

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The season of Advent is a time of preparation and a time of anticipation. We are preparing to welcome Jesus Christ and we celebrate this season in anticipation of his birth. Today, we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a feast of preparation and a feast of anticipation.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates the day that Mary was conceived in the womb of Saint Ann. Today is not a celebration of the day when the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived the Lord Jesus. We celebrate that event on the feast of the Annunciation, some nine months before Christmas Day.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates that Mary was conceived without original sin. From the first moment of her conception, from the moment when her life began, the Blessed Virgin Mary belonged entirely to God.

The grace of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a grace of preparation. From the first moment of her life, when she can do nothing for herself, it is the grace of God that saves her. The work of salvation and the work of sanctification always begin with the action of God. In the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary is prepared to be the mother of the Messiah. She is given the grace to be able to give herself completely to the will of the Lord. It is the grace of

her Immaculate Conception the enables her to respond to the words of the Archangel Gabriel: “Let it be done unto me according to your word.” The Blessed Virgin Mary is prepared by her Immaculate Conception to be the first tabernacle of the Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a grace given in anticipation. This special grace is given to Mary in anticipation of the redemptive work of her Son, in whom alone and through whom alone is the salvation of the world. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the first to receive the grace that will be won on the cross of Calvary. Mary receives this grace in anticipation of the glory that will be revealed.

We celebrate the mighty work of Almighty God in this time of preparation and this time of anticipation. We join with all creation and with every generation and name Mary as one who is blessed. As we celebrate the Eucharist today, we give praise to the God of Heaven above who claimed Blessed Mary at her conception, for He claimed us in our baptism. We ask the Lord for the grace to prepare, with Mary, to receive the gift of the Lord Jesus, at Christmas. And we await, in joyful anticipation, for the glory that will be revealed.