



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
2nd Sunday of Advent, 8 December 2013*

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

This second Sunday of Advent falls on the day of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and thus our gaze is drawn to the beauty of the Mother of Jesus, our Mother! With great joy the Church contemplates her “full of grace” (Lk 1:28), and starting with these words we salute her together: “Full of grace!” Let us say it three times: “Full of grace!”. Everyone: Full of grace! Full of grace! Full of grace! This is how God saw her from the first moment of his loving design. He saw her as beautiful, full of grace. Our Mother is beautiful! Mary sustains our journey toward Christmas, for she teaches us how to live this Advent Season in expectation of the Lord. For this time of Advent is a time of waiting for the Lord, who will visit us all on the feast, but also, each one, in our own hearts. The Lord is coming! Let us wait for him!

The Gospel of St Luke presents us with Mary, a girl from Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, in the outskirts of the Roman Empire and on the outskirts of Israel as well. A village. Yet the Lord’s gaze rested on her, on this little girl from that distant village, on the one he had chosen to be the mother of his Son. In view of this motherhood, Mary was preserved from original sin, from that fracture in communion with God, with others and with creation, which deeply wounds every human being. But this fracture was healed in advance in the Mother of the One who came to free us from the slavery

of sin. The *Immaculata* was written in God's design; she is the fruit of God's love that saves the world.

And Our Lady never distanced herself from that love: throughout her life her whole being is a "yes" to that love, it is the "yes" to God. But that didn't make life easy for her! When the Angel calls her "full of grace" (Lk 1:28), she is "greatly troubled" for in her humility she feels she is nothing before God. The Angel consoles her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (v. 30,31). This announcement troubles her even more because she was not yet married to Joseph; but the Angel adds: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you... therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (v. 35). Mary listens, interiorly obeys and responds: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (v.38).

The mystery of this girl from Nazareth, who is in the heart of God, is not estranged from us. She is not there and we over here. No, we are connected. Indeed, God rests his loving gaze on every man and every woman! By name and surname. His gaze of love is on every one of us. The Apostle Paul states that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4). We too, from all time, were chosen by God to live a holy life, free of sin. It is a plan of love that God renews every time we come to him, especially through the Sacraments.

On this Solemnity, then, by contemplating our beautiful Immaculate Mother, let us also recognize our truest destiny, our deepest vocation: to be loved, to be transformed by love, to be transformed by the beauty of God. Let us look to her, our Mother, and allow her to look upon us, for she is our mother and she loves us so much; let us allow ourselves to be watched over by her so that we may learn how to be more humble, and also more courageous in following the Word of God; to welcome the tender embrace of her Son Jesus, an embrace that gives us life, hope and peace.

After the Angelus:

Let us join in spirit with the Church in North America which is today remembering the foundation of its first parish Notre-Dame de Québec 350 years ago. Let us give thanks for the ground covered since then, especially for the saints and martyrs who made those lands fertile. I warmly bless all the faithful celebrating this jubilee.

This afternoon, following an old tradition, I will go to Piazza di Spagna to pray at the foot of the monument to the Immaculate Conception. I ask you to join me spiritually in this pilgrimage, an act of filial devotion to Mary in order to entrust the city of Rome, the Church and humanity as a whole to her. Before returning, I shall stop briefly at St Mary Major to pray to *Salus Populi Romani* and I will pray for all of you, for all the people of Rome.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday and a good feast of our Mother. Have a good lunch and see you soon.