

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
December 8

Gospel: (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And he said to her, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age...for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Reflection:

The dogma of Mary's being conceived without sin—what we refer to as the Immaculate Conception—was defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. Mary is the model of holiness who calls us to be who we were meant to be: innocent before God. Mary's innocence and holiness were God's special favor to her. This solemnity reminds us that God's desire for each of us is to have the same innocence and holiness. Just as Mary and her divine Son said "yes" to God's will for them, so are we called through our baptismal commitment to do the same. But that doesn't mean that their example of holiness and fidelity is beyond us. Their lives were ordinary—wife and mother, son of a carpenter—but they lived the ordinary according to God's word. Our ordinary days—being wife or husband, mother or father, brother or sister, neighbor or friend, employer or employee—are to be lived as a "yes" to God. This is how we are holy too. (Living Liturgy, p.6)

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic Ozanam had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from his youth to his death. Frederic was insistent that the Society take Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as its patroness. The first members of the Society chose December 8th as their special Marian feast twenty years before the formal proclamation of the dogma in 1854 by Pope Blessed Pius IX and a year after Frederic's death! Vincentians implore Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, their patroness, to intercede for their Councils and Conferences, their lives and ministry. (SVDP Manual, p.34-35)

Discussion: *(Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)*

How does our Conference show devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Through Mary, conceived without sin,

-we ask for the grace of holiness.

Through Mary, and her Immaculate Conception,

-we ask for healing for those who are brokenhearted.

Through Mary, patroness of our Society.

-we ask for the grace of fidelity for all Vincentians. Amen

