

Immaculate Conception 2020 LK 1:26-38

There is only one thing in the world that is definitely and absolutely our own, and that is our free will. Health, power, possessions, and honor can all be taken away from us, but our free will is irrevocably our own. It's free. We can't earn it. Hence, nothing really matters in life, except what we do with our will.

In Mary's first word as recorded in today's gospel, Mary asked how she would conceive in her womb since she knew not man. But when the angel Gabriel said she would conceive of the Holy Spirit, Mary's second word immediately answered, "Fiat!" Let it be done." Stated simply, "Lord, you do with me whatever you want."

Hers was one of the great fiats of the world.

1. The first fiat was at Creation when God said, "Let there be light."
2. Another was at Gethsemane, when Our Blessed Lord said, "Thy will be done."
3. The third was Mary's, pronounced in a Nazarene cottage, "Let it be done to me."

Now, no one would have ever suspected that when Mary resigned herself to God's will by accepting the honor of

becoming the Mother of God, she would ever have to bear a cross. It would also seem that one who was conceived free from original sin, for that is what the Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates, that Mary, conceived in the womb of her mother St. Ann, after having normal marital relations with her husband St. Joachim, was conceived free from the stain of original sin. One would think that Mary should be dispensed from the effect of sin, such as crosses. Yet this honor brought to her at least seven crosses that we know of, the seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

1. The Prophecy of Simeon
2. The Flight into Egypt
3. The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple
4. Mary Meeting Jesus on the Way to Calvary
5. Jesus dying on the Cross
6. The Piercing of the side of Jesus
7. And the Burial of Jesus

All crosses.

There are, many kinds of crosses:

crosses of grief and sorrow,

crosses of want,

crosses of abuse,

crosses of wounded love

crosses of defeat, to name a few.

There is the cross of widows. I was just writing about this in a homily yesterday as I'll be burying a member of the family on Saturday. My Mom described the loss of our Dad as being cut from her head to her feet. How often Our Blessed Lord spoke of widows:

- ✓ in the parable of the judge and the widow, when he rebuked the Pharisees who “devour the houses of widows.” (MK 12:40);
- ✓ when he spoke to the widow of Naim (LK 7:12),
- ✓ and when he praised the widow who threw two coins in the temple treasury (MK 12:42).

Widowhood may have been particularly dear to Him, because His own mother was a widow, for Joseph his foster father was presumably already dead.

The cross of grief - when someone is taken from us. I love the imagery of the shepherd and his sheep. When the sheep have grazed and thinned the grass in the lower regions, the shepherd will take a little lamb in his arms, and carry it up the mountain where the grass is green, lay it down, and soon other sheep will follow. Just so, Our Blessed Lord takes a lamb from

the parched field of a family up to the heavenly green pastures so the rest of the family may keep their eyes on their true home and follow them.

There is the cross of sickness. Our Blessed Lord said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified in it.” (JN 11:4) It’s easier to accept one’s own illness. It’s the illness of another, of a child, a baby, that’s so hard to accept. Resignation to the cross of sickness is one of the very highest forms of prayer.

God certainly takes into account our crosses. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it is said to the rich man, “Remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here whereas you are tormented.” (LK 16:25)

There will always be merit for those who suffer in this world. Because we live in a world where position is determined economically, we forget that in God’s world the well positioned are those who do His will, those who give Him their fiat. Heaven will be a complete reversal of the values of earth. The first shall be last and the last first.

Life consists of two things: active duties and passive circumstances, often in the form of crosses. The first is under

our control, to do God's will. The second is outside of our control. So accept these crosses in God's name. Consider only the present; leave the past to God's justice; the future to God's providence.

The reason most of us are mediocre Christians, up one day, down the next, is simply because we refuse to let God do His work in us. We often make the fatal mistake of thinking that it is what we do that matters, when really what matters is what we let God do in and through us. God sent the angel to Mary, not to ask her to do something, but to let something be done.

So the take away from today's Feast of the Immaculate Conception is to imitate Mary's fiat: Let it be. Lord, do with me whatever you want.