

Rev. Derek Fairman

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (New Creation)

This day we celebrate the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. We remember the day whenever the Lord Jesus redeemed His Mother by preventing her from inheriting original sin, so that He Himself would be sinless in union with His Mother. By preventing His Mother from inheriting original sin by a special grace, the Lord ensured that He would avoid original sin naturally and not by a special grace. It would take away from the Lord's role as Savior if He is the Savior, but somehow, He had to save Himself. No, He saved His Mother ahead of time, so that the humanity He took on for our salvation would come from a pure mother.

The Virgin Mary's conception is a work of the Holy Spirit. She had two parents, Saints Joachim and Ann, so her conception is unlike the Lord's fatherless conception by the Holy Spirit. Still, the Virgin Mary's conception is the dawn of a New Creation, a creation that began with the Annunciation, when the Lord came down from Heaven. The Immaculate Conception was the dawn, announcing a new creation was coming. As the dawn announces the rising of the sun, Mary's conception announced the beginning of a new day, so to speak, of humanity.

Another reason why the Virgin Mary is the New Eve is because she is a New Creation, and she is at the center of the New Creation that her Son formed and continues to form. Whenever the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation, which we heard in the Gospel, the presence of the Holy Spirit recalls the way in which the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters of creation, bringing order out of chaos. The Holy Spirit brought order into this world at the Annunciation, a world that sin and superstition and error have made chaotic.

The New Creation involves the way in which the Son of God chose to come into this world. The Son of God already had a Father, so He has no earthly father. He does not have any siblings in Heaven, so He has no siblings on earth. The Son and the Holy Spirit are not "brothers;" the Son and the Holy Spirit come from the Father distinctly, and the Spirit comes from the Father *and the Son*. Anyway, the Son came into this world through His Mother. The conception of the Son of God by the Holy Spirit is something new and unprecedented.

The New Creation began at the Annunciation, and it reached an important moment at the Lord's Cross and Resurrection. As St. John Chrysostom pointed out, the Lord Jesus conquered death and the evil one using the same means that the evil one used to conquer: a tree, a virgin and death. The Cross was exchanged for the tree of knowledge of good and evil; Mary took the

place of Eve; the Lord's death overcame the death of original sin. The Virgin Mary was present at the Cross, at that important moment, and she was there as the Lord's side was pierced, and blood and water flowed forth, and the Church had its foundation.

At the Lord's Crucifixion, darkness came over the land, and there was an earthquake, and rocks were split. Whenever the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, He rose from the tomb located in a garden. St. Mary Magdalene initially thought that the Risen Lord was the gardener. There was also an earthquake when the Lord rose from the dead. All this points to a New Creation happening, and the Blessed Virgin was there.

The New Creation continues in our hearts. We are created anew in Baptism. In Baptism, the Lord brings sanctifying grace into our hearts, as well as faith. The Lord creates us in our mother's womb, but then brings spiritual life to our souls in Baptism. What the Lord Jesus began in the garden, when He rose from the dead, He recreates in our souls. The power of His Resurrection penetrates the darkness of our souls.

This will all culminate in the eternal life of Heaven. In Heaven, the New Creation will be complete, and for those who are worthy, there will be a wedding banquet, in which the souls of the just will enjoy all of God's gifts. The paradise that existed from the beginning of creation will be open for the righteous, and it will be even better than the first paradise.

The paradise that awaits us in Heaven was already present in the soul of the Virgin Mary. In her soul, the absence of original sin recalled the original creation, before sin entered creation. In her soul, the Lord created something new. The joy and peace and radiance that was in her soul from the beginning is something that we will see in Heaven, but only if we are faithful to the grace that God gives us.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is an occasion for us to think about something that needs renewal in our lives. Perhaps there is a sin which we keep falling into again and again. Perhaps there is a relationship that is strained. Perhaps our lives have lots of chaotic moments or forces in them which pull us away from God. This is a time to pray to the Virgin Mary, that through her intercession, we will find new life amid the darkness and chaos.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to help us to remain faithful to the grace that the Lord has given to our souls. If we are faithful, in Heaven, we will get to see the fullness of the New Creation that God has begun. For now, we look to the soul of the Virgin, and realize that the Lord brought her calm amid the storms of her life, and He can do the same for us.