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The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
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Gn 3: 9-15, 20; Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12; Lk 1: 26-38
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“The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is the belief that Mary received the [**benefits and**] **grace** of Jesus’ death and resurrection even before the event occurred in human time.

This means that Mary was not affected by Original Sin--- the condition of humanity that leads us to choose what *we want* over what *God wants*. With grace given to Mary, she was able to choose God’s desires for her over any personal desires.”

Mary is full of grace.

Born over 2000 years ago--- as the Mother of God--- she is closely tied to all generations.

I’d like to share with you some reflections given on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Benedict XIV to the city of Rome on Dec 08, 2009. These particular reflections remind us of Mary’s solidarity with our everyday lives.

Pope Benedict spoke of the effects of the news media in our day and age--- going so far as to suggest that we can allow it to “poison us,” after a time, because, as he says, “the *negative* is never fully cleansed out of our system, but accumulates day after day.” The Pope then posed the question, “What does Mary tell [us]?” She -in effect- says, “Do not be afraid, [my Son] defeated evil, uprooted it, freeing us from its rule.” Mary, in speaking of [Jesus], “reminds us of grace’s victory over sin and makes us **hope** even in the. . .most difficult [human] situations.”

Pope Benedict continued: “Mary Immaculate helps us rediscover and defend what is inside people,

because in her there is perfect transparency of soul and body.

She is purity in person. . . .”

The Pope [calls] us “to look at [Mary’s] innocence and purity once more: “. . . although we are surrounded by evil, and constant news keeps that evil in front of us, ***we must remember that Mary is no different from us.***”

Benedict asserts that even “though the evil [2000 years ago] may have been different, ***Mary*** was surrounded by evil---- pain, and suffering *as well.*” She lived in a country that “was occupied by a foreign government that sought to control Jewish practices. Life was hard. Every occupation in Nazareth was geared to nothing more than -subsistence- in order to live. Life expectancy was short.” Mary cared for “her only Son whom she would see put to death.”

Pope Benedict bids us to hear the voice of “Mary---- the voice that comes *not what she said* but *from how she lived.* Despite what she lived through and witnessed, Mary never lost her innocence. She never lost her purity of heart.”

“...in baptism we were given the same Sanctifying Grace [as Mary], a grace that is enough to allow us to face sin without becoming sinful ourselves. Mary’s purity shows us ourselves as we are meant to be. We are meant to be *in love* with our Creator and with creation.”

The Pope reminds us that “we are able to rise above the seduction of evil. We just have *to choose* to do so.” He says: “If we shine goodness on our choices, the right choices will be clear. Let us listen to the same grace given to Mary and refuse to be mastered by sin.”