

The Immaculate Conception

DECEMBER

There is a lot of confusion surrounding the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception. Many people mistake this to be about Christ's Conception. This is easy to do because the Gospel reading for the Novus Ordo speaks at length about the Angel Gabriel coming to Mary and telling her she has conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 26-38). This is the perfect Gospel reading for the Solemnity of the Annunciation, and the Church tends to agree because it is also the reading for that feast.

In the Traditional Latin Mass, however, the Gospel reading for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception *may* hold the record for shortest Gospel of the liturgical year:

“At that time, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And when the angel come to her, he said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are you among women.’”
(*Luke 1:26-28*)

This is because the words of the Angel Gabriel to our Blessed Mother is the only indication within the Bible that Mary was immaculately conceived and preserved from the stain of original sin. Mary, who had a human mother (Saint Anne) and a human father (Saint Joachim), was given special graces and preserved from sin from the moment of her conception. The Immaculate Conception is about **HER** conception, not Christ's.

Mary, who is completely depending on the salvation Christ brings, does not have sin and did not sin *because* of the saving power of Jesus Christ. He is born to Mary later in time, but God is outside time and space and certainly has the power to preserve the mother of Christ—our Blessed Mother—from the stain of original sin.



“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!”

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WHAT DOES THE CATECHISM SAY ABOUT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION?

490 To become the mother of the Savior, Mary “was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.” The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as “full of grace”. In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God’s grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

492 The “splendor of an entirely unique holiness” by which Mary is “enriched from the first instant of her conception” comes wholly from Christ: she is “redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son”. The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” and chose her “in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love”.

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God “the All-Holy” (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as “free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature”. By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

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508 From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. “Full of grace”, Mary is “the most excellent fruit of redemption” (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

SAY IT IN LATIN

Learn to say the Angel Gabriel’s words to Mary in Latin.

Latin: “Ave, grátia plena, Dóminus tecum: Benedicta tu in muliéribus.”

English: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”

Ave, Ah-vey	grátia gr-ah-tee-ah	plena, puh-leh-na	Dóminus Doh-mee-noo-ss	tecum: tay-koom
	Benedicta Ben-eh-deck-tah	tu too	in in	muliéribus. moo-lee-err-ee-boos

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SOME FAST FACTS ABOUT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



1. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated on December 8, 1854 by Pope Pius IX in his apostolic constitution, *Ineffabilis Deus*.
2. December 8th falls exactly nine months before the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (September 8)
3. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is the Patronal feast day of the United States (and several other countries).
4. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which is of course dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, is the largest Catholic Church building in North America.
5. If December 8th falls on a Sunday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is transferred to the following Monday (GNLY, #5). However, some Bishops disagree if your obligation transfers or not. Check with your local Bishop.
6. If someone asks you about cerulean (blue) vestments, you should reply, "that's a load of Papal bull!" This is an 1864 Spanish history joke. Of note, blue is NOT an approved liturgical color, nor has anyone found the mythical Papal Bull from 1864 (or any other time) granting permission for blue.

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