

This day, we celebrate a great mystery, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary, the woman who would become the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, was conceived in the womb of her mother, St. Anne. But unlike the rest of us, Blessed Mary was given a singular grace; the Lord preserved her from the curse of original sin. God the Father created in Mary a perfect vessel, free from all sin, an immaculate womb in which the Word would be made flesh.

But this beautiful gift of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is not just a preparation for the Incarnation of Christ her Son, it is also a promise of our eternal destiny, a promise of God's plan for each of us. This is what St. Paul meant when he wrote these words in the Letter to the Ephesians: "God the Father chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him." Without blemish - in the Latin version of the Bible, the word used here is "immaculati" -the same word used to describe the conception of Blessed Mary. Just as Mary was created by God without stain or blemish, completely free from original sin, so God has destined us to be free from any stain or blemish of sin.

We begin this journey at our baptism, when the stain of original sin is washed away for each one of us, when we become adopted sons and daughters of the Most High God. And this journey continues throughout our lives. As we draw near to the Lord in our life of prayer, our

relationship with God is strengthened. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we are cleansed from the sins that we commit after baptism and our purity is restored to us by God's mercy. In the Eucharist, we call God our Father and we offer thanks to Him for the many gifts that He showers down upon us.

Let us give thanks to God today for the great gift of our Blessed Mother Mary. She is for us a mother, an intercessor, and a model of faith in her perfect "Yes" to God's plan. Let us pray that we may one day be perfect like her when the Lord will make us holy and without blemish before him. May all of us one day join with Mary in the heavenly kingdom where we will praise the glory of God for all eternity.