

The Immaculate Conception (Solemnity, December 8th)

Genesis 3:9-15, 20—The Fall of Adam and Eve (1st Reading)

1. Protoevangelium: Latin for the “First Gospel” (3:15)

The Serpent	vs.	The Woman
Serpent’s Offspring	vs.	Woman’s Offspring
(Strikes the Heel)		(Strikes the Head)
2. Eve: “mother of all the living” (3:20); word for “life” (Hebrew *Havah*; Greek *Zōē*)

Psalm 98—Sing to the Lord a New Song

1. Miracles: “sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!” (v. 1)

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12—Chosen to Be “Holy and Without Blemish”

1. Holy: chosen to be “holy” (Greek *hagios*; Latin *sanctus*) (1:4)
2. Immaculate: and “blameless” (Greek *amōmos*; Latin *inmaculatus*) (1:4)

Luke 1:26-38—The Annunciation to Mary

1. Greeting: “Hail, full of grace” (Greek *kecharitōmenē*; Latin *gratia plena*) (1:28)
2. Grace: “you have found favor (Greek *charis*; Latin *gratia*) with God” (1:30)

Ancient Christians: Jesus and Mary’s Freedom from Sin

Irenaeus of Lyons: *[T]he knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary.* (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.22.4)

Cyril of Jerusalem: Death came through a virgin, Eve. It was necessary that life also should come through a virgin... (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 12.15)

Jerome: Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. (*Letters* 22.21)

Ephrem the Syrian: *Only you [Jesus] and your Mother are more beautiful than everything. For on you, O Lord, there is no mark; neither is there any stain in your Mother.* (*Nisibene Hymns* 27.8)

Augustine of Hippo: *We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin.* (*On Nature and Grace* 42)

John Henry Newman: “[I]f Eve had this supernatural inward gift given her from the first moment of her personal existence, it is possible to deny that Mary too had this gift from

the very first moment of her personal existence? I do not know how to resist this inference—well, this is simply and literally the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. I say that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is in its substance *really does seem to me bound up in the doctrine of the Fathers, that Mary is the second Eve.*”

The Catechism on Mary the New Eve

This passage in Genesis [3:15] is called the *Protoevangelium* (“first gospel”): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers. The Christian tradition sees in an announcement of *the “New Adam”* who, because he “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,” makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam. Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the Protoevangelium as Mary, the mother of Christ, *the “new Eve.”* Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: *she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.* (CCC 411).

Old Testament

1. Adam: created without sin
2. Eve: created without sin

New Testament

1. Jesus: conceived without sin
2. Mary: conceived without sin

The Catechism on the Immaculate Conception

To become the mother of the Savior, Mary “was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.” *The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as “full of grace” (Luke 1:28).* In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God’s grace. Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854... *The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” and chose her “in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph 1:3-4).* (CCC 490-94)