

## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION-2008

So, why the Immaculate Conception? Today is the patronal feast of the United States, so perhaps this is a good day to reflect upon the cause of so much pain and suffering, so much terror, so much war. It is a day to reflect upon a fundamental of our Catholic Faith....Original Sin and our human condition.

Original Sin means both the sin that Adam and Eve committed and the consequences of this first sin: the hereditary sin in which we, the descendants of Adam, are born. For anyone who thinks that our sins don't really matter, all he or she has to do is look at how the results of Adam's sin has affected the entirety of human existence.

Today's Solemnity calls for us to remember our days in paradise, or at least imagine them and ask, "What will it take to get us back to that state of perfect union with God our Father?" We know the answer.

Blessed Pope Pius IX, on December 8, 1854, pronounced and defined the millennially-held truth that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was preserved exempt from all stain of Original Sin."

This “merit” of Jesus Christ is offered to us as well. It is not something we earn. It is the same gift offered to Mary, something Jesus has earned for us.

Today’s Solemnity is truly about two men and two women....Adam and Jesus Christ; Mary and Eve. God allowed Mary to be conceived and born into the same state of perfection and grace in which Eve was created. For us, Original Sin has to be removed in Baptism, but for Mary, she was born free of it.

We must also remember that Mary, conceived without sin, was nevertheless, always free to *choose* sin. Mary made the fundamentally different choice than did Eve. When given the opportunity to choose between what God desired versus what she wanted, Eve chose the latter; Mary chose God.

You and I stand before the same choice in life. Mary chose God; so can we. Like Mary, we, too, have to be told: “Be not afraid.” Mary’s *fiat*, her “yes,” can echo in our souls as well. Mary gave us our Savior. Eve gave us death. The choice is ours. “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee!”