

Interprovincial Marian Apostolate Update

Homily Helps for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Submitted by the generosity of Brad Milunski

Update of the International and National Militia Immaculata

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

December 8

Genesis 3:9-15, 20

Nicknamed by St. Irenaeus as the “Protoevangelium” because of v. 15, this passage tells the all-too-familiar tale of *the* sin and its aftermath. What we might view today by our standards as a rather innocent act of disobedience by children—picking and eating fruit from a forbidden tree—soon spirals downward into lies, shame and blame. There is something about sin in our human experience that goes beyond isolated acts into the formation of character. If we tell too many lies, we become dishonest people; if we close our eyes to the poor often enough, we begin to be identified as selfish or uncharitable *persons*. Genesis 3 reminds us in story form that sin oftentimes is “mortal” not just because of an isolated act, but because its effects can kill us as persons and thus weaken or break our ties with others in the human family. The note of hope in Genesis 3, however, is that God continues to take care of the disobedient couple, and as Irenaeus would say, promises a Savior in the final verses, with more than a hint of the battle to come.

Psalm 98 (selected verses)

This psalm also occurs on Christmas (Mass During the Day) because it is a wonderful song of elation over God’s saving deeds and fidelity. It is obviously a reminder that any kind of victory comes from the Lord, and we have all the responsibility in the world to make it known to “the ends of the earth.”

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

Here we inhabit the scriptural passages that so inspired the promoters of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Paul tells us in Ephesians to go beyond our narrow human minds, often wounded by sin and its aftereffects, and think big: God’s plan goes beyond even what we’ve experienced in the suffering and death of Jesus to a time before creation even happened. Christ could not have been in God’s mind only as a last-minute thought. The whole plan was worked out beyond our imagining, so that human persons “exist for the praise of his glory” and are given a pattern for daily living in the gracious and sinless activity of Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:26-38

This may be the most frequently depicted Gospel scenes in the history of Western art. The future Mother of God is greeted as “full of grace.” The Greek word used, *kecharitomene*, indicates a completed action whose effects continue into the present. There is no doubt that Mary has been graced and favored. We notice, however, that the sinless one is afraid. Fear, we recall, is no sin in itself, but it can lead to the sin of failure to act on God’s or someone’s behalf.

Reminded by the angel of God's fidelity and the fact that nothing is impossible from the divine perspective, Mary's sinlessness and complete freedom give rise to one of the most important yes's in history.

The Feast

Promoted in the Franciscan school, promulgated as a celebration for the whole Latin church by our own Sixtus IV, and made the cornerstone of Marian spirituality by St. Maximilian Kolbe, the dogma of Mary's preservation from original sin as a "singular grace and privilege" *because of Jesus Christ* was formulated officially by Pius IX in 1854. As the scriptural readings move from the story of sin to the story of overwhelming grace, the feast actually downplays the starring role that sin often has in the human drama. The day invites us to think big and to remember how powerful and loving our God is to have planned for Christ far beyond the limits of time that our human minds can embrace—limits which we can too often settle for in the daily choices we make. We are invited to make the words of the Alternate Opening Prayer our own: "Trace in our actions the lines of her love, in our hearts her readiness of faith." We are invited to imagine a love that doesn't know sin and then to help ready this world for the fullness of God's kingdom by allowing that kind of love, free from shame, blame and lies, to be brought to birth again (and again) as our character is formed in Christ. Pius IX's closing words speak directly to us even today: with Mary's example and prayer for and with us, "nothing is to be feared, nothing is hopeless."

Update on The Militia of the Immaculate

The Militia of the Immaculate, held an **International Extraordinary Elective Assembly**, from October 11-16, 2010, at the College of the Seraphicum in Rome, with appointed delegates from a variety of countries participating.

The week preceding the elections, was a time of intense work on defining the major directions which the Association wants to take upon itself in the next six years, deepening the roots of the principal desire of St. Maximilian Kolbe: consecration to the Immaculate.

In an atmosphere of tranquility and joy, the participants brought their diverse experiences, sharing their own cultural and spiritual perspective, on the one hand, and on the other, coming to appreciate a unity around a single idea: bringing all people to Christ, through the Immaculate.



On October 16, 2010, at the conclusion of the week, the President of the Association of the Militia of the Immaculate, Raffaella Aguzzoni, a Father Kolbe Missionary of the Immaculate, was elected, along with her Council, made up of members from various countries: Friar Patrick Greenough (USA), Friar François Godefert (France), Friar Sebastian Quaglio (Brazil), Friar Piotr Cuber (Poland), and Friar Louis Mary Schmid (Australia).

National MI Council and Conference

The **National MI Council** which met on October 22, was followed by the **National MI Conference** at Marytown. The theme of the Conference was “Priestly People, A Kingdom of Priests for God our Father”. The National Council will meet again in February in West Covena, CA to work on the National MI website, creating a regular email blast as well as an e-magazine. The Council will also work on creating the means for better communication with MI Villages.



If you haven't already started and Immaculate Conception Novena it's not too late to plan a Triduum!

If anyone is interested in submitting a book review, homily helps or news with a Marian theme please send it to Daniel Geary at brdaniel@hotmail.com