



Conversations of Faith Blog



The Immaculate Conception *The New Eve and Mother of Redemption*

By Timothy Andries, December 2021

“We define the doctrine that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.”(Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus, 1854)

Introduction

1. In Pius IX’s Apostolic Constitution, defining the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father explained not only the doctrine’s long history going back to early Christianity but also its Scriptural foundation. The dogmatic statement also sheds light on the fact that Mary, Our Mother, was predestined to have an active role in the Father’s divine plan of redemption.

2. Our Holy Mother, by providential design is the “New Eve” as her son Jesus, is the “New Adam”. We can be tempted at times into thinking this is another example of “too much emphasis on Mary”. I have to be honest and admit, I was at one time tempted to think the same way. If you look at the litany of titles and names for Mary, it’s easy to get that impression.

3. So what is the Immaculate Conception and how did that make her a participant in our redemption? When I was younger I thought it meant the conception of Jesus, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. It's only after I looked deeper into the history of the teaching, that I gained a better and deeper understanding. Looking closer at Scripture and the Catechism and seeing the parallels between Mary and Eve allowed the pieces to fall together. The picture I now saw was not an "over-dose of Marian Dogmas", but instead a glimpse into Mary's role in the plan of redemption for the human race.

4. So let's take a look at Mary the New Eve and Mother of Redemption. I wish to emphasize that at no time is the necessary role of *Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer*, called into question or in any way "sidelined". Mary is the "New Eve", not the "New Savior". While Our Lady needed redemption just like us, she still played an active role in our redemption according to God's design.

I.

Eve and the Promise of Redemption

"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". (Gen 3:15)

5. We are taught from the Book of Genesis, that God created man and women in His image and likeness, (*Gen 1:26*). Adam and Eve were to be the first parents of the children of God. Both were created without sin that is, they were created with the fullness of grace. They were filled with the life of God and were obedient to Him. They lived in the perfect charity and friendship of God.

6. Eve was to be the "*mother of all the living*" (*Gen 3:20*). As long as Adam and Eve remained in God's perfect friendship, their offspring would share in that same life of grace and divine friendship. But because our first parents fell into sin, humanity, their children would share the same judgment. Human nature was now tainted and unable to hold up under temptation and resist the devil.

7. So here we have part of the background scene with our first parents falling. In doing so, humanity would now forever carry, like a genetic trait, the stain of impurity and disobedience. Humanity now gropes in the dark for something it cannot find and searches for someone it cannot see. Our future at this point is dark and uncertain.

8. The rest of the background is Our Father's plan. It was His will that humanity share in His divine life for eternity. It **IS** His will that man and woman live in His goodness and friendship. So instead of leaving us adrift wallowing in our sin, the Lord God promised that He would redeem and save us. In Gen 3:15, "enmity" means being hostile or opposed to something or someone. So from the start, God set the offspring of Eve in opposition to the offspring of the Devil. Added

to that is the promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The woman and her child would be the Devil's undoing.

II.

The New Eve, Mother of the Redeemer

“Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race.” (Ineffabilis Deus, Pius IX)

9. When you and I watch a movie, we can only see each scene as it is shown. Because we see it time, we have to watch pieces of the drama play out piece by piece over a given period of time. Almighty God, who is all-knowing and all-seeing, exists in eternity. So if God were to watch that same movie, He would see every character and every scene at once. So picture if you will, God seeing the first moments of creation before time began to the fall of Adam and Eve through to the Ascension to the Final Judgement in one shot.

10. In God's providential design, Mary received “preventative redemption”, unlike ours which is liberating. We were liberated from original sin whereas Mary's redemption prevented her from contracting original sin. (*see Theology for the Laity, Defending Our Lady's Privileges*). This preventative measure on the part of God by the foreseen merits of Christ prepared her for the role of Mother of God, Mother of the Church, and Mother of Redemption.

11. Mary's Immaculate Conception was an act of sanctification giving her the fullness of grace so that this new Eve would cooperate fully with the divine will of the Father. We see this in Scripture with the Archangels' greeting, *“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” (Lk 1:28)* and in her response, *“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word”.* (Lk 1:38). See CCC #494.

12. The angelic salutation and Mary's Magnificat reveal that Mary understood that her child was *“Emmanuel” or God-With-Us, (Matt 1:21-25)*. Any Jewish woman would have recognized the fulfillment of prophecy about the promised Messiah (*Mashiach in Hebrew*). Her sanctification before birth would, on the one hand, provide a suitable dwelling for the divine Word of God. Her sinless humanity would be taken up by the Son of God and offered to the Father for the redemption of the world.

13. Through Mary's yes to God and faithful cooperation, our Lord and Redeemer was born. She raised and nurtured Him into manhood and followed His mission to Calvary. In a real sense, she sacrificed her own heart and flesh on the cross for our salvation. In doing so, the Mother of

the Redeemer became Mother of Redemption. The devastation of sin and disobedience brought by Adam and Eve was reversed by the perfect faith and obedience of Jesus and Mary the New Adam and New Eve.

III. Conclusion

14. The Immaculate Conception is a gift from God's own loving heart to His children. It is a testament from the Father of His paternal care and promises to bring us back to Him. Mary is that most precious gift, full of grace, immaculate, humble, and faithful. Mary Immaculate is our new Ark that contains the new and everlasting covenant.

15. Mary Immaculate, the New Eve continues her role as the Mother of the Living. The mother of those united through baptism to Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. Just as she prayed for the Apostles in the Upper Room, she continues to pray and intercede for us today. Let us turn to Our Immaculate Mother to ask her intercession and imitate her virtues so that we too may carry the Word of God, alive within us.

The Month of December, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Prayer to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

O most Holy Virgin, immaculate in body and spirit, look kindly on me as I implore your powerful intercession.

O most Holy Mother, receive my prayers as I present them to God.
(state your intentions here)

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, you intercede for us with your Son.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Amen.