

Faith in Five – Adults The Immaculate Conception



1. Some people mistakenly think that the term Immaculate Conception refers to Christ's conception in Mary's womb without the intervention of a human father. Others think the Immaculate Conception means Mary was conceived "by the power of the Holy Spirit," in the way Jesus was, but this is also incorrect.



The **Immaculate Conception** is the Catholic dogma that Mary was preserved free from the effects of the sin of Adam (usually referred to as "original sin") from the first instant of **her** conception (CCC 491).

In the angel's greeting to Mary, a reference is made to her Immaculate Conception. The angel Gabriel said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). This is the only instance where an angel refers to Mary as a title, and not a name. Mary is referred to as "highly favored" or "full of grace". Both translations refer to the Greek term *kecharitomene*, which means a gift, favor or grace. This word is used nowhere else in the holy Scriptures. In Biblical Greek, this verbal form suggests permanence and singularity. Such singular, permanent grace in Mary is the same concept affirmed in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

2. The grace Mary received was not a result of the angel's visit and was with her, for her entire life. She was in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence, and the corruptible stain of Adam's original sin did not blemish her. St. Luke uses this powerful expression *kecharitomene* in his gospel, indicating that God has already graced Mary previous to the annunciation, making her a vessel who 'has been' and 'is now' filled with divine life."
3. In 1830, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Catherine Labouré, revealing to her an image of what is referred to as the Miraculous Medal. The medal was forged as a remembrance of this apparition, and contains the words, "**O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.**" This popular sacramental affirms the sinlessness of Mary and her Immaculate Conception.
4. Blessed Pope Pius IX issued a dogmatic definition in 1854 affirming Mary's Immaculate Conception. This declaration ([Ineffabilis Deus](#)) indicates that the teaching has been infallibly revealed by God through the living Tradition of the Church. "We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved immaculate

from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful”.

5. The doctrine was not created in 1854, but fully defined for the faithful and those opposed to the teaching. The Immaculate Conception has strong roots in Church writings dating back to the 4th century. "Mary, a virgin not only undefiled but a virgin whom grace has made inviolate, free from every stain." - St. Ambrose of Milan, 340-370 AD.
6. Blessed Pope Pius IX's initiative to define Mary's perpetual sinlessness was given validity in 1858. That year Mary made a series of apparitions to the young French peasant girl St. Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes. In the apparitions, Mary identified herself by stating, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Once more, as with St. Catherine Labouré, Mary's sinlessness had been verified by the supernatural.

7. We honor Our Lady as the **Patroness of the United States**. One of the first churches in the United States was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in the 1500's. In 1792, the first bishop of the United States placed the diocese of Baltimore (which covered 13 colonies) under Our Lady's protection. As the republic grew into the United States, a need for a holy guardian was called for and in 1846, bishops in the United States declared Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception as patroness. **The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated on December 8, is a Holy Day of Obligation for Catholics in the United States.** It is nine months before the Nativity of Mary, celebrated on September 8.



An Act of Consecration to Mary Immaculate

Most Holy Trinity, we put the United States of America into the hands of Mary Immaculate in order that she may present the country to you. Through her we wish to thank you for the great resources of this land and for the freedom which has been its heritage. Through the intercession of Mary, have mercy on the Catholic Church in America. Grant us peace. Have mercy on our President and on all the officers of our government. Grant us a fruitful economy born of justice and charity. Have mercy on capital and industry and labor. Protect the family life of the nation. Guard the innocence of our children. Grant the precious gift of many religious vocations. Mary, Immaculate Virgin, Our Mother, Patroness of our land, we praise you and honor you and give ourselves to you. Protect us from every harm. Pray for us, that acting always according to your will and the Will of your Divine Son, we may live and die pleasing to God. Amen.

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