

REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Every year, during the season of Advent, we have the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This high feast day reminds us that Mary was conceived immaculately meaning without the stain of sin. She was always prepared to be the dwelling place of the Most High, the womb that the Lord chose to be born among the people. Mary knew how to respond to this mission, as the *Lady of 'Yes to Lord,'* the new Eve; the mother of the new humanity inaugurated in the incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ the Lord.

The readings help us to delve deeper into Mary's availability and self-giving, contrasting her with our first parents, Adam and Eve, who represent humanity born of God, but who did not accept his plans, his creative project.

In the first reading, through the figures of Adam and Eve, the sacred scripture shows us how humanity, by rejecting God's plan, embarks on a path of sin. A path that distances itself from God, confronting its fragility and nakedness. A path that sees in the other person someone who pushes us towards evil and not the companion in our journeys; one who feels our own nature as an enemy. When man turns away from God, he takes the path of fear, selfishness, and mistrust. Man is faced with horizons of suffering, destruction, unhappiness, and death. However, we are also told that God does not abandon humanity in its sin; He promises it a savior who will be born of the woman and will crush the head of the serpent -- the deceiver, indeed the spirit of evil.

In the second reading, St. Paul, writing to the Christians of Ephesus, reminds them of God's plan for humanity, as revealed in Jesus Christ: *“that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, ... In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things ... so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”*

It was through Mary that this project was realized. In her womb Jesus Christ became incarnate, and he became human with us, thus opening the path of Life for us, and reconciling us with God. The way to realize this path of life is holiness, to be holy as Christ Jesus taught us, living in the ways of mercy, forgiveness, and peace.

In the Gospel, we see how Mary sets herself up as a model for us in this following of Jesus Christ. A model of the holiness that God asks of us. She is the *Lady of Yes, Lord*, who places herself before God as a humble servant, giving her whole life to the service of God's saving plans. She becomes the new Eve, who gives birth to the new humanity, conceiving in her womb the one awaited by the world: *our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord*. She is the woman of hope, who believes that God fulfills his promises and gives herself to him, trusting him completely.

Mary thus becomes the Lady of Advent, our companion in waiting for the Savior. She teaches us to prepare the way for the Lord by being faithful to the Gospel, by being people of faith and trust, and by affirming hope as a fundamental virtue in our Christian journeys. With Mary, let us learn to say yes to God and to build the new humanity inaugurated in Jesus Christ.

Amen.