

**December 8, 2019**

Dear Friends,

December 8 is the date for the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The belief we Catholics hold is that a special grace of God was given to render Mary free from the effect of original sin from the moment she was conceived in the womb of her mother Anne. Her parents did not know that is was happening. They never knew. Mary did not know this was happening. She lived her whole life without the realization that God had so singled her out for blessing. Although she felt greatly blessed.

What Mary did know was what the Archangel Gabriel said to her: “Hail full of grace. The Lord is with you.” Full of grace. Grace is not a something. Grace is the effect of being in intimate union with God. Grace is the inner life of the Trinity. For the archangel Gabriel to say to Mary that she was “Full of grace” was not something that Gabriel decided on his own. It was part of the message that the Father gave to the angel to be delivered to the young maiden Mary of Nazareth.

Full of Grace. In complete intimate union with God. No sin. (Latin word: macula=spot or stain. No macula. She was immacula from the moment of her conception). Not anywhere in her or impinging upon her. God’s grace prevented that. Why? So that the beloved Son would be born of the Divine Spirit and the sinless maiden; the maiden without spot or stain. Can God do such a thing? Well, we believe that God surely has the power to do this. But what we believe is not just whether God has the power to do this. We believe that God actually did do this. God acted beforehand to render this young woman to be the perfect vessel in which the Word would become flesh. From God’s perfection and our human untainted purity and richness—but by God’s intervention and design. We celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December because that is nine months to the day when we celebrate Mary’s own birthday, September 8<sup>th</sup>.

God is preparing for and looking out for the Holy One. Just as He sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Lord, God also took the time to prepare the young lass so that she could be the best one to undo the sin of Eve and the sin of Adam. In the moment of Mary’s conception, she became a new Eve, the first woman of the new creation. From the first Eve came sin and surrendering to temptation. From the new Eve will come faithfulness, obedience and submission in trust to the Spirit of God. These are the conditions for the possibility for the new creation to begin and for the child to be born of the overshadowing of Mary by the Holy Spirit to be identified as the Holy One of God, the Incarnate Word of God. His name, as we know and have been told, shall be Jesus.

Peace,  
Msgr. McHenry