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| Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception |
| Genesis 3:9-15, 20 |
| Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 |
| Luke 1:26-38 |

**A. Text and Context**

* Throughout the bible only a few times that the name of Mary is mentioned
* Why is it that the Holy Bible is so silent about Mary?
* This is the question which lingers upon the minds of devout Catholics when supposedly Mary is the mother of the Lord
* And so she is supposed to be very popular among the bible writers
* But in reality little is written about her in the Scriptures
* The reason: the evangelist who wrote about the life of Mary was not included in the canons of the Scriptures
* The decision was made by the highest authorities of the Church during the Council of Trent in the year 1546
* It was St. James in his writings known as the proto evangelium of James or the 1st gospel of James
* There in the gospel of James are the details about the life of the Most Holy Mother
* It was not included in the canons of the scriptures but it is included in the traditions of the church in the so-called non-canonical or the apocryphal writings
* Aside from the 4 gospels that we have: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we also have the gospel of James, Thomas, Peter, and even the gospel of Mary Magdalene
* And so to avoid confusion the Council of Trent has narrowed down the gospels into 4: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
* Otherwise, the gospel of Thomas will be included where it elaborates the life of Jesus as a young child and there will be confusion
* The gospel of Mary Magdalene will also be included and there will be even more chaos and confusion in the Scriptures
* In the gospel of James there you can find all the details on the life of Mary and the Council of Trent was very wise in making the decision not to include it to avoid confusion
* But where the bible is so silent about Mary on one hand, the traditions of the Church are so full of writings about her on the other hand

**B. Human Situation**

* St. Joachim and St. Anne are the parents of Mary. They were already old when Mary was born
* The time comes that God has revealed to them in a form of a dream that they will soon have a child
* And not only that, the child that they will soon conceive will become the mother of the Messiah and so Mary was conceived and it was really something miraculous
* Why is she conceived without sin? The answer lies in the prayers of the Tota Polchra sang by the religious every Saturday evening
* That the Virgin Mary has benefited in advance from the sacrifice of the cross
* Mary is exempted from sin even though her parents have sinned
* Why? Because Mary has already obtained salvation in advance even before she was born
* In other words Mary was already forgiven and saved even before she was born. This is deep theology and this is not possible for Mary but it is possible with God
* God has allowed Mary the privilege to benefit in advance from the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross
* The Immaculate Conception of Mary was declared a dogma on the year 1854
* And 4 years after the declaration of the dogma on 1858 Mary appeared in a vision to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes France and she told Bernadette I am the Immaculate Conception
* The apparition in Lourdes has concretized the faith of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception for all Catholics all over the world
* That is why today is a holy day of obligation because it is a dogma. If we do not believe in the Immaculate Conception we can be ex-communicated by the Church
* Because if we do not believe in Mary’s Immaculate Conception it is tantamount to not believing in the redemption given by Jesus
* The Immaculate Conception of Mary is so attached to the birth of our Lord
* If you listen intently on the 2nd reading it says that Jesus is without blemish
* And so it is just prim and proper and logical that where he comes from and that is the womb of Mary is also free from sin
* In the 1st reading it was through the woman Eve that sin has entered the world and blemished humanity
* And so it is also through the woman Mary that redemption has entered the world. The Late Pope John Paul II calls Mary as the modern Eve

**C. Challenge**

* In this solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Mary has exemplified for us the virtue of purity
* Mary is our model when it comes to purity because even before she was born she is without blemish and it begins during her conception
* As human beings we are tarnished with the stain of sinfulness so let us make Mary as the model of purity
* How can we do that? We must begin with fidelity. Purity and fidelity about our own intentions
* Why do we want to help others who are in need is because deep in our hearts we know that our help does not need to be reciprocated
* Why do we need to be prompt and faithful to our work is because it is just fair you do the service and the company pays you
* Why do we need to be frugal with our lifestyle? Because if we are extravagant we will have no savings to rely on in times of need similar to what is happening in this pandemic. If we have not saved we will only rely on the charity of others, and that is beyond our control
* We work in harmony with others and not just be honest with your duties but also you do not blow up the dark secrets of others and put them to shame
* So we are challenged today to ask the intercession of our Immaculate mother that the Lord will grant us the purity of our intentions and motivations
* Let us ask God to cleanse us from our bad thoughts words and actions through Mary’s intercession every time we pray
* The Immaculate Conception of Mary reminds us that God resides in us if we keep and maintain the purity of our hearts, mind and body
* We sanctify ourselves, or we make ourselves holy by doing everything that we do with the purity of our intentions and motivations