

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception – December 8, 2017 – Very Rev. Bryan Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:30pm Solemn Mass – 575 words

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created by God in a state of justice and holiness. We read in the first paragraphs of Genesis about how they had been set over the earth: all was for their use, their benefit, and there was harmony between all things. But this harmony was lost when they committed the Original Sin. The first reading begins to recount the curse that they and all of creation suffered as a consequence of their disobedience to God: the serpent would have to crawl on his belly; then, the passage goes on to tell of how Eve would have pain in childbirth and be subordinate to her husband; and Adam would have to labor by the sweat of his brow to obtain what he needed.

In God's designs there is always a beautiful symmetry. What was lost by Adam and Eve needed to be restored. Thus the New Testament tells us that Christ is the New Adam. And the Fathers of the Church understood Mary as the New Eve. The first Eve was the "mother of all the living" in the order of nature; Mary, the New Eve, is the mother of all the living in the order of redemption. Adam and Eve lost their original justice and holiness, but in Mary and Christ it is restored: Mary is preserved by God from the first moment of her conception from all stain of Original Sin, in view of the merits of her Son, who is holiness and justice incarnate. Through Mary's immaculate conception she not only became a worthy mother for her divine Son but also reversed the ancient curse.

Therefore, in the order of redemption, all things are subject to Mary and Christ, just as in the original order, all things were subject to Adam and Eve. Scripture tells us that Christ won the victory over sin and death and that, in the end, that victory will be made fully manifest by the subjection of all things to himself. So it is with our Blessed Mother: in the end, we will see how she is Queen of all – though, note well, she already is Queen of all! Those of us who freely place ourselves in her service now – who seek out her intercession and guidance each day – already share in the order of redemption. The question for us is whether we are coworkers with her and with our Lord in this new order: are we, by our example, our actions, and our prayers, seeking to bring others into subjection to and service of the King and Queen of the New Creation?

As we celebrate this beautiful Solemnity – which is also our patronal feast day here in the United States – let us ask our Lord for the grace to be even more devoted to his holy Mother, and to help lead others to her devotion and service as well. She was preserved by God from all stain of Original Sin from the very first instant of her life: may we, through her intercession, be freed by God from all stain of sin by the very last instant of our lives, so that we may merit to enter immediately into eternal bliss and share in the glories of the New Creation. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee! Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners: now and at the hour of our death. Amen.