



A Family of Faith: Volume I

December Lecture Notes

THE NEW MAN AND THE NEW WOMAN: Jesus Christ and
Mary, Mother of God

Introduction

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Introduction

A. Opening Questions

1. What did God call Adam and Eve to do?
2. How did they respond?
3. What did God call Mary to do?
4. How did she respond?
5. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Mary were no doubt very special, but does God call only certain people to cooperate with His will? Or does He call all of us?

We are all called to holiness and to discern what God is calling each of us personally to do.

B. Previously, we saw how it was an original man and woman who got us into this mess.

1. It is because of Adam and Eve – not because of a flaw in God's design – that we are born with a vulnerability to physical sickness, psychological sickness, and spiritual sickness.

C. So in God's magnificent design, just as our Fall from Grace was brought about through the cooperation of a man and woman, so too our Salvation was brought about through the cooperation of a man and woman.

1. For instance, the story of the Fall begins with a wicked angel – the Serpent – coming first to a woman, and then the woman's cooperation leads to the completion of our Fall by a man.

2. Similarly, the story of Redemption begins with a good angel – Gabriel – coming first to a woman, and then the woman’s cooperation leads to the completion of our Redemption by a man.

D. So today we’re going to see

1. First, who the New Man, **Jesus**, is
2. Second, who the New Woman, **Mary**, is
3. Third, how the story of **Our Salvation begins**

I. **Jesus Christ and the Incarnation**¹

A. Who is Jesus Christ?

1. Jesus Christ is *God who became man*. He is the second, eternal, divine person in the Trinity, and a Jewish man born of Mary around the beginning of the first century A.D.

B. How did this happen? How did God become man?

1. We use the term **Incarnation** to designate the event of God becoming man
 - a. Although “incarnate” means “in the flesh,” Jesus Christ has not only flesh, but a *whole* human nature: body and soul. He’s completely God, and completely man. He is **One Person with Two Natures**.
2. One way to think of it, is to say that in Jesus Christ, there is *one* “Who” – the Eternal Person of the Word, and *two* “What’s” – humanity and divinity.
 - a. Think of what happens when someone writes a letter with a pen. If we said, “Who wrote that letter,” the answer would be the name of the person. If we said, “What wrote that letter,” the answer would be the *two* natures: a *human being* and a *pen*. Something kind of like that occurs in the Incarnation.

C. Why did this happen? Why did God become man?

1. For a lot of reasons:
 - a. To show us His love
 - b. To show us Himself
 - c. To show us how to be human
 - d. To make up for the damage our sin had caused

¹ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 5, “**The Incarnation**”

2. Most importantly, He came to earth to be the bridge between us and God
 - a. Think of an infinitely deep river, with an infinitely strong current. You're on the near shore – the human shore – but you were made to get to the opposite shore – the divine shore – and there's no way to get across.
 - b. Then imagine that on just *one point*, the far shore starts coming to you, and eventually merges with your side of the river, forming a land bridge that is both near shore and far shore.
 - c. That's Jesus. That's why He's the only way to God.

Now, what about Mary?

II. Mary and the Immaculate Conception²

- A. Wouldn't it be a shame there had been such a thing as a perfect man, but in all of creation we never got to see a perfect woman? Or wouldn't it be a shame if Jesus gave us His Father to be Our Father, but not His Mother to be Our Mother?
 1. Fortunately, that's not what happened. It has been revealed to us by the Church that, in fact, Mary was **Immaculately Conceived**, which means that *Mary was free of all sin from the first moments of her existence and throughout her life.*
- B. How do we know? How do we know Mary was free from original sin?
 1. Well, primarily because Gabriel gives her a title no one else in Scripture is given, "Full of Grace" (Luke 1:28). And you can't be "full of grace" if you contain sin or the effects of sin.
 - a. Just like a cup can't be totally filled up with water if it has any rocks in it.
 2. But does that mean Mary didn't need a savior?
 - a. No, it just means she was saved from sin before it could reach her.
 - b. A vaccine saves you from a disease, but it saves you before the disease can get you. That's what happened with the Immaculate Conception.
- C. Why? Why did God decide to keep Mary free from the effects of Original Sin?
 1. Well, first of all, remember that Mary is the source of Jesus' humanity
 - a. So if Our Lord was to have a perfect human nature, it makes sense He should receive His humanity from an uncontaminated source.

² The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 5, "**The Immaculate Conception**"

2. Also, since Mary's role was to be the New Woman – the one to participate in Christ's war on sin – it makes sense that she should be completely sinless.
 - a. After all, if she was in any way under the power of sin, she would be in a compromised position – she wouldn't be able to give herself entirely to battling evil.
 - b. So Jesus equipped Mary to be His perfect ally

And her role as Christ's all began at the Annunciation

III. The Annunciation: Our Salvation Begins³

- A. At the Annunciation, we see what God's perfect love for humanity looks like, and we see what humanity's perfect love for God looks like
 1. God's perfect love for humanity takes the form of a man: Jesus Christ
 2. Humanity's perfect love for God takes the form of a woman: Mary

- B. First, God presents His plan to Mary
 1. The Angel Gabriel comes and tells her that she has been chosen to be the Mother of God
 - a. Satan came to tell Eve about making men into gods
 - b. Gabriel came to tell Mary about making God into Man

 2. Gabriel explains that because this child will have God as His Father, there will be no need for Mary to cease being a virgin.
 - a. In fact, her perpetual virginity will be the permanent sign that this child is of God – since it manifests that He's not the child of any human father

 3. Now it had happened previously in Scripture that angels had been sent to announce births (as in the case of Isaac, Samson and John the Baptist).
 - a. But never before had the one who heard the angel explicitly accepted his message.

- C. Finally, in Mary, we see humanity responding to God as it should! We see humanity the way it's supposed to be!
 1. She says, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

³ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 5, "The Annunciation"

- a. This is something new! Acceptance and obedience towards God's will! This is the beginning of a new direction for the human race.
- b. Mary is the preview of the holiness we are all destined to.
- c. And by her "yes" to Gabriel, she welcomes God into her womb.

The work of Redemption has begun. And when it is completed on the Cross, this man and this woman will be together again.

IV. Sacred Art Discussion: The Annunciation Prado Altarpiece by Fra Angelico

- A. What event is the artist portraying here? What do you notice about the overall composition of the painting: the colors, the background, the lighting, etc.?
 1. The artist is portraying the Annunciation. Notice how Mary and the angel both reflect each other's positions of crossing their arms in prayer. Mary and the angel are too big for their background, if Mary stood up, she would most likely hit her head on the ceiling. Here the artist emphasizes the spiritual dimension of the scene instead of its realism. The event that occurs here is larger than life! Notice also how the source of light comes from behind the angel, in the descending ray.
- B. Where are your eyes naturally drawn? What is in the ray of light?
 1. Accept all answers. There is a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, within the ray of light.
- C. Read Luke 1:26-30. What does the archangel Gabriel tell the Blessed Virgin Mary?
 1. He tells her that she is "Full of grace," or the "favored one." Allow your reflection conversation on this passage to go in unexpected directions.
- D. Who are the figures in the fuller version of this painting?
 1. In the foreground we see Mary, the angel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit as the dove within the ray of light, and an image of the Father over the arches. There is also a little bird resting on the bar within the arches. In the background we see Adam and Eve with an angel expelling them from the garden.
- E. Why do you think the artist chose to include Adam and Eve in the background?
 1. Reflect on how Adam and Eve's fall led to the event of the Incarnation. Jesus and Mary are the new Adam and the new Eve. Through Adam and Eve's rejection of God, sin and death entered into the world and we lost grace. Through Mary's "Yes," Christ entered the world and redeemed it from sin, conquered death through the Resurrection, and restored grace through the Sacraments.

- F. How did Mary respond to God's call in comparison to how Eve responded?
1. Mary was obedient to God's call, and said "Yes" to being the Mother of God. Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which He expressly told her and Adam not to eat. See in the painting how Adam and Eve are turned away from the angel and the light of God. This contrasts with Mary's humble and receptive posture toward the angel and the Holy Spirit.
- G. What would your reaction be if an angel told you about a special mission God wanted you to carry out?
1. Allow conversation to go in unexpected directions.

Discussion Questions

1. What did God announce to Mary at the Annunciation?
 - a. That she had found favor with God and would bear His Son.
2. What does Mary's response tell us about her?
 - a. That she asks a question and then faithfully submits to God's will shows us that she seeks to understand what God is calling her to do and then cooperates with His plans.
3. In a homily called *The Whole World Awaits Mary's Reply*, St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote of our Blessed Mother about the Annunciation, "Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word." How does this quotation show the awesome nature of this moment?
 - a. Mary's yes to God was a marvelous and beautiful moment in God's saving plan, because through a simple word, she brought the Savior — the Word of God — into the world. The Word was made flesh.
4. If God called you to do something very challenging, how would you respond?
 - a. Accept all responses, providing encouragement where needed.
5. How does the Angel Gabriel address Mary?
 - a. "Full of grace."
6. Who are the only two other people who were created full of grace?
 - a. Adam and Eve.
7. Why do you think God preserved Mary from Original Sin?
 - a. Because she would be the mother of Jesus.

8. Some non-Catholics mistakenly think that Catholics believe Mary did not need to be redeemed. How would you clarify that mistaken belief?
 - a. Mary was a human person and did need the redemption that her Son won for humanity through His salvific sacrifice on the Cross. God, who is outside time, gave her that redemption, removing the stain of Original Sin at the moment of her conception.
9. What is the Incarnation?
 - a. The mysterious truth that Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, took on a human body and human nature.
10. At what moment in Salvation History did the Word become flesh?
 - a. At the Annunciation.
11. God could have remained in Heaven, but the Son of God chose to assume a human nature and truly be with us. How does this reveal God's love?
 - a. He wanted to be here with us, not only to save us from death, but to experience life among us.
12. What does the Incarnation teach us about how we should love each other?
 - a. First and foremost we must be physically present with each other. On a fundamental level, we express love with our physical bodies — this begins with our presence.

Reminders and Announcements

- A. The next Community Meeting picnic will take place at **[location]** on **[date]**.
Provide information for your parish

Living the Faith At Home

- A. Put up the **December Fridge Page** and the **Car Conversations hang tag**.
- B. Choose the activities that will work best for your family. For example, some children may prefer reading and discussion, while others might prefer crafts.
 - *You are not required to do all the activities in the book.*
- C. Your children will learn the Faith from your witness as parents better than through any structured activity.
 1. Fridge page and car conversations can be found in their Parent's Guide at the beginning of this month's lesson.
 2. This program is first and foremost about their own formation, and secondarily about helping them teach their children. "Put your own mask on first," as they say!

Key Points in Our Reading This Month

- A. The Annunciation was God's announcement to Mary that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God.
- B. God preserved Mary from Original Sin from the moment of her conception.
- C. Where Eve's rejection of God brought death, Mary's yes to God brought life in Jesus Christ.
- D. God Himself entered into human history by sending His only beloved Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to become man and assume a human nature.
- E. This mysterious truth is known as the Incarnation.

Closing Prayer

- A. Write on the board the following quotation, and ask parents who they think said it: "The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ... He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham, and his descendants forever."
The Blessed Virgin Mary said these words to her cousin Elizabeth, whom she visited after learning she would be Jesus' mother. Pray together the whole prayer, called the Magnificat, in Luke 1:46-55.
- B. Ask parents to reflect on how this prayer of Mary ties in with what you have been studying for the last two months — God is a promise keeper!