

Mary, the Immaculate Conception



When Mary appeared at Lourdes, to St. Bernadette, she was asked by the Bishop through Bernadette, “Who are you?” Her response was “I am the Immaculate Conception.” In December of 1884, about 40 years later, Pope Pius IX promulgated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. We celebrate that feast this week.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is about Mary. The teaching of the Church says that from the very first moment of her conception, Mary was completely free from original sin and its effects. This very special privilege was given Mary through the “merits of Jesus, her Son.” This means that she was free from the many things which make us weak enough to choose sin. Mary had the gift of sanctifying grace. This gift, recognized by Gabriel at the Annunciation, filled Mary. God filled Mary with His life and love from the beginning of her life. Her closeness to Jesus, that closeness of a child in its mother’s womb, increased Mary’s holiness. While Mary was free from original sin, she was not free of the suffering which all human beings know: suffering, sickness, sorrow and death.

Because of Mary’s privilege of being the Mother of God, we honor her. She was the first teacher of Jesus. She cared for Him along with St. Joseph, teaching Him to walk and talk. Together they formed Jesus in His humanity. On the cross Jesus gave us His mother to be our mother. Her many appearances in the last century show us her continuing concern for humanity.