August 14, 1941, the day before the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, his beloved Immaculata.

**For additional information on the Immaculate Conception, visit:**

1) <http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/a115.htm>

2) [www.catholic.com/answers/tracts/\\_fullgra.htm](http://www.catholic.com/answers/tracts/_fullgra.htm)

3) <http://www.philvaz.com/apologetics/ImmaculateConceptionMaryJuniperCarolMariology.htm>

4) <http://www.justforcatholics.org/a182.htm>

5) [http://www.catholic.com/library/Immaculate\\_Conception\\_and\\_Assum.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Immaculate_Conception_and_Assum.asp)

6) Catholic TV: <http://www.realcatholicstv.com/daily/?today=2011-12-08>

7) Fr Mitch Pacwa's **video homily (EWTN):** <https://youtu.be/hGL0vj1Rl6Y>

## **MARTIN LUTHER ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

<http://patrickmadrid.blogspot.com/2010/09/did-martin-luther-believe-in-immaculate.html>

*It seems that Martin Luther, that once-Augustinian priest- turned-Revolutionary, upheld belief in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (even before it was declared a dogmatic doctrine in 1854 by Pope Pius IX). The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds that Mary was preserved from original sin at her conception and from all sin during her life – that she was conceived, lived, and died without any taint of sin.*

The eminent Lutheran scholar Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907-73) has also confirmed that Luther believed in the Immaculate Conception even as a Protestant. Here is Martin Luther in his own words:

"It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin"

- Martin Luther's Sermon "On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God," 1527.

"She is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin—something exceedingly great. For God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil.

- Martin Luther's Little Prayer Book, 1522.

Both quotations derive from Luther's writings after his break from Rome.

Far be it from me to approve of Luther. I only list these quotes to show how far Protestantism has come from its quasi-Catholic origin. If only Lutherans would return to this single doctrine of their founder, how quickly our Lady would turn them into true Catholics! (continue reading . . .)

Later in his life, however, Luther thought that Mary was made Immaculate not at her conception but sometime before the conception of Christ. I have suggested that his later position is more accurately called "immaculate purification." (<http://patrickmadrid.blogspot.com/2010/09/did-martin-luther-believe-in-immaculate.html>) L/17

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