

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is not to be confused with the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary, at her Annunciation. The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, refers to Mary's own moment of creation (conception), when she was immaculately conceived in the womb of her own mother, who was St. Anne. Mary's conception, in her mother's womb, resulted from a loving physical union between her Mum and Dad. Her Dad was St. Joachim. In nine months' time, we will celebrate the Birth of Mary, on the 8th September. It is this Immaculate Conception, of Mary's beginning in Anne's womb that we celebrate today. Mary is Immaculately conceived, in order to become the sinless Mother of God, and in turn, become our Mother and that of the Church. At the moment of Mary's conception, in the womb of her Mum, Mary was miraculously preserved from inheriting the mark of Original Sin, caused by the disobedience of the First Adam and the First Eve. God favoured Mary and bestowed the privilege of a singular Grace upon her, at her conception, which would single her out from all of humanity, making her *full of Grace and blessed among women*, in God's redemptive plan for Salvation. Mary was saved without ever having been lost.

MARY IS FREE FROM ORIGINAL SIN

In our own conception, we inherit the mark of Original Sin. This is the mark of Death. The First Reading today (Genesis 3:9-15,20), informs us that Eve, was the first mother of the living, but she, along with Adam, threw it all away, by their sinful act of disobedience to God's command. Jesus, as it were, becomes the Second Adam, who removes the mark of death from our souls, and replaces it with the mark of Eternal Life, in the Sacrament of Baptism. Mary was chosen to be the New Mother of the Living, which is the Church, and all its living Members (us). Her Immaculate Heart, body, mind and womb, were prepared to be free from any mark of sin, as pure Vessel, in order for the Author of Life (Jesus), to enter into the world. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God: Jesus is God, the Word made Flesh. Mary remains forever Immaculate and Blessed, in the glory of her Virginitly. **The Name Mary means Vessel.** Mary is truly a Living Vessel of God, full of grace, humility and the spirit of obedience to willingly do God's Divine Will. Today's Gospel (Luke 1:26-38) always brings us back to the Annunciation moment, revealing her to be a worthy and sinless creature, full of grace, to carry God in her virginal womb. However, this Gospel today can easily confuse people with the two conceptions. One with Mary which we celebrate today, and the other with Jesus which we celebrate on 25th March. God bless, Fr. Brendan.