

### Third Lecture: Immaculate Mary

#### I. **Recalling the Argument**

- a. “Consecrated to the Immaculate”: The Backstory
- b. The American “Cultural Core” (William McLoughlin, 1980)  
Moral Individualism \* The Protestant Work Ethic (or “The American Dream”) \* Manifest Destiny \*  
Millennial Optimism \* Thankful Piety towards God \* The Problem of Virtue
  - i. This “Cultural Core” is Re-Articulated Every 50 or So Years, Next in the 2020s
  - ii. Some Re-Articulations are More, others Less, Compatible with Catholic Teaching
- c. A Catholic Moment: A Social Moment in which a Nation turns to the Church for the Ideas,  
Witness, or Grace it Needs to Realize Its own Ideals
- d. Fundamental Principle: Mary as Archetype of Church & Soul (*Maria, vel Anima, vel Ecclesia*)
- e. The Six Marian Doctrines Discussed in These Six Lectures  
Mother of God \* Virgin \* Immaculate Conception \* Bodily Assumption \* Co-Redemptrix \* Co-Mediatrix
- f. Last Lecture: Mary, Mother of God & the Renewal of the American Understanding of Labor

#### II. **The Immaculate Conception: The Doctrine Itself**

- a. What It Does Not Mean: Immaculate Conception vs. Virgin Birth
- b. What It Means: Mary Was Conceived Without the “Stain of Original Sin”
- c. Quick Primer on Original Sin
  - i. What it is: We are made *imago Dei*, but this nature is stained by disorder...
    1. Physical Disorder: A tendency towards sickness and death
    2. Intellectual Disorder: An ignorance of God where no ignorance ought to be
    3. Moral Disorder [*fomes*]: Concupiscence, or unjust & self-centered attraction to sin
    4. Spiritual Disorder: The “Guilt” of Original Sin is that injustice is displeasing to God
  - ii. The Grace of Baptism Removes the “Stain of Sin”: Exorcism Prayer from Roman Ritual  
→ Thus the “stain of original sin” refers primarily to the moral and spiritual disorder.
- d. The Ancient Conviction that Mary is Immaculate
  - i. The Protoevangelium of James (c. AD 150): The Purity of Mary
  - ii. Epitaph of Abercius (AD 163): The Spotless Virgin draws Christ the Fish from the Well  
“everywhere Faith was my guide and everywhere provided as my food the Fish of exceeding great  
size and pure whom the spotless virgin caught from the spring. And Faith ever gives this food to  
his disciples to eat, having the choicest wine and administering the mixed drink with bread...”
  - iii. Irenaeus: Mary, the New Eve (+AD 202)
    1. Christ the New Adam (1 Cor 15:45): “The first man, Adam, became a living  
being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”
    2. This Implies Mary, the New Eve
    3. Mary, the Obedient New Eve, is therefore the Sinless New Eve  
“Eve was created ‘very good’—that is, she was created without sin... it is reasonable to  
conclude that Mary, as the second Even, also *must* have been created without sin. In fact,  
the Eve-Mary typology also suggests that Mary never committed a single sin.” (Pitre 36)
  - iv. Augustine, the Doctor of Grace (*De natura et gratia* 42.36)  
“We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it  
touches the subject of sins, out of honour 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.”

#### III. **A Debated Doctrine: Sinless in the Womb or at Conception?**

- a. Thomas Aquinas (+1274) Advances Presanctification but Opposes the Immaculate Conception

- i. 1<sup>st</sup> Reason He Opposes the Immac. Conc.: Embryology (ST III.27.2, c)
- ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reason He Opposes the Immac. Conc.: Jesus Needs to Save Mary (III.27.3, c)  
“it does not seem fitting that anyone should be freed from that condemnation... except after his incarnation... so it seems unfitting to say that before Christ appeared sinless, his mother’s flesh should be without the fomes... [therefore] Divine Providence preserved her soul in a singular manner from any inordinate movement, until the conception of Christ’s flesh when she was immune from concupiscence.”
- iii. Nonetheless, Mary was Still “Pre-sanctified” (ST III.27.1)
  1. Thomas Aquinas: What is “Presanctification”?
  2. Mary Had Concupiscence in Principle, But God “Chained” It
  3. There was a Threefold Perfection in Mary... (ST III.27.5, Ad 2)  
Perfect Disposition: Her presanctification in the womb delivering her from original sin  
Perfect Form: Her conception of Christ in her womb, cleansing her from fomes  
Perfect Degree: Her assumption into heavenly glory, saving her from all affliction
- iv. Thomas Aquinas: *Why Mary was Pre-sanctified* (ST III.27.4)
- b. Duns Scotus (+1308) Defends the Immaculate Conception
  - i. Answering the Problem of Embryology: Mary Received Her Rational Soul at Conception
  - ii. Answer the Problem of Mary’s Need for Redemption: A More Perfect Redemption
    1. Basic Principle: “The most perfect mediator has the ability to mediate... by the most perfect act of mediation”—and Must, at least Once, to be Perfect
    2. Defining the Most Perfect Act of Mediation: Never Falling Into Sin
    3. Preventing a Fall into Sin is Still a Form of Salvation  
By the normal order of events, “each person would possess original sin, unless someone else should prevent it by mediation. Therefore the authorities (e.g., Paul) should be taken as saying that all who are naturally begotten of Adam are sinners--that is... they... lack the justice they ought to have, unless it is given from elsewhere; but as grace can be given after the last instant, so it can be given in the first...” Thus, “it is obvious... that Mary was utterly in need of Christ as her redeemer. For she \*would\* have contracted original sin by reason of our common origin, if she had not been prevented by the grace of the mediator... just as others are in need of Christ, in order that the sin already contracted be forgiven by his merit, so she needed, all the more, a mediator who would prevent sin...”
    4. Analogy: Saving me After Falling vs. Saving me From Falling
  - iii. Answering a New Problem: Mary Had *Some* Effects of Original Sin, why not *All*?  
“A perfect redeemer could preserve Mary from useless punishments (concupiscence) but allow her to remain in useful ones--temporal punishments like hunger and death, since by these Mary could merit.”

#### IV. The History of the Immaculate Conception

- a. Council of Basel (1431-1439): Accepts Scotus’ Defense of Doctrine
- b. Pope Sixtus IV (OFM; 1471-1484): Extends Feast of Immaculate Conception to Whole Church
- c. Pope Alexander VII (1655-67): The Feast of Mary’s Conception is about Moment of her Soul’s Infusion
- d. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878): Declared the Immaculate Conception of Mary a Dogma, December 8, 1854

#### V. The Immaculate Conception: The Doctrine Applied to the Church and To Ourselves

- a. Doesn’t This Make Mary *More* Remote From Us?  
“That some have hesitated for so long to ascribe to Mary a total freedom from sin I surely do to a lack of understanding that it is precisely sin that isolates people... does sin really create solidarity? Does sin not rather alienate us from each other? In hell there is no solidarity, only terrible loneliness. The root of sin,

which is egoism, makes it difficult for a man to open himself to others... [but] The one who is no longer interested in himself can be completely engaged in the suffering and needs of others... it is Mary's total purity that makes a total solidarity possible in her." (Stinissen, 16-17)

- b. The Immaculate Conception & Our Souls: Free from Sin to be Free for our Calling
  - i. In Scripture, God Predestines Us According to his Purpose with Grace
  - ii. God Prepares All Of Us For the Mission We Are Called To, Even Before our Conception  
"The Scriptures speak of God's care for all human beings, even before their coming to birth, and recount the action of God's grace preceding the specific calling of particular persons, even from their conception... We can thus see that God was at work in Mary from her earliest beginnings, preparing her for the unique vocation of bearing in her own flesh the New Adam" (ARCIC, 55)
- c. The Immaculate Conception & the Church: To Made Sinless

Ephesians 4:25-28: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies."

  - i. In Heaven, We Will be Sinless
  - ii. Will we Be Less Free?
  - iii. No: The Indefectibility of the Church is Not a Slavery, but a Freedom
- d. The Immaculate Conception Reveals the Relationship between Grace and Freedom
  - i. Karl Rahner: What Difference Does Immaculate Conception vs. Presanctification Make?
  - ii. Our Vocation or our Office in the Church Requires Holiness for us to Carry Out
  - iii. Mary's Office (Being Mother of God) Was *Necessary to God's Plan*
  - iv. Therefore, it was *Necessary that Mary Have the Grace She Needed to Fulfill It*
  - v. Therefore, it was *Necessary that Mary Be Completely Free from the Weakness of Sin.*  
"Mary is the holy Mother of God necessarily as God's grace is stronger than man's power to deny him. Her life is the free act (maintained right up to the moment when she stood below the Lord dying on the Cross) through which she received God's Word in faith and in her womb, for her own salvation and the salvation of all men. This was the moment for which she existed; then it was that there took place the covenant between God and humanity, which is eternal and definitive..."
  - vi. A General Principle: Freedom is Achieved Only through Grace  
A man's free performance of a salutary act and God's grace are by no means things which tend to exclude one another; grace rather bestows on us the power to act and the actual performance, and the creature's answer is itself the work of God's effective call...
- e. Applying Mariology to Anthropology
  - i. The Central Question of Freedom and Grace  
"God can of himself, ie prior to a man's actual decision, absolutely and effectively will a definite good act of man's freedom, and yet this act does not thereby cease to be free... In this way, God attains his will and man does freely what God of himself has unconditionally willed."
  - ii. Grace is Strength for the Good, not Neutral Deliberation between a Set of Options  
"God wishes to come, and on account of this unconditional will to save the world, himself gives her the power to realize the condition under which God's Word wished to come: in the freedom of those who were to receive him, because the Word wished to come freely. Her word is pure answer in the strength of the Word directed to her: nothing else but this wholly."
- f. We Will Be Immaculate, without Sin, In Heaven—and Only then Will We Be Most Free
  - i. The Nature of Freedom for us all
  - ii. The Nature of Grace for us all
  - iii. Mary's "Privileges" as being at the Service of, not Distinct from, the Church
  - iv. Predestination is always for Service within the Church

**VI. The Immaculate Conception: Becoming More Marian Americans**

- a. The Puritan Cultural Core: Freedom  
“the free and morally responsible individual, whose political liberty and liberty of conscience are inalienable,” though nonetheless answerable to a God’s higher law. (McLoughlin, 103)
  - i. **REMEMBER:** the definitions of these basic concepts “have altered with each awakening” (ibid)
- b. The American Conception of Freedom: History
  - i. Freedom in the Puritan Awakening
  - ii. Freedom in the 1<sup>st</sup> Awakening
- c. The American Conception of Freedom: The Liberalism of the 4<sup>th</sup> Awakening (1960-1990)
  - i. Freedom from Social Norms that Constrained the Individual
  - ii. The Economic and Social Liberalism That Emerged was Fundamentally Multicultural
- d. The American Conception of Freedom: A More Catholic Tomorrow...
  - i. The Limits of Late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Liberalism...
    - 1. If each person totally defines what is good for themselves, then it is hard know how to love them.
    - 2. If each person makes their own self-realization the goal of their lives, then their lives can collapse into a kind of self-centeredness.
    - 3. If we destroy the institutions that limit our self-expression, we also destroy the things that protect the freedom of others, especially the vulnerable
  - ii. A Marian Proposal for Freedom: Become Free of Self-Expression and Seek the Freedom to Live for Others, to Live for our Vocation or our “Office.”

**VII. Another Concluding Psalm (139): Words She Used, and We Can Too**

Oh Lord, you searched me and you know me,  
you know my resting and my rising,  
you discern my purpose from afar.  
You mark when I walk or lie down,  
all my ways lie open to you.

Before ever a word is on my tongue  
you know it, O Lord, through and through.  
Behind and before, you besieged me,  
your hand ever laid upon me.  
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge,  
too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit,  
or where can I flee from your face?  
If I climb the heavens, you are there.

If I lie in the grave, you are there...

For it was you who created my inmost being,  
knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
I thank you for the wonder of my being,  
For the wonders of all your creation.

Already you knew my soul,  
my body had no secret from you  
when I was being fashioned in secret  
and molded in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw all my actions,  
they were all of them written in your book;  
every one of my days was decreed  
before one of them came into being.