

The Immaculate Conception Of Mary



Catechism of the Catholic Church

722: "The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" should herself be "full of grace." She was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty."



In 1854, Pope Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception as a dogma of the Catholic Church. In the Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Church taught that Mary, "from the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."

While the infallible Dogma was proclaimed in 1854, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated almost four hundred years earlier in 1476.



Ephraim the Syrian writing in the year 350:

“Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity....alone made in thy entirety the home of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit....my Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolate spotless robe of Him Who clothes Himself with light as with a garment...flower unfading, purple woven by God, alone most immaculate.”

Ephraim the Syrian, Precationes ad Deiparam

Genesis 3:15 "The Lord God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel"

Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden



Genesis 3:15 is the first "good news," the first Gospel, a prophecy of total absolute hatred (enmity) between Satan and a woman. From this woman's "seed" a redeemer will come and strike the head of Satan.

This "woman" cannot be Eve for there was no enmity between her and Satan whom she obeyed. This prophetic woman is Mary who obeyed God and said at the Annunciation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to His will"

In the Apostolic Constitution's decree on the Immaculate Conception, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX states:

In saying, "I will put enmities between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed" taught . . . that his most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and, at the same time, the very enmity of both [Mary and her Son] against the evil one was significantly expressed."

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”

Luke 1:28

In Greek, the greeting of the angel to Mary was *Kaire*, *kekaritomene*, or “Hail, full of grace.” When one greeted another with *Kaire*, a name or title would be found in the immediate context. In addressing Jesus with, “Hail, king of the Jews” He was given a title. Likewise Mary was given the title, “Full of Grace” by the angel Gabriel.

In the Greek “*kecharitomene*” is a perfect passive participle. That means one is endowed with favor or grace in a “permanent or perfect” fashion. According to Greek grammatical lexicons, the perfect stem of a Greek verb means the “perpetuation of a permanent result or completed action.”



Typology--Mary the New Eve

One of the earliest references comparing Mary with Eve is the Church Father Justin Martyr (AD 165). He contrasted Mary’s obedience with Eve’s disobedience. His insight was repeated a generation later by Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 200): “What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith.”

The Annunciation was the antithesis of Eve’s disobedience. The parallels are obvious: both were women, both were virgins, both were approached by angels who promised them something glorious should they cooperate with their respective propositions, both stood at the dawn of creation (Christ’s work was a “new creation”). Eve was created immaculate, without sin just as Mary was conceived immaculate, without sin.

The contrasts, too, are obvious: In the one case, disobedience of God brought misery, while in the other, obedience brought about happiness; the one was all-too-eager to hear what the evil spirit was suggesting, while the second was “troubled” at the angel’s wondrous greeting; the first accepted the angelic proposal even though it contradicted God’s word, while the second tested the message by its fidelity to God’s word.

Unlike the first woman, the Virgin always obeyed God, was always at enmity with the treacherous serpent, and was made the mother of all who are spiritually alive through grace. Eve is the mother of all according to the flesh, “the mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20), but Mary is seen as the Mother of all according to the spirit. Thus Mary came to be called the New Eve.

Epiphanius writes (AD 403): “But we must consider another marvelous aspect of the comparison between Eve and Mary. Eve became for men the cause of death, because through her death entered the world. Mary, however, was the cause of life, because life has come to us through her. For this reason, the Son of God came into the world, and, ‘where sin abounded grace superabounded’

Typology-- Mary Ark of the Covenant



What was the Ark of the Old Covenant? The ark was the holiest of all objects. It was sacred because of what it contained. What did it contain? It carried the stone tablets of the Law that God gave Moses at Mount Sinai. It also contained the manna from the desert which sustained the Israelites on their journey through the desert. And it contained the staff of Aaron, the first priest.

In Exodus 25 God gave specific instructions on how the ark should be constructed.

“Make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst....make an ark of acacia wood...overlay it with pure gold, within and without.”

1 Chronicles 15:12-14 records that the persons who bore the ark were to be spiritually clean.

“Sanctify yourselves so that you may bring up the ark of the Lord.... “

There would be no sense in sanctifying men who carried a box where God dwelled, and not sanctifying the womb who carried God himself!

The Immaculate Conception is the teaching that Mary, from the moment of conception, was without sin and remained without sin her entire life. Mary was made free not only from original sin but also preserved from any effects of original sin. This means that she had no corrupt nature. It also means that she remained free from actual personal sin as well.

How does Typology helps us to understand that Mary was immaculately conceived, pure and holy and without sin?

Looking at the ark typology, the Old Testament ark was lined with pure gold, both inside and outside. It was holy and could not be touched by anyone. Why? Because God dwelled within the ark!

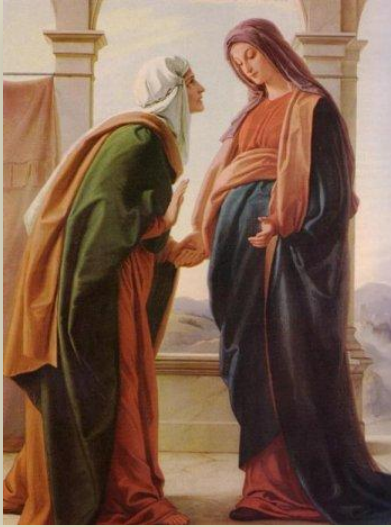
In the same way, Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant had to be pure both inside and outside as well. She was holy and could not be ‘touched’ by sin. Why? Because God dwelled within her!

For God to dwell within her womb, she had to be pure and spotless. God is so pure and holy that He needs to be ‘contained’ in something pure and holy as well.

The ark carried the Word of God in stone, the Commandments, the manna that came from heaven and the staff of Aaron, the sign of a priest. In other words the ark carried representations of the future Messiah.

Mary carried in her womb the Messiah Himself, the Word of God in the flesh, the True Manna that came from heaven and she carried, not the sign of a priest, but the one true High Priest Jesus Christ.

The Typology of Luke's Gospel



We have seen how Jesus, Peter and Paul used Typology to present Old Testament types with their New Testament fulfillments. Luke also uses Typology to show that Mary is the New Ark of the Covenant.

In Exodus 40:34 we read that God the Holy Spirit overshadowed and then indwelt the Ark. The Ark became the dwelling place of the presence of God

In Luke 1:35 we read that God the Holy Spirit overshadowed and then indwelt Mary. At that time Mary's womb became the dwelling place of the presence of God

In 2 Samuel 6:1-11 The Ark traveled to the hill country of Judah to rest in the house of Obed-edom.

In Luke 1:39 Mary traveled to the hill country of Judah (Judea) to the home of Elizabeth.

In 2 Samuel 6:14 Dressed in a priestly ephod, King David approached the Ark and danced and leapt for joy

In Luke 1:43 John the Baptist, son of a priest who would himself become a priest, leapt for joy in Elizabeth's womb at the approach of Mary

In 2 Samuel 6:15 David shouted for joy in the presence of God and the Holy Ark:

“How can the ark of the Lord come to me?”

In Luke 1:42 Elizabeth exclaimed with a loud cry of joy in the presence God within Mary:

“Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

In 2 Samuel 6:11 we are told the ark remained in the house of Obed-edom for 3 months.

In Luke 1:56 we are told that Mary remained in the house of her cousin Elizabeth for 3 months.

In 1 Kings 8 The ark is returned to Jerusalem where the presence and glory of God is revealed in the Temple.

In Luke 1:56 Mary returned to Jerusalem where she presents God the Son in the Temple



Why is Mary most often pictured as wearing blue?

Numbers 4:5-6 “the Lord said to Moses...When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the Ark of the Covenant with it; then they shall put on it a covering of goatskin and spread over that a cloth of blue.”

In his Gospel, John records that at the foot of the cross Jesus turned to His mother Mary and said, “Woman, behold your son” then turning to John He said, “Behold your mother.”

In calling His mother “woman” Jesus is alluding to the “woman” of Genesis 3:15 whose seed conquers the serpent.

Catechism 2618 “It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true “Mother of all the living.”

In the Book of Revelation John reveals that Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant.

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple and there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake and heavy hail and a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” Rev. 11:19-12:1

Mary was at enmity with Satan. As the ark of His covenant Mary was pure and holy. She was full of grace and by a “singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.” (Pope Pius IX)



Recommended books: *Mary Mother of the Son Volumes 1 and 2* by Mark Shea (Buy at ewtn.com)

Six disk audio CD *The Gospel Truth about Mary* by Tim Staples buy at Catholic.com

Next topic: the **Protestant objections** and the Catholic Answers to the Immaculate Conception.