

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Mary Always Trusted The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patronal Feastday of the USA Friday, December 8, 2017 7:30 PM **Gn 3:9-15, 20**; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38 (Our basic problem as human beings started at the very beginning of human history and it has to do with trust.)

Advent will give us many opportunities to reflect on that gospel, so today we will reflect on the first reading from the Book of Genesis. This is a well-known story, but poorly understood. It is not the retelling of something that happened; **it is the conveying of meaning about the origin** of, not only our world or our human race, but also about the origin **of our fundamental problem**. Our basic problem as human beings started at the very beginning of human history **and it has to do with trust**.

The story recounted here about **Adam and Eve** in the garden is really about how human beings are invited into an intimate life with God, but that requires of them trust. So according to the story God provided a most wonderful, provident, lovely environment for this creation made in his own image and likeness with self-consciousness and intelligence and freedom of will. But rather easily **they became convinced that God really did not want them to have the best**. The serpent insinuated that well God doesn't really want you to be happy. God knows that if you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, meaning if you take it into yourself to decide what is good and evil, which God has forbidden you, then you will be equal to God, and God doesn't want you to be equal. **So if you are smart, you are going to ignore God and decide for yourself what your life is going to be all about. That's the original sin.**

And when we celebrate Mary as the Immaculate Conception we are saying that God gave Mary graces, but not only that, but that Mary cooperated with the graces. That's the part people often don't think about. God gives everyone graces. **Mary is that one creature**, at least we know of, **that chose to let God always satisfy her desires**. That's why the Magnificat says, "My soul

magnifies the Lord.” Most people’s souls don’t magnify the Lord; most people’s souls magnify themselves. **Mary always chose to follow God’s way, always trusted**—always trusted in God. That is why she is called the Immaculate Conception.

Now you may notice that in non-Catholic Christian churches you do not see the veneration of the Blessed Mother or the saints. The reason is that **both Martin Luther and John Calvin thought that the grace of God was so overpowering that there is no real freedom to reject it;** they actually thought that. So they said well, yes, the saints did great things, but they had no choice. **But the Catholic Church never believed that.** The Catholic Church has always said that Mary and all the saints and **all people of all times have always had a choice. We can either go along with God and trust in God and believe that God really wants our well-being, or we can reject that.** And when we reject it we are acting foolishly, and we have to pay the consequences sooner or later for our foolishness. **Mary** never did that. She always trusted in God to provide, even when she had no idea how it could be. And that is why we hold her up as **a great model of discipleship.**