

The Solemnity of The Immaculate Conception of Mary –
8 December 2016/Year A –
and the Observance of the 72nd of the
Founding of Our Lady of Victory Parish
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Genesis 3:9-15; 20

- *The first “undoing” of what God had done*

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 98 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Ephesians 1:3-6; 11-12

- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, **to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise and glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.**"

GOSPEL:

LUKE 1:26-38

- "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

I. There is an old Latin statement: “*Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*” . . . the **law** of prayer . . . or, the **way** we worship . . . is the **law** of belief . . . or, **what** we believe, and determines **how** we will live.

Bottom line is, there is a purpose and a reason for us to come together . . . celebrating and praising God for what God has done in and through the Blessed Virgin Mary . . .

It is not as if God needs this . . . as if God needs to hear our voices raised in song . . . words of prayer come across our lips . . . our standing, bowing, kneeling, gesturing in any other way . . . God does **not** need this . . . nor, for that matter, does the Blessed Virgin Mary . . . but **we** . . . you and I **need** this . . . for it is our opportunity to express what it is we believe . . . and more . . . reaffirm just **how** we will live.

II. Consider the Preface that will be prayed for this great festival. It is a prayer, once the gifts of bread and wine have been received and prepared that praises God for what God chose to do in and through Mary. It is also a prayer that offers us a great understanding of the “why” God acted in this way . . .

“For you preserved the most Blessed Virgin Mary from all stain of original sin, so that in her, endowed with the rich fullness of your grace, you might prepare a worthy Mother

for your Son and signify the **beginning of the Church . . .**”, continuing with “you placed her above all others to be for your people an **advocate of grace** and a **model of holiness.**”

In yet another Preface . . . one that calls particular attention to “Mary, Model and Mother of the Church” . . . we are reminded that “with due praise, as we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary”, ultimately, **we proclaim the greatness of God . . .** echoing again what so many throughout the centuries have come to believe and embrace with regard to Mary . . . her role in salvation history . . . and her **significant role** as it applies to the **Church**: “Receiving your Word in her Immaculate Heart, she was found worthy to conceive him in her virgin’s womb and, giving birth to the Creator, she **nurtured the beginnings of the Church.**”

So yes, while we do gather . . . as is fitting . . . to celebrate Mary . . . in truth . . . we gather to praise God for what God has done . . . in Mary . . . by the power of the Spirit . . . through Christ . . . and on our behalf . . .

Our purpose . . . our reason is specific . . . our prayer and our belief is clear . . . all of which remind us just **how** we are to live.

III. We . . . you and I and countless others are that

“Church” that was brought into being in the very womb of Mary . . . a womb that God prepared . . . so that the one who became one like us in all things but sin could be born in time . . . could prove His love for us on the Cross . . . and ultimately . . . ultimately re-create us through this selfless act of love so that we might become His very presence in the world.

God did what God did in and through Mary so that we could be nurtured at the very beginning of this people God’s Son would call and choose . . . and saw fit to continue to nurture us even today . . . until His return in glory.

Listen, again, to the words in the reading from Saint Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: we have **all** been chosen, “in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish”. And this choice has always been for a specific purpose: so that each of us might give a visible, tangible witness and expression to God’s abundant grace, granted to us . . . God’s beloved. **This** is what we **pray** . . . **this** is what we **believe** . . . **this** is **how** we are to live!

Just as Mary was the Christ bearer, so, too, are **we!**

What God **did** in Mary's life is no different than what God has done . . . *and continues to do* . . . in **all** of our lives. Oh, the process may have been different . . . Mary's being "full of grace" from the moment of **her** conception . . .

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and all of us being "full of grace" . . . this **same grace** . . . from the moment of our Baptism . . . but the intention was always the same on the part of God. And, the call to each of us to respond in the way Mary responded: greatly troubled? yes! but **faithful? yes!** as well!!

This is what we **pray** . . . this day and always . . . **this** is what we **believe** . . . **this** is **how** we must live!