



THE ARCHANGEL

St Michael's School and Parish • Harts Lane • Burghclere • RG20 9JW

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December 2021

Mother Most Admirable

Dear Parishioners,

Advent is a good time to meditate on our Lady's divine motherhood.

From the moment the Word was made flesh in her womb, Mary tasted and enjoyed the delights of the divine. Her soul overflowed with grace, thus bringing her spiritually closer and closer to God, and then, in the fullness of time, her body, under the action of the Holy Spirit, produced the very author of grace, Jesus Christ!

It is not by chance that the feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception falls at the beginning of Advent. Nor is it coincidental that our Lady gave St Catherine Labouré the Miraculous Medal on the eve of the Advent season. The Immaculate Conception and Our Lady's Divine Maternity are intimately linked.

Our Lady was preserved from all sin from the very first moment of her conception in order that the flesh and blood she was destined to provide to her divine Son would be untainted and free. Satan would never be able to boast that he had once touched or possessed something belonging to Our Lord. Our Lord's divine humanity was destined to be invested with dignity divine, and then offered to God in sacrifice for the remission of sins. The offering had to be pure and untainted. Satan must have no hold or influence over it, however small, however short.

Mary's humanity, from which the second Person of the Holy Trinity would become flesh, was preserved from all sin from the very first moment of Mary's existence. But this is only half the mystery.

Mary was not merely born clean. She was made holy of a holiness that God alone can look upon without becoming dazzled and dazed. Even the angel Gabriel was stunned. The greeting "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee!*" is perhaps the expression of sheer astonishment: *Such beauty, such virtue, such power, such love and submission, such dedication! The Lord is truly with this Lady, and she with Him!*

In his dogmatic declaration on the Immaculate Conception *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pius IX says: "From the first instant Mary was loved by God more than all creatures. He found most extreme pleasure in her. He loaded her with his graces in a wonderful way, more than all the angels and the saints."

Mary's fullness of grace grew in proportion to her love and devotion and the various steps of her participation in the plan of redemption. Her fullness was exponential, and her progress ever more rapid as she approached ultimate sanctity.

Mary's initial fullness of grace, which she received at the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb, surpassed the grace of all the saints put together. Her virtues, in their initial state, surpassed the heroic virtues of the greatest of the saints.

Along with grace, Mary received a plenitude of the moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost whereby she merited not only her place in heaven but ours as well. For just as a queen may earn for others pardon and recompense for all her subjects, so too Mary, our most excellent family member (after Our Lord), merited for us all the joys of heaven.

It is commonly taught that Mary also received the use of reason and the gift of infused knowledge along with her plenitude of grace. This means that Mary knew God and loved Him from the very first moment of her existence. It also means that Mary's merits began from the very moment of her conception. Her infused knowledge would have taught her all that she needed to know to fulfil her vocation in the best way possible. For example, it allowed her to easily comprehend the archangel Gabriel's mysterious words at the moment of the Annunciation.

Mary was therefore, after Her divine Son, the first in the order of creation. God contracted with His Mother the tightest and most intimate union possible between God and creature. The only union more intimate still would be the hypostatic union, when the Word became flesh. Mary's supreme holiness makes her the first in the order of divine adoption. To her is given the privilege of primacy in the order of grace, making her, in union with her Son, mediator between God and man. God commits to Mary every grace destined for man.

But there is something more extraordinary. Her fullness of grace also makes her the *worthy* Mother of God. We may therefore say that the divine Child had a Mother worthy of Him. Food for thought, and Advent meditation!

Fr John Brucciani, Prior

Mother, the Heroine

Motherhood is one of the greatest gift of God to mankind. It is the most consoling state of life for most women. It is the fulfilment of her being, of her whole nature, the realisation of the deepest of her aspirations, the very state God created her for: the begetting of another self, her child.

God created the world and all that is in it. He then created Adam and Eve and gave them power and domination over all of his creation. "And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and all living creatures that move upon earth."

Man and woman come together in the sacred bonds of wedlock in order to fulfil this great command of God. They marry to beget children to fill the earth and subdue it. They are raised to the sublime dignity of co-creators with God. God created alone our first parents. Henceforth He has bound Himself to create only with the co-operation of man and woman all new members of the human race. It is a work that even the angels, powerful as they are, cannot accomplish. Only man has been given the power to co-create.

Man is not like the rest of God's earthly creatures. To him has been given a spiritual soul which differentiates him from the rest of God's creatures and makes him like unto God. "Let us make man in our own image and likeness...And God created man to His own image, to the image of God He created him... And God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life and man became a living soul." With this soul man is able to know himself and God. He is able to adore and love God and to know and obey God's will.

Therefore it is man's duty to beget children not only to fill the earth and subdue it, but also to multiply the adorers of God. The sole reason why God created the angel and man, i.e. all intelligent life, was in order that they might praise and share His glory and happiness. Henceforth, it will be man's duty to beget adorers of God. No greater privilege could be asked of man.

Now the parents, especially the mother, play an essential part in such a sublime work.

No other is closer to a child than its mother. The child is flesh of her flesh. The love that binds the mother to her child cannot be fathomed. The pelican feeding its young with its own blood is but a shadow of what a mother is prepared to give for the well-being of her child. Only one example of heroic love suffices to

portray adequately to what lengths the love of a mother is prepared to go for the good of her off-spring: the sacrifice of Our Lord upon the Cross. Would that we could fathom a little of the immense, the infinite love that overflowed from the heart of God, a love that he poured forth in equal abundance to the blood that flowed from His wounds.

Once a woman becomes a mother, she lives only to give and to give superabundantly to her child. Thus she shows her child the extent of her love and devotion. A mother is not prepared to give her life once for her child. She wishes to give her life a hundred, a thousand times in order to fulfil the great aspiration of her being. Not content with having given life to her child, she wishes to give it more.

This she can do, this she does so daily, as any mother can testify. We sigh after tales of heroism, we dream of the great deeds of romantic heroes in distant lands: the invincible mother and her seven sons in the second book of the Machabees; St Felicity witnessing the martyrdom of her seven sons and encouraging them not to shame her, but to live up to all she had taught them and lay down their lives for God. A wife and mother will read the story of the Valiant Woman in the Book of Wisdom and perhaps become disheartened. She will hear stories of other mothers, even observe them closely, and see that she has still so far to go to become a good mother. An echo can be heard in the depths of a mother's heart: If only I could do something to prove my worth to my children and myself. If only I could be a good mother.

A mother can do something to prove her worth to herself and her children, and more importantly, to God. Indeed, a good mother proves her worth daily. Any good mother, all good mothers are shining examples of heroism and virtue. True, they are and remain unknown to the world. Their efforts and sacrifices are performed and offered up in secret. Yet they are no less real. In fact, the obscurity in which these sacrifices are performed makes them all the more genuine.

All mothers, especially those of large families toil. Such labour is not accepted in exchange for the applause of onlookers. It is accepted, and gladly so, purely out of love for the children. Here is true heroism, heroism for which God is looking in order to reward in superabundant measure.

Man marvels at the courage of martyrs, at the pains and sufferings they endure for a higher ideal, for the love of God. Martyrs are few and far between and so tend to

be hailed as heroes, and rightly so. But man forgets that the world is full of martyrs, silent martyrs who give their lives a hundred times a day. At times they endure physical suffering, but most certainly it is mental anguish, a burden much harder to bear than any physical pain, which inflicts suffering. Mothers are the common martyrs, so ordinary, so quiet, so uncomplaining that they go by unnoticed by the rest of the world. Two thoughts spur them on day by day and help them carry their cross: love of God and love of children.



The sufferings of a mother often go unheeded by her children and by the world. Her sole consolation is that she thereby becomes an imitator of and companion to Our Lord and Our Lady, who bore alone the weight of the world and the still heavier burden of sin upon their shoulders alone. "And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none. And they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps. 68, 21-22)

As much as the hearts of Christ and His mother loved, so much did they suffer. It is the same for a mother. The mother's heart is sacred, for therein was wrought the redemption of her soul and that of her children. "Much is forgiven of her, for she has loved much." So says Our Lord of Mary Magdalene, so He also says of the mother.

The family is the greatest source of consolation for a mother. It is her kingdom. In the home she reigns supreme, not by power and domination, not by fear or intrigue, but by selfless love. She wields great power over her subjects, greater power than any temporal ruler could ever have dreamed: she holds the heart of her subjects and they hold hers. Life in the home can become a magnificent example of Christian charity where each one finds their happiness in giving. And in giving all they receive all with interest. Who needs to be rich, to revel in worldly possessions when one knows that one possesses the heart of one's child?

Yet, though the family be such a source of happiness, it is also a source of suffering, anxiety and worry. At times a mother may look back on the days when she was a maiden and sigh after the peace and tranquillity she once possessed, but which she has lost forever. Not that she loves any less her husband and children. But the weight of worry never lightens. It binds itself ever more closely to her heart and curves the shoulders with its burden.

It is the lot of the woman, and in particular the mother, to suffer. God has decided it so. Eve was told that she would bear her children in pain. That pain does not cease at birth, but endures throughout life.

We refer to the woman as the weaker sex. Yet she has a capacity to suffer which is much greater than man's. She can bear more trials and more anguish. Our Lord did not choose a man as co-

redeemer. He chose a woman, Mary, a mother, His own mother, to co-operate with Him in the work of redemption. What was her role: simply to suffer and to suffer in silence and obscurity.

Only in a mother did God find the resources and the strength necessary to aid him in His great work of redemption. What a magnificent testimony on behalf of God Himself to all mothers!

Christian mothers know that all their sufferings are not in vain. Though their burdens are hard to bear they would gladly accept more because they know that God will reward them in their children. Whether they see the reward is another matter, but God would no longer be God if He were to ignore the hardships of a mother. His own heavenly mother would not let Him overlook any earthly mother.

Mothers are unique to the world: they are happy sufferers. May the world learn from them!

NOVENA TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

30th November to 8th December. The world is in a sorry state: ... there is much to pray for. Catholics should therefore redouble their prayers, for we are dealing with the reign of Satan in the world today. Let us try to obtain much needed graces by praying a novena in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Genesis, 3:15).

The novena can be made up of an extra decade of the rosary followed by the triple invocation: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." We should also confess our sins during this time and receive communion on the 8th December.

When once assisting at a rather violent exorcism, I experienced first hand the power of an invocation to "O Mary, conceived without sin." The devil literally howled in desperation!

CHAPEL CLEANING - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

MONDAY 20TH DECEMBER - 9:30 AM

WINTER DEEP CLEAN

FAST DAYS FOR SSPX 3RD ORDER MEMBERS

- Dec. 7 - Vigil of Immaculate Conception

ON 28TH DEC., FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, HOLY HOUR AND MASS WILL BE OFFERED IN REPARATIONS FOR THE SINS OF ABORTION.

HOLY HOUR 11 AM, FOLLOWED BY MASS.

Online Christmas Raffle



Restaurant vouchers, cash prize, champagne & treats!

Tickets also available from school office or on request

Xmas Raffle

SATURDAY



11TH DEC.

**ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL
ADVENT FAIR**

PORTAL HALL - BURGHCLERE

Open 12:00

Close 3 pm

To set up a weekly standing order in lieu of Sunday and Holy Day collections:

Account name: BURGHCLERE PRIORY

Sort Code: 16-26-18

Account number: 10191331

INCREASE YOUR DONATIONS BY 25%

SIGN UP ON DISTRICT WEBSITE



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Liturgical Calendar and Mass Times - November

*Confessions before Saturday, Sunday & Holy Day Masses
& during 1st Friday Holy Hour.*

1	Feria of Advent	7:15 am
2	St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr	7:15 am
3	St. Francis Xavier, Conf. 1st Fri. - Holy Hour 18h	7:15 / 19:00
4	St. Peter Chrysologus, B., Conf. & Dr 1st Sat.	7:30 / 12:00
5	Second Sunday of Advent	7:30, 9:00
	<i>2nd Collection for Vocations</i>	18:00 Benediction
6	St. Nicholas, Bishop & Confessor	7:15 am
7	St. Ambrose, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15 am
8	Immaculate Conception of the BVM	7:15 / 19:00
9	Feria of Advent	7:15 am
10	Feria of Advent	7:15 am
11	St. Damasus I, Pope & Confessor	7:30 / 12:00
12	Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	7:30, 9:00
		18:00 Benediction
13	St. Lucy, Virgin & Martyr	7:15 am
14	Feria of Advent	7:15 am
15	Ember Wednesday of Advent	7:15 am
16	St. Eusebius, Bishop & Martyr	7:30 am
17	Ember Friday of Advent	7:30 am
18	Ember Saturday of Advent	7:30 / 12:00
19	Fourth Sunday of Advent (Rorate)	7:30, 9:00
		18:00 Benediction
20	Greater Feria of Advent	7:30 am
21	St. Thomas, Apostle	7:30 am
22	Greater Feria of Advent	7:30 am
23	Greater Feria of Advent	7:30 am
24	Vigil of the Nativity - <i>confessions 11:00 & 23:00</i>	7:30 / 12:00
25	Nativity of Our Lord - Holy Day (Carols 23:30)	0:00, 9:00
26	Sunday in the Octave of Christmas	7:30, 9:00
27		18:00 Benediction
27	St. John, Apostle & Evangelist	8:00 am
28	Holy Innocents, Mart. Holy Hour 11:00	12:00 pm
29	St. Thomas Becket, Bishop & Martyr	7:30 am
30	Thursday in the Octave of Christmas	7:30 am
31	Friday in the Octave of Christmas	7:30 am
1	Circumcision of Our Lord - Holy Day	7:30/9:00
2	Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus	7:30, 9:00
	<i>2nd Collection for Vocations</i>	18:00 Benediction

MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS CHRISTMASTIDE

If you wish to place around the altar poinsettias in memory of a loved one, please fill out and hand in the forms (soon available) before December 15. The January newsletter will list the names of those remembered. Holy Mass will be offered for them and for their benefactors on January 1st, Feast of the Circumcision and Octave Day of Christmas. Poinsettias (for the sanctuary and church): £10 a pot.

