

Immaculate Conception of the BVM – December 8, 2022 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Ala. – 5:30pm Vigil, 6:30am Solemnity Mass – 400 words

The Immaculate Conception is one of the Church's Marian dogmas. It teaches us in a definitive way that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, was preserved from the first moment of her conception from all stain of Original Sin. This doctrine has profound spiritual significance and can inspire us to strive for holiness in our lives.

Indeed, this teaching reminds us that even amidst a fallen world, profoundly wounded by sin, it is possible for us to be elevated to a state of grace and perfection. Mary, as the first and only person to be conceived without Original Sin, represents the ultimate example of human potential. Her sinless state reminds us that we, too, are capable of living lives of virtue and holiness, even in the face of temptation and adversity.

In addition to inspiring us to strive for holiness, the Immaculate Conception also instructs us about the power of God's grace. For Mary's sinless state was not achieved through her own efforts, but rather, by the grace and initiative of Almighty God. As I've preached repeatedly in recent months, no one saves himself! So this teaching reminds us that no matter how far we may have strayed from the path of righteousness, God's grace is always available to help us turn back towards him and to live the lives that he has called us to live.

Finally, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary also reminds us of our Blessed Mother's importance in the history of salvation. As the mother of Christ, she played a crucial role in the Incarnation, and then, in the world's Redemption. Recall how she stood by the Cross in her compassion, sharing in the Passion of her Lord and ours. By honoring Mary and recognizing her unique role in salvation history, we are reminded of the centrality of Jesus Christ, and the importance of our own participation in his saving work.

Yes, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is not merely necessary for us to believe in to be saved, as all dogmas are, but has deep spiritual significance for us. It recalls our own potential for holiness, the power of God's grace, and the importance of the Virgin Mary in salvation history. By meditating on this teaching, we can be inspired to strive for holiness in our own lives and to participate more fully in our Lord's work.