

+ Immaculate Conception

December 8, 2020

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum...The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything...*¹

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
My Very Dear Sons,

It seems clear that we human beings (even monks) live increasingly like certain water insects that move about on the surface of water, not swimming, but resting upon the surface tension. We skim across information, receiving little or no wisdom, and we are ever more victims of anxiety and confusion. And why? Because we have lost sight of the deep designs of God.

The Holy liturgy applies to Mary in her Immaculate Conception the words of the Book of Proverbs referring to Divine Wisdom: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways...”. Like Wisdom, though on a very different plane of reality, she was the object of the profound providential purposes of God. In fact, we are all the objects of such a design, but Our Lady’s privilege of the Immaculate Conception represents a unique plan of God’s eternal love and wisdom. It is there for our own eternal benefit as well.

So, how does Immaculate Conception benefit us? How do we learn to abide in the perspective of the deep designs of God? Let us take a closer look. The current state of the Church and the world, where rumors and opinions run like wildfire across a parched land, makes it urgent for us to enter more intimately into the ocean of wisdom which is God. In an interview recently given and published in Italian, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI points to the source of the crisis:

The true threat for the Church, and thus for the Petrine service, comes... from the universal dictatorship of apparently humanistic ideologies. Anyone who contradicts this dictatorship is excluded from the basic consensus of society. One hundred years ago, anyone would have thought it absurd to speak of [alternative forms of] matrimony. Today those who oppose it are socially excommunicated. The same holds true for abortion and the production of human beings in the laboratory. Modern society intends to formulate an anti-Christian creed: whoever contests it is punished with social excommunication. Being afraid of this spiritual power of the Antichrist is all too natural, and what is truly needed is that the prayers of entire dioceses and of the Church around the world come to the rescue in order to resist it.²

But how exactly might we effectuate this entry into the deep things of God, how might we be rescued from the onslaught of the Antichrist? One way, the easiest, perhaps, of accomplishing this is through our Marian devotion. Some theologians maintain that, due to her personal relationship to the hypostatic union, connected to the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist there is a sort of Marian presence... This may seem to be going too far; this may be too bold. I do not know. But following the ancient adage, *potuit, decuit, fecit*, we might consider that, since God could do such a thing (that is to say, make a sort of Marian real presence to subsist next to the real presence of Our Lord) and since it was fitting, due to her special

¹ Book of Proverbs, chapter 8.

² Pope Benedict in interview with Peter Seewald *Benedetto XVI. Una vita* (Garzanti), 2020.

privilege as Mother of God, then He did it. In any case, as Father John Hardon once wrote, “There is no secret about how the Blessed Virgin is related to the Holy Eucharist. It is very simple: except for the Blessed Virgin, we would not have the Holy Eucharist.”³ In order to enter more truly into the deep things of God today on this beautiful feast, we must venerate with special veneration Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, doing this above all when we participate in Holy Mass or in Eucharistic Adoration.

The noted Mariologist, Msgr. Arthur Calkins, summarizing the teaching of Pope Saint John Paul II on the matter, writes the following:

Mary’s sacrifice “becomes present” just as the Sacrifice of her Son “becomes present” at the words of consecration of the bread and wine pronounced by the priest. Here it must be specified that one is not speaking of the transubstantiation which takes place in the sacred species, but of a mystical presence of Our Lady which accompanies the sacrifice of Christ.⁴

Pope Saint John Paul II for his part used a mysterious expression, difficult to translate, speaking of an “aroma Mariæ,” of a holy “perfume” or “fragrance” proper to Our Lady that accompanies the presence of Our Lord at Holy Mass.⁵

Finally, a disciple of Saint Padre Pio once asked him, “Does the sorrowful Mother assist you? Is she always present during the divine sacrifice?” To this the Saint replied, “Can a mother disregard her son? She is there with all of paradise.”⁶

In these days of social turmoil, when we need to steady our souls with the loving presence of God, let us turn to the Immaculate Mother of God and seek the light and warmth that derive from an authentic and living Marian devotion. In her we encounter neither fear, nor faltering, but that strength that comes from a being plunged in the Holy Spirit. We can and must follow her, the Immaculate One, into the deep designs of God’s loving providence. She is, no doubt, the one we need just now to lower her virginal and immaculate foot upon the head of the ancient serpent, who seems to be having a “hay day” at present, wreaking havoc in the world and even in many sectors of the Church. As her children let us repeat the words of her prophetic canticle:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden,
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy
is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.

Amen. Alleluia.

³ Quoted in *The Sponsor Magazine*, March 1994.

⁴ Msgr. Arthur Burton Calkins, *Our Lady’s Presence in the Mass in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*.

⁵ Cf. Father Michael Champagne, CJC, retreat at Clear Creek Abbey, November 2020.

⁶ Cleonice Morcaldi, *La mia vita vicino a Padre Pio: Diario intimo spirituale* (Rome: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1997), 48-49 (trans. by Msgr A. Calkins).