

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 9

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:

This festival in honor of Mary celebrates her innocence from the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb. Mary enjoyed a singular intimacy with God, for it was she who conceived by the Holy Spirit and carried in her womb for nine months the very Son of God. Her body—conceived in innocence and kept free from the stain of sin throughout her life—was a fitting temple to nurture the human life of the divine Son. Like Mary, we must respond to God's offer of graceful innocence with our own "Behold, I am the handmaid (servant) of the Lord." Then, like Mary, we too, bear the Son of God within us. She is the model for God-like innocence. She is our Mother and helps us attain for ourselves the fruits of her great privilege—Emmanuel, God is with us! (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 your 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 now lift our hearts and say,

-Holy God, hear our prayer.

Through Mary, queen of all saints,

-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 in the world.

Amen

