

# MARY'S TRUST IN THE FATHER

## HER IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

**F**or the honor of the holy and undivided Trinity, for the honor and renown of the Virgin Mother of God, for the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Christian religion, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority, We declare, pronounce and define: the doctrine that maintains that the most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore must be firmly and constantly held by all the faithful.

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*

There are many dimensions to what we call original sin, from which Our Lady was preserved. But in this year dedicated to God the Father, I'd like to concentrate on Mary's relationship with the Father. The Vatican II document calls her, beautifully, "beloved daughter of the Father." Mary never lost her relationship of being a loving daughter of the Father. The Jewish rabbis say there is only one sin: to forget we are sons and daughter of the King. Mary never forgot that.

What was the act which was at the very heart of what we call the original sin? Some say sensuality: Adam and Eve wanted better food. Or, disobedience: God gave them a command and they disobeyed him. But were they just attacked by a fit of disobedience? Some say the root was pride: they made their own desires the center of the universe instead of God's will. Yes, that too.

But what was the deeper lie at the root of the sensuality, the pride, and the disobedience? You can't really sin without telling yourself a lie. What was the lie at the root of original sin? Listen to Genesis 3:3-5: "The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat the fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

What was sown in our first parents by the devil was this: God the Father, the Creator, is not to be trusted. He did not tell you the truth. He's really trying to withhold something precious from you. Don't believe Him.

Try to imagine the enormity of this lie. "The One who created you is not to be trusted; he is deceiving you. Don't believe him." The One who "chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph 1:4), is not to be trusted. He who is Love, who can only act out of love, who moves the stars out of love, is not to be trusted. The One who desired to create other intelligent persons who could also enjoy bliss and life in union with the Trinity, is not to be trusted.

In the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, it is precisely this lack of trust which is pointed out as the root of original sin: "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience towards God and lack of trust in his goodness" (§397). We could say that disobedience occurred because Adam and Eve allowed trust in their Father to die in their hearts.

In the first book he published—*God in the Dock*—C. S. Lewis put forth the theme that moderns put God in the dock. He is the prisoner, the One being accused, the one on trial. We are okay; it is God who is the criminal. God is responsible for evil; he is the one deceiving the human race.

There is certainly some of this in the bible, but our faithless generation makes God the meany, the double-crosser, the one with plans to do us

in. The One playing tricks on us. For many even who believe in God, he is not to be trusted.

What we are celebrating today is a special grace given by the Father to this daughter of Zion, in view of the merits of Christ, that she would never lose her relationship of a loving daughter of the Father. Never would trust in her loving Father die in her heart. Never for a moment would she mistrust the One who created her. Never for a moment would she entertain the thought that perhaps God was lying to her, deceiving her, not wanting her to have the fullness of life. Not for one moment would she think that she must find her own way, and use her freedom in whatever way she wished in order to become like God.

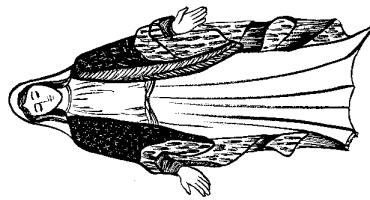
My brothers and sisters, you see what an extraordinary moment our Lady's conception was in the history of the world. God decided, you might say, to start over again, and create another Eve, a human person whose trusting relationship to Him would be virginal, pristine, innocent, unquestioned, perfectly



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### Pass It On! #16



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#16

trusting. A new Eve who would be perfectly open to his plan for the human race. Never, throughout all the events of her life—the Annunciation, the arduous journey to Bethlehem, the slaughter of the Innocents, the hidden years of Nazareth, her Son's leaving home, his persecutions, sufferings, and terrible death—never for one moment would she doubt her Father's love for her. Never for one moment would she mistrust him. Even if Satan was allowed to whisper in her ear, "Why did God allow you to give birth to this Man only to have him killed? God is deceiving you," she never doubted her Father's love for her.

In the Preface of the Mass today you will hear the Church say that in this grace she celebrates her beginning. When blood and water flowed from Christ's side, the sacraments were born. At Pentecost, the Church was made visible. But with the grace of the Immaculate Conception, the new creation begins: There was present in the world then, the new Eve, the first member of the Church, God's second creation.

And when we were baptized, this new creation began in us. We have been radically restored to our first innocence, reunited with the Father, essentially given the grace of absolute trust in the Father. But we suffer still from this inclination to evil which the Church calls "concupiscence." Again, to quote the Catechism: "Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back toward God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle" (§405).

In union with our Lady, we are called to struggle against this mistrust of the Father which tends to keep rising in our hearts, and which was at the heart of the original fall. We ask Our Lady to obtain this grace for all of us—to never, never doubt the Father's love for us, no matter what happens. No matter what temptations come.

The late and great Jewish rabbi Abraham Heschel, after giving a public address, was asked, rather sarcastically, how he could still believe in God after the holocaust. There was a long silence, and then he approached the microphone and, weeping, said, quoting Job: "Though he kill me, yet will I trust him."

The Holy Father constantly points out that Our Lady's greatness was her faith, her trust in the Father. She never allowed her trust in her heavenly Father to die in her heart. Even when at the foot of the cross, watching her Son being slain, she said, "Though he slays my Son, yet will I trust him."

In the Divine Office for the feast this morning we read, from St. Anselm: "Blessed Lady, sky and stars, earth and rivers, day and night—everything that is subject to the power or use of man—rejoice that through you they are in some sense restored to their lost beauty and are endowed with inexpressible new grace. He who could create all things from nothing would not remake his ruined creation without Mary. God, then, is the Father of the created world and Mary the mother of the re-created world. God is the Father by whom all things were given life, and Mary the mother through whom all things were given new life."

*Homily by Fr. Robert Wild, December 8, 1998*