

December 8th: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:26-38): The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." (...) Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (...).

The "Immaculate" Conception of the Virgin Mary

EDITORIAL TEAM evangelii.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)

(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, we celebrate Mary who is the "Im-maculate" (spotless), holy, since she was conceived: as a singular divine favor, God saved her from the original and "contagious" sin. The wonderful story of the Annunciation to Mary helps us to understand the content of the title "Immaculate".

The angel's greeting is interwoven with threads from the Old Testament. Mary, the humble provincial woman who comes from a priestly lineage, is the "holy remnant" of Israel, as referred by the prophets in all turbulent periods. In her, the true Zion is present: in her heart God finds peace. She is the sprout that, in the dark winter night of history, flowers from David's beaten trunk: of her germinates the tree of redemption. God has not failed, as it may appear at the beginning of the story: God saved and saves His people.

—Mary, you are the holy Israel, you say "yes" to God, you become fully available to Him, and so you become the living temple of God.