

Feast of the Immaculate Conception – December 4, 2017

I was sitting outside last night in Florence, hearing confessions in the wind, which is probably why some of this is happening. This one little old lady; I said, “how do you like the weather?” She said, “oh, I love it, it’s so warm.” And then I remembered, she’s from Alaska.

Today we celebrate The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We celebrate this feast, no matter what happens, because she is the patroness of our country. And as such, the conference of bishops, even though they made that rule that if a holy day of obligation falls on a Monday or Friday, it’s not a holy day of obligation. There’s always exceptions, bishops always make exceptions, no matter what. They said, “the Patroness of America will always have her holy day celebrated. This year, we’re finding out that they also made another exception. Christmas has been deemed a holy day of obligation even though under the rule that they made, it isn’t. Can you believe in telling people, “you don’t have to go to Mass at Christmas?” It would never fly. Any pastor that did that would be shooting himself in the head because, he wants the money. There’s always something else, right? That’s why we are celebrating her today. We celebrate this feast because of what it means for our salvation. We read the gospel story of Jesus’s conception, because we don’t have the story of Mary’s. Mary was so humble; she would not allow St. Luke, who wrote the gospel, to put her story in the scripture that he was writing. He went and interviewed her. Only he, has certain infancy narratives and things in the early life of Jesus. So, he talked to her and you know he would have asked her questions about herself. But, she refused to have anything about herself in the story. So we have two things that sets her apart. First off, that God wanted her and her alone to bring her son, His Son into the world. He had to have a pure vessel. God’s not going to put his Son into someone who hasn’t gone to confession for twenty years or has a stain of sin on their soul. So, we know that she is full of grace; the grace of the crucifixion and resurrection, ahead of the time, because all things are present for God. We know that out of the whole human race, she was able to be sinless her whole life. The second thing we know is that even though she had the ability to say, no, she said yes to God. It was a mystery, she had no idea what it was going to entail, and she said, “yes.” And by doing so, irritated Satan to no end. Satan and the angels were kicked out of heaven in the battle with Saint Michael and the other angels. They saw in the future, angels can see the future, that they were going to have to bow down and serve a woman and that God is going to become man. Their pride would not let them do that. We are not going to be obedient to these two. And Satan said, “I will not serve.” That started the whole thing. So, Satan has it in for women especially because he knows that as women go; with morals, with integrity, so goes society. So, he hits women harder than he hits men. Because, women lead men. We always say the other way but, we all know better. Women lead men. It’s that little imaginary ring in our nose or our ear; whichever one they grab. Women lead men. Women lead the culture, how women hold themselves, how women do themselves, determines how men will act. If they set the bar low, then we’ll act like animals, if they set the bar high, then we’ll be gentlemen. So, Satan hits women harder than he hits men. God knew, He had to raise up a woman that would be elevated and that we would adore. Not to worship, but adore. We have an example for all women to follow. We have an example for men to look at and say, “that’s what I expect of a woman.” Not what we see today. I’ve been hearing confessions all week long; four penance services in three days. At one of them, there were 200 teenagers, that we heard. The boys were coming up to me and they were saying, “Father, these girls are sending me pictures on my phone of their private parts.” It’s called sexting. “And they won’t leave me alone and so I fall into sin.” They were just so distraught, because these girls were acting like predators. Nobody had taught them about modesty and femininity and what it truly means to be a woman. It doesn’t mean that you’re the lioness that goes after the lion. The lion goes after the lioness, and lets her know, “you get the food, and I’ll eat it.” But, that’s what’s happening. Satan has hit the women hard in our society. But, our Blessed Mother is the remedy. Jesus Christ, our salvation, is our remedy.

In our first reading from Genesis, God told Adam and Eve. He will strike at his heel while you strike at his head. What that means is; Satan doesn't have the power to kill. Satan doesn't have the power to destroy, unless we give it to him. To strike at our heel means a minor wound. But, crushing his head means destroy. We have the power through our Blessed Mother's, "Yes," and Jesus's, "Yes," to destroy Satan. His temptations, his influence. But, we have to remember to follow our faith, not our culture. We have to remember how we were created, in the image and likeness of God. That's how Mary was created and Mary is an example of the image and likeness of God, here on earth, especially for woman. We celebrate her, yes. Because Eve and Adam caused the sin that is affecting our DNA. That causes us to go to the dark side instead of staying with the force. Causes us to go with Satan and sin instead of with Jesus. Mary, by her yes, gave us a way out. Then Jesus came along and His yes gave us a way out. So, both of them undid the stain of sin from Adam and Eve. That's why we call Jesus a new Adam and Mary a new Eve. They came and by their actions, by their obedience, did away with the disobedience of Adam and Eve that affects all of us. We have the ability to rise up to that level; to the level of Mary, sinless. The sacrament of confession, people not going. A lady told me, "I think about it, I want to go, but when the time comes, I just forget about it." I looked at her and I said, "write it on your calendar where you have your doctors' appointments, write in your calendar. You don't forget your doctors' appointments; you won't forget confession either. And do it once a month." She gave me a dirty look because I had taken away her excuse. That's what I'm here for. When we celebrate the Immaculate Conception, we're celebrating our ability to overcome sin, temptation, Satan himself. By crushing his head; by imitating our Blessed Mother in sinlessness. By partaking of the sacraments worthily, especially the sacrament of reconciliation.

God Bless you.