

## **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MARY, THE VIRGIN FULL OF GRACE**

From the earliest times, the Church had the belief that Mary was conceived without original sin, but it was only in 1854 that Pope Pius IX proclaimed it a dogma, that is, a teaching binding every Catholic. Four years later, in 1858, Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes and it was there that Mary Herself revealed to her that She was conceived without original sin.

The teaching of the Church before the apparition in Lourdes was based on the message of the Angel Gabriel, when he told Mary that She was full of grace. She had the fullness of grace so there was no stain of sin on Her. Later, Elizabeth also told Her that of all women She was the most blessed.

Mary was prepared to give birth to the Saviour, so She became the new Ark of the Covenant. She becomes the new Eve, and Jesus the new Adam. The first Adam and the first Eve brought damnation to humanity, due to disobedience and pride, and the second Adam (Jesus) and the second Eve (Mary), brought salvation because of obedience to God.

This is what we heard in the readings of today. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and when they realized that they were naked, they hid themselves. This is what happens to us when we sin; we run away from God. It is not God who goes away from us but we reject Him. They shifted blame and even Adam blamed God saying, "The woman whom you put here with me, she gave me the fruit from the tree, and so I ate it," (Gen.3:12). This is what we also do.

But the "yes" and obedience of Mary has brought us the Redeemer. She is the woman described in Revelation, clothed with sun, the moon at Her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on Her head, (Rev.12:1-2). She was as bright as the sun, so no darkness was in Her.

This solemnity is to tell us that with God all things are possible. Even though we have difficulties in understanding certain things God can do everything. We have to accept them in faith. This feast reminds us of the mighty power of God, His wonderful deeds, and His love for all His sons and daughters.

St. Paul reveals to us that through Christ, we have also been called, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before God. God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. Mary, the first disciple of Jesus, is our model and mentor. Her life tells us that if we allow God He will restore us to our former innocence which Adam and Eve lost. We have special people in our society we look up to for success and great achievements in life. How many of us have taken Mary as our rolemodel and mentor in our spiritual life? We ask Her always to pray for us, but how often do we learn from Her way of life? She is ever ready to take us to Her Son, so let us follow Her footsteps and live a blameless life before God.