

DECEMBER 8, 2015



SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



GENESIS 3:9–15, 20

PSALM 98:1, 2–3AB, 3CD–4

EPHESIANS 1:3–6, 11–12

LUKE 1:26–38

REFLECTION

Today is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This solemnity is not about the conception of Jesus but about Mary's conception. However, today's readings do tell the story of the Annunciation, the conception of Jesus. This can be a bit confusing, given the focus of the solemnity; however, Mary saying "yes" to Angel Gabriel, to God, is one of my favorite stories. No matter what age we are, Mary is a perfect example for everyone! She was simple girl—probably only thirteen years of age—and she had an astounding faith to become a vessel for a gift she did not understand. In today's terminology, she had guts! In order for her to say "yes," she had to be pure, holy, and blameless. The sin of Adam and Eve did not touch her. Even though God created her with this special holiness, she was still able to choose. We all have the ability to choose. Mary's response gave us the eternal gift—the saving love of Jesus.

ACTION

Pictures are tools; ones that remind us of those we love or pull us into places where we only wish we could actually be. Look up different images of Mary on the web. Which image most relates to how you want to imagine Mary in your life? If you don't know how to pray the Rosary, look that up. Consider praying at least one Hail Mary a day, keeping in mind the image of Mary you like, and her special love for you.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

The journaling questions are connected to each of these words. Read the Gospel to find these words and then think of answers for your life. Choose any or all of these to answer.

- "Favor": Do you ever have a hard time with someone who is the popular one, or is called upon all the time in class, or is the better athlete? How can you find your favored status in God's eyes?
- "Pondered": What are you holding in your heart right now that needs a solution? How can Mary's courage to say yes to the unknown help you?
- "Do NOT be AFRAID" (emphasis added): What are you afraid of right now and are these rational fears to have? Who can help you get over some of them?
- "Handmaid": Being a handmaid means being a servant. Do you struggle listening to others and letting go of your own needs for another person?