

## Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. Original Sin
3. The Immaculate Conception in the Bible
4. Why did Mary have to be sinless to give birth to Christ?
5. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (M't:5:48)
6. Prophecy in the Proto-Gospel
7. Mary the Ark of the New Covenant
8. Mary, full of grace
9. But Only a sinner needs a Savior
10. Misunderstanding about Romans 3:23 ("All have sinned")
11. Mary the New Eve
12. Mary gave birth without pain
13. How come it took Catholics 1800 years to decide Mary was conceived without sin?
14. Other objections to Mary's Immaculate Conception

## Introduction

It's important to understand what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is and what it is not. The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived without original sin or its stain—that's what "immaculate" means: without stain. The essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace, and its stain is a corrupt nature. Mary was preserved from these defects by God's grace; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace and was free from the corrupt nature original sin brings. It has to do with the **Holiness** of God. God cannot tolerate Sin. Mary as the God-bearer in Jesus had to be sinless in order to be in such close proximity to God Himself. The whole Bible teaches that God's presence demands and imparts holiness. (Ex 3:5; Deut 23:14; 1 Cor 3:17; 1 Jn 3:5-6; Rev 21:27). The Jewish high priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year, under threat of death if God's instructions were violated (Lev 16:2-4,13). The Ark itself was so holy that only a few were allowed to touch it (Num 4:15; 2 Sam 6:2-7). Thus, Mary, due to her physical and spiritual relationship with God, necessarily had to be granted the grace of sinlessness.

In other words, since Jesus took flesh in and from Mary's body, and also obtained His **Human Nature** from Her, **she had to be perfectly sinless**. The only question that then arises is **when** and **how** Mary was made sinless.

According to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**:

*Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" (Luke 1:28) through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: "The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin." [CCC 491]*

Although the Bible does not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her mother, Saint Anne's, womb it does imply it. However, the Bible is not explicit on several doctrinal issues, such as the Trinity, and that there are two natures in the one person Jesus Christ as well as

the extent of the Canon of the Bible. The word Trinity for example is not even found in the Bible, but of course it is a true doctrine.

Mary's Immaculate Conception is a special gift from God preserving her from original sin and concupiscence - the inclination to sin. Mary always had sanctifying grace. By God's grace, she remained free of every personal sin all her life (CCC 493).

In her very conception her soul was **preserved** immaculate in the sense that she inherited no stain of original sin, derived from our first parents.

In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."

The dogma concerning the Immaculate Conception of Mary was promulgated by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854. The official language of the Papal Bull entitled Ineffabilis Deus states:

*We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."*

*Hence, if anyone shall dare—which God forbid!—to think otherwise than as has been defined by us, let him know and understand that he is condemned by his own judgment; that he has suffered shipwreck in the faith; that he has separated from the unity of the Church; and that, furthermore, by his own action he incurs the penalties established by law if he should dare to express in words or writing or by any other outward means the errors he think in his heart.*

Mary was conceived immaculate. The word "immaculate" is derived from the Latin word macula which means "stain." For Mary to be conceived immaculate means that, through God's grace, she was preserved from the stain of Original Sin. To understand what that means, one has to understand the difference between Original Sin and its stain. Original Sin itself is the absence of God's sanctifying grace in our souls, so a person who is born in Original Sin is born in a state of spiritual death and separation from God. But Original Sin also has certain consequences, such as concupiscence -- the disordered desires and cravings which lead us into actual, personal sins. These consequences of Original Sin are known as its stain.

## Original Sin

The teaching on Original sin is based mainly on the Fall of man in Genesis 2:16, 17 & 3:15 – 24, Romans 5:12 to 19 and, Ephesians 2:1 to 3

Ge:2:16: *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: Ge:2:17: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for **in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.***

Ge:3:15: *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* Ge:3:16: *Unto the woman he said, **I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*** Ge:3:17: *And unto Adam he said, **Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*** Ge:3:18: *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;* Ge:3:19: ***In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*** (pronouncement of death) Ge:3:20: *And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.* Ge:3:21: *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.* Ge:3:22: *And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, **lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever;*** Ge:3:23: ***Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.*** Ge:3:24: ***So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.***

Ro:5:12: Wherefore, as **by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men**, for that all have sinned: [Latin Vulgate reads -in quo omnes peccaverunt-] (verse 12) [translated: "IN WHOM all have sinned"]Ro:5:13: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.Ro:5:14: Nevertheless **death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him that was to come.Ro:5:15: But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For **if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ**, hath abounded unto many.Ro:5:16: And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.Ro:5:17: For if **by one man's offence death reigned by one**; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)Ro:5:18: Therefore as **by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation**; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.Ro:5:19: For as **by one man's disobedience many were made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Eph:2:1: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph:2:2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Eph:2:3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.**

I Co:15:21: For **since by man came death**, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. I Co:15:22: For **as in Adam all die**, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Psalms:51:5: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and **in sin did my mother conceive me.**

Psalms:58:3: The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Job:15:14: What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a PERSONAL SIN, but this sin affected THE HUMAN NATURE that they would then transmit IN A FALLEN STATE [Council of Trent, Session V]. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" -- a state and not an act.

From Ludwig Ott **Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma** pages 107ff

Adam's sin is transmitted to his posterity, not by imitation, but by descent. (De Fide)

Original Sin consists in the deprivation of grace caused by the free act of sin committed by the head of the race. (Sent communis)

Original Sin is transmitted by natural generation. (De Fide)

In the state of Original Sin man is deprived of sanctifying grace and all that this implies, as well as of the preternatural gifts of integrity. (De Fide in regard to Sanctifying Grace and the Donum Immortalitatis, Denz 788ff)

Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back toward God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle. We still have the disordered desires that lead us to commit actual, personal sins, and we still have to wrestle with these sins through the remainder of our life on earth.

But what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception says is that by the redeeming grace of God, Mary was given this grace early. She was conceived not only without Original Sin, but without its stain as well. Thus she was conceived in an immaculate state, just as we will all one day be rendered immaculate, or stainless. God gave her the same grace he will give us all, but he gave it to her early in order to make her a more fitting vessel to carry his Son as he entered the world.

From the words in Genesis 3:16 to 24 we see the physical punishment pronounced by God for the woman and for the man for their disobedience. We see this punishment of the 'pain of childbirth' applied to all women and

the 'toils to earn ones bread', and the 'return to the dust' (death) is universal to all men respectively. This is proof that Original Sin is real and universally applicable to each of Eve's descendants, all of mankind. Then, of course, the banishment from the tree of life or the spiritual death or loss of sanctifying grace said in Gen 3:22, 23 is also real and universally binding on all of mankind. 1Tm:2:14, 15 reiterates the physical punishment due to Original Sin talked of in Gen 3:16 and goes on to say that women are freed from Original sin ' *in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety*'.

Protestants do not believe in Original sin, but when it comes to arguing about Immaculate Conception they claim Mary was not Immaculate, that she 'was a victim of Original sin' like all humans are. They teach that before the age of reason, everyone is bound for heaven. They believe that humans only begin sinning when they reach the age of reason, and when they consciously choose sin. Given those beliefs they would say that **everyone** is conceived without sin because conception is certainly before the age of reason. Yet these same have a sudden revulsion when a Catholic mentions that Mary is conceived without sin. It seems they are saying that everyone is conceived without sin **except** for Mary the Mother of Jesus.

## Immaculate Conception in the Bible

We find in the Bible that to some the privilege of sanctification in their mother's womb was granted, as for example to Jeremiah . . . and John the Baptist. . . . Hence it is reasonable to believe that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before birth.' Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15) were sanctified from the womb for the serious tasks to which God was calling them. Adam and Eve, before the Fall, were immaculate and without sin. They were brought forth from an immaculate earth, just as Jesus came forth from the immaculate Mary. Then what of Mary who had a much serious task of giving birth to the Son of the Most High and the child of the Holy Ghost.

Prophet Jeremiah was sanctified from his very birth because he was destined to be the herald of God's law to the children of Israel:

*"Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee" (Jeremiah 1:5)*

John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). He was "a burning and a shining light" (John 5:35) because he was chosen to prepare the way of the Lord.

The Apostles received the plenitude of grace; they were endowed with the gift of tongues and other privileges (Acts 2) before they commenced the work of the ministry. Hence St. Paul says: "Our sufficiency is from God, who hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6) [other translations have *able, competent, qualified*]

There is none who filled any position so exalted, so sacred, as is the incommunicable office of Mother of Jesus; and there is no one, consequently, that needed so high a degree of holiness as she did.

For, if God thus sanctified His Prophets and Apostles as being destined to be the bearers of the Word of life, how much more sanctified must Mary have been, who was to bear the Lord and "Author of life" (Acts 3:5) . . . If God said to His Priests of old: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord (Isa. 3:2); nay, if the vessels themselves used in the divine service and churches are set apart by special consecration, we cannot conceive Mary to have been ever profaned by sin, who was the chosen vessel of election, even the Mother of God.

Miracles take place through articles used by those who walked with the Lord, through the intervention of aprons touched by the apostles (Acts 19:12), and shadows of the apostles (Acts 5:15). If such then how can the womb that carried the Lord for 10 months not be a holy place.

Her sinlessness is explicitly taught in Luke 1:28. If God calls and predestines people for a specific purpose from all eternity, from before they were ever born, as Jeremiah strongly implies, then what *inherent* difficulty is there in His sanctifying a very important person in salvation history, centrally involved in the Incarnation, from conception? And if God can call Jeremiah and John the Baptist from the womb and (possibly) from conception, why not Mary as well? The moment the Father foresaw in Genesis 3:15 the birth of His Son in human form from a woman, He also saw the woman to come and that being Mary.

## Why did Mary have to be sinless to give birth to Christ?

Jesus was preserved from Original Sin and from all sin because of the personal or hypostatic union of His humanity to the Word in the very instant in which His sacred soul was created, since it could not be that sin should ever be attributed to the Word made flesh; and also because, since His conception was virginal and due to the operation of the Holy Ghost, so that Jesus did not descend from Adam by way of natural generation.

It was not becoming that the 'perfect' Redeemer should have a mother who was conceived in sin. Also, just as the Word proceeds eternally from a Most Holy Father, it was becoming that He should be born on earth of a mother to whom the splendor of sanctity had never been lacking. Finally, in order that Mary should be able to repair the effects of Eve's fall, overcome the wiles of the devil, and give supernatural life to all, with, by, and in Christ, it was becoming that she herself should never have been in a fallen condition, a slave to sin and the devil.

Would God create Jesus in a sinful human vessel? No. He purified the vessel. That is what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is all about.

If she was conceived with original sin, then Jesus who is spotless would be at enmity with his mother at the moment of his conception.

No sin or anything tainted with sin can stand in the face of the holiness of God. "Enmity" is that mutual hatred between Mary and sin, between Christ and sin.

*Gen 3:15I will put enmity between you (the serpent, Satan) and the woman (Mary), and between your offspring (minions of Satan) and hers (Jesus); He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.*

For the birth of God as a human being, God was interested in the condition of the mother's womb. For even a great, but imperfect, judge of Israel, Samson, God was directive about the state of the mother during the pregnancy. The request for the mother to be pure is repeated for emphasis.

*Judges 13:3f An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Though you are barren and have had no children, yet you will conceive and bear a son. Now, then, be careful to take no wine or strong drink and to eat nothing unclean."*

*Judges 13:7 "But he (the angel) said to me, 'You will be with child and will bear a son. So take neither wine nor strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb, until the day of his death.'"*

*Judges 13:13f The angel of the LORD answered Manoah, "Your wife is to abstain from all the things of which I spoke to her. She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor take wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean. Let her observe all that I have commanded her."*

How much more would God be interested in the state of His own mother's womb!

Mary's Immaculate Conception should be seen as the way God wanted all of us to come into the world: in the state of sanctifying grace and free from original sin, just like Adam and Eve. God's original plan was for all humans to begin their existence in the family of God in the state of sanctifying grace. It was only as a result of Original Sin that we are now conceived in a state deprived of sanctifying grace. Mary, rather than being the exception, fulfills in a real sense the original intention of what God wanted for all His human children: to be members of His family from the first moment of their existence.<sup>2</sup>

Mary had to be sinless in order to be in such close proximity to God Himself. The whole Bible teaches this (e.g., Ex 3:5; Deut 23:14). God's Presence imparts and requires holiness (1 Cor 3:13-17; 1 Jn 3:3-9). The Jewish high priest entered the Holy of Holies (where the Ark and God's Special Presence were) only once a year, under threat of death if God's instructions were violated (Lev 16:2-4, 13). The Ark itself was so holy that only a few were allowed to touch it (Num 4:15; 2 Sam 6:2-7). Thus, Mary, due to her ineffable physical and spiritual relationship with God the Son, the Holy Spirit (as "Spouse"), and God the Father (as "Daughter of Zion"), necessarily had to be granted the grace of sinlessness from conception, just as we all will be cleansed utterly in order to be present with God in heaven (Rev 21:27). Seen in this light, the Immaculate Conception is a very biblical doctrine indeed.

## **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (M't:5:48)**

Jesus is the only person who was able to chose His own mother. He was able to chose the holiest human woman. And being a perfect Son, He loved His mother more than any other son. Being the Son of a Perfect Father and teaching others to 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (M't:5:48), He would of course prefer the one to bear Him also to be perfect. Being a loving Son, He would not want His mother to spend one second in imperfection or Satan's domination.

### **Prophecy in the Proto-Gospel**

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception can be found in what God says to Satan in Genesis 3:15.

**Genesis 3:14-15** *"And the LORD God said unto the serpent ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* KJV

Here, God speaks to satan, saying:

"I will place enmity between you (the serpent / satan) and **the woman** (Eve, or Mary the New Eve), and between your seed (sin /death) and her seed (the Messiah: Jesus), and He (Jesus) will strike at your head (i.e., crush your power), even as you strike at His heel (the Crucifixion).

This verse, according to both Jews and Christians, is the Proto-Evangelion: the first prophecy of the Messiah or the first promise of God to send His Son to conquer evil. And it reveals to us that the Mother of the Redeemer will be placed in opposition to satan, and not under his dominion. Thus, this New Eve could pass a sinless humanity onto her Son, the New Adam.

"He" and "her seed" refer to Christ. "Woman" and "her" can refer to Eve, but they apply better to Mary (John 19:26). All Christians agree that this is a prophecy about the Messiah, Jesus Christ, coming to strike the head of the serpent, Satan. - Actually the Hebrew word that is translated as "seed" is being used in a very unusual way. Normally it applies to the male, but here it is being used in reference to a woman. It is referring to Jesus's birth through the Virgin Mary. -

These are the words God spoke to the Serpent. However, some confuse them with the words earlier spoken to Eve, taking Eve to be the Woman mentioned here.

1. The words "her seed" in the original text are singular, meaning ONE descendant. It is generally agreed that the **seed** of "the woman" referred to here, the man who will crush Satan's head, is **Jesus**.

2. In Hebrew terms a Woman was never normally spoken of as having "seed", because this was taken as coming from the man. The only case in which seed is used with reference to a woman, is when the woman's child had no human father. This points to the Woman referred to being the child's **SOLE** human parent - as was Mary.

3. "I will put enmity between you and the Woman, and between your seed and her seed." This is spoken to Satan. And by this we can see that the Woman referred to cannot be Eve. Here God makes a statement about the future and He refers to some other "woman". We know this because of the context of His statement, "I will put enmity between you and the woman". The word "enmity", in this case, means "complete repulsion". **Was there enmity between Eve and Satan?** Not at all. Now, we can plainly see that Eve did not have enmity with the serpent, she was 'beguiled' by him. "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." That's not enmity! Eve was about to be expelled from Eden for Sin. So, was there enmity between the "seed", or descendants, of Eve and Satan? No. There is no enmity between unredeemed humanity and the devil. **The "seed" of Eve were in fact so evil that all but Noah and his family had to be destroyed in the flood.** If enmity is prophesied between Eve's "seed" and Satan, then the prophecy has failed. God promises that the "seed" of the "woman" would conquer the serpent. We all know who conquers Satan... Jesus. So, the woman whom the seed=Jesus comes from is, of course, the Blessed Mother.

So, the woman that has "enmity" with Satan is the Blessed Mother! Remember the definition of the word enmity. There is absolutely no attraction between Satan and 'the woman', so Mary could never have sinned or there wouldn't be a complete repulsion between her and the Devil. Jesus even goes on to identify Mary as the "Woman" in John 2:4, 19:26, and also in Revelation 12: 1, 5.

Luke in his gospel in 1:41, 42 gives us a parallel recognition of the 'woman' and 'her seed' to be Mary and Jesus. This recognition of the duo being endorsed by the Holy Spirit.

*Lu:1:41: And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was **filled with the Holy Ghost**; Lu:1:42: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, **Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.***

The '**blessed** among '**woman**' and the **blessed fruit** of her womb, pointing to the blessed duo, the '**woman**' and her '**seed**' of Ge 3:15

Luke's Annunciation scene (Luke 1:26-38,42) appears to contrast the Eve-serpent scene (Gen. 3:1-7): Mary vs. Eve, Gabriel vs. Satan (Rev. 12:9) as serpent, Fruit of the womb vs. fruit of the tree. In **Romans** 5:14 and **1 Cor.** 15:44-49, St. Paul sees Jesus Christ as the New Adam. In like fashion, St. Justin Martyr in 155 A.D. saw Mary as the New Eve: "For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy... And by her has He (Jesus) been born." [Dialogue with Trypho 100] St. Irenaeus in 190 A.D. wrote: "Eve was...the cause of death...; so also did Mary...become the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race...The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith." [Against Heresies III 22:4] Jesus Christ as the New Adam corrected Adam's sin by His Cross, while Mary as the New Eve undid Eve's disobedience by saying yes to God (Luke 1:38). Around 360 A.D., St. Ephraem the Syrian was the first to clearly write on Mary's sinlessness. He saw Mary as a replica of Eve before the Fall: she "was as innocent as Eve before her fall, a virgin most estranged from every stain of sin, more holy than the Seraphim." The Church Fathers of the east also called Mary "the All-Holy" (Panagia) and proclaimed her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature" [CCC 493]. Unfortunately some people went too far, such as the Pelagian heretics who tried to use Mary to prove their "sinless conception." This caused negative reactions.

Take note that God says two subjects will have enmity with the serpent, the woman and her seed. Now the word "enmity" in the original Hebrew literally means total and absolute opposition. What this means is that only a person who can never ever succumb to any temptation of the serpent can possibly be considered at enmity with the serpent. Anyone who gives in to temptation, even if only once, finds himself in sin, and following the lead of the serpent. He then cannot be at enmity with serpent. Certainly God was not referring to Eve in Genesis 3:15.

According to this interpretation, Mary stands with Christ in a perfect and victorious enmity towards Satan and his following.

Many of the later scholastics and a great many modern theologians argue that Mary's victory over Satan would not have been perfect, if she had ever been under his dominion. Consequently she must have entered this world without the stain of original sin. Pope Pius IX's defining bull *Ineffabilis Deus* approves this messianic-marianic interpretation. It draws from it the inference that Mary, in consequence of her intimate association with Christ, "with Him and through Him had eternal enmity towards the poisonous serpent, triumphed in the most complete fashion over him, and crushed its head with her immaculate foot."

The early Fathers saw Mary and Christ together crushing the serpent's head (Gen 3:15; cf. Romans 16:20; 1 Cor 15:22,25; Rev 12:1,17). Other Old Testament women who "crush the head" of enemies should be noted: Jael (cf. Judges 4-5) and Judith (OT book of Judith).

God announces far in advance that the devil's triumph in the Garden of Eden would eventually end in defeat, with his head being crushed or bruised under the trampling blows of the Messiah and His mother." (Curtis Mitch, *Catholic For a Reason II*, page 56)

There are two occasions in the Gospel where Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman". The first is at the wedding at Cana, the beginning of His glorification.

*John 2:4*

"Woman.....my hour has not yet come."

And the second is from the cross, the 'hour' of His glorification.

*John 19:26*

*"When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!'"*

Jesus is the seed of Mary. By addressing her as "Woman", he gives a meaning to her role in history which ties together with the first Woman, Eve. The first woman chose not to exercise her ability to not sin; the second, Mary, chose to exercise her ability to not sin, thus putting enmity between herself and the serpent.

It is important to note that the creation of the **enmity between Satan and the woman** is not something that the woman does, rather it is what God does, and He does it in the most perfect way. Unfortunately some Christians in their misguided attempts to defend the glory of God actually insult Him by denying Him the credit that is due for this miraculous work He did in Mary.

Enmity is a determined, enduring and extreme hostility that exists between enemies.

Every Christian once in heaven will be perfected by God's grace. However, only of Mary, and of "her seed," which is Jesus Christ, is it said that there will be enmity between them and Satan. Since Jesus is God and since holiness is an aspect of His Nature, he has that enmity by nature, whereas with Mary, she has it as a gift.

If there had ever been a time when Mary was under Satan's domination through personal or original sin, then there would not be a real enmity between her and Satan. Therefore, by virtue of the grace He gave her, God put Mary in opposition to Satan from the beginning and throughout her life. Notice that God the Father says that \*He will put\* the enmity between her and Satan. Only in God, and by His gift of grace, also in Mary, can it be said that there is enmity with Satan because only in them is their entire life opposed to Satan.

Therefore, since Mary had an enmity between her and Satan, and even though she was a descendant of Adam and would have contracted Original Sin, she was saved from the stain of it by the merits of Jesus Christ from the first moment of her life.

The bible in Gen 3:15, makes no distinction here between the enmity that Christ has toward Satan and the enmity of the woman and Satan! The enmity is shown as equal!

We know that there is no darkness or sin in Jesus. He has complete enmity with Satan. By the same token this verse suggests that Mary's enmity with Satan is equal to that of Christ's.

Everything in the OLD Covenant is a foreshadowing of the new. The Ark of the Covenant held the 'Word of God', both in the OLD Covenant (the Torah) and the new (Jesus). Read the first few lines of the Gospel of John. Jesus is the Word, the Word made flesh, so wouldn't he deserve an ark as well? The Ark was so holy it wasn't even to be touched. Those who had the Ark with them were never defeated. Make no mistake, The Ark of the Covenant, and the queen of the apostles (the 12 stars in Revelation) is Mary.

## **Mary the Ark of the New Covenant**

The **Ark of the Covenant**, is a chest described in Book of Exodus as containing the Tablets of Stone on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed and pieces of manna. According to some traditional interpretations of the Book of Exodus, Book of Numbers, and the Letter to the Hebrews the Ark contained (1) **manna**, and (2) **Aaron's rod**, and (3) **the tables of the covenant**.

*Heb:9:4: Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein **was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant***

Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant carried in her the incarnate Word, the Bread of Life and our new high priest. This Ark prefigured the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary.

What made the Ark of the Covenant so special? It was God's special presence manifested by the shekinah or glory cloud that overshadowed it (episkiazo in the Septuagint). St. Luke cleverly teaches that the Ark of the



Covenant was a type, a mock-up, of Mary. He does this in two ways. First he employs the same Greek word, *episkiazo*, to describe the action of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb. "And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come over you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow [episkiazo] you' (Lk 1:35).

**Luke 1:35** (RSV) *And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."*

*Ex 40:34: Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

The Greek word for *overshadow* is *episkiasei*, which describes a bright, glorious cloud. It is used with reference to the cloud of transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34) and also has a connection to the *shekinah* glory of God in the Old Testament (Ex 24:15-16; 40:34-38; 1 Ki 8:10).

**Exodus 40:34-35** *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

The Greek Septuagint translation uses the same word, *episkiasei*, in this passage.

"the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." That word "overshadow" is a rare verb. It's used to describe what the Holy Spirit does over the top of the Ark of the Covenant. And so it doesn't take much scholarship to see the connection that is probably intended by Luke as he recounts this.

Secondly, in describing Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth, Luke cleverly draws a parallel between the Ark of the Covenant traveling to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1-16) and Mary going to Elizabeth's home (Lk 1:39-56).

Mary is, therefore, in effect, the new temple and holy of holies, where God was present in a special fashion. In fact, Scripture draws many parallels between Mary, the "ark of the new covenant" and the ark of the (old) covenant:

**2 Samuel 6:9** *And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"*

**Luke 1:43** *And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

**2 Samuel 6:15** *So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the horn.*

**Luke 1:42** *and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"*

**2 Samuel 6:14,16** *And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. . . King David leaping and dancing before the LORD . . .*

**1 Chronicles 15:29** *And as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David dancing and making merry . . .*

**Luke 1:44** *For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.*

**2 Samuel 6:10-11** *So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite three months .*

**Luke 1:39,56** *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, . . . And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.*

Further reflection on "holy places" and "holy items" brings out the meaning of the striking parallel symbolism. The Temple and Tabernacle were holy, and this was especially the case with the holy of holies, where the ark was kept. God was said to dwell above the ark, between the two cherubim (Ex 25:22). The presence of God always imparted holiness (Duet 7:6; 26:19; Jer 2:3). The furnishings of the Tabernacle could not be touched by anyone, save a few priests, on pain of death (Num 1:51-53; 2:17; 4:15).

This was true of the holiest things, associated with God and worship of God. The high priest only entered the holy of holies once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Num 29:8). The Jews would tie a rope to his leg in case he perished from improper behavior (Lev 16:2,13), so they could pull him out. This was true of the ark itself.

Uzziah merely reached out to steady it when it was toppling over, and was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:2-7). Others died when they simply looked inside of it (1 Sam 6:19; cf. Ex 33:20).

*Exodus 25:11-21 - the ark of the Old Covenant was made of the purest gold for God's Word. Mary is the ark of the New Covenant and is the purest vessel for the Word of God made flesh.*

*2 Sam. 6:7 - the Ark is so holy and pure that when Uzzah touched it, the Lord slew him. This shows us that the Ark is undefiled. Mary the Ark of the New Covenant is even more immaculate and undefiled, spared by God from original sin so that she could bear His eternal Word in her womb.*

*1 Chron. 13:9-10 - this is another account of Uzzah and the Ark. For God to dwell within Mary the Ark, Mary had to be conceived without sin. For Protestants to argue otherwise would be to say that God would let the finger of Satan touch His Son made flesh. This is incomprehensible.*

*1 Chron. 15 and 16 - these verses show the awesome reverence the Jews had for the Ark - veneration, vestments, songs, harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets.*

Mary was conceived sinless, because like the Ark **she was required to bear the physical presence of the real true God in her womb**. God requires a pure, unblemished and holy vessel. She is the ark of the new covenant and she is prefigured by the ark of the old covenant.

Mary became like the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where God dwelt. God gave extremely detailed instructions on constructing the ark, since it was to contain His Law (Ex 25-30 and 35-40). Mary had to be that much more holy, since she was to carry the Word of God in the flesh (Job 14:4).

The Ark of the Covenant of the ancient Hebrews was a vessel of setim wood, a type of acacia which does not corrupt. It was overlaid with pure gold and decorated with specific carvings of beaten pure gold. It was, practically speaking, the very first visible sign of God's invisible presence among the Israelites.

*De:10:3: And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand.(KJV)*

Other translations use the words "incorruptible," "acacia," "indestructible," and "hard" to describe the wood used. In any case, Moses used this wood because it was regarded as very durable and "incorruptible." Mary is regarded by Catholic and Orthodox Christians as being the Ark of the Covenant in the New Testament and therefore it would seem fitting that the New Ark likewise be made "incorruptible" or "immaculate."

*1Sa:4:21: And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.*

*1Sa:4:22: And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.*

*1Sa:5:11: So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.*

*1Sa:6:19: And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.*

*1Sa:7:1: And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.*

*1Ch:15:12: And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.*

Powerful and holy indeed was this sacred vessel! And what did it contain? **'a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant'** (Hebrews 9:4)

*Exodus 25:8-9*

*And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.*

In the ark was placed the tablets of the law (the ten commandments), a golden cup containing manna from heaven and Aaron's rod, which once had bloomed.

*Hebrews 9:2-4*

*For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, **which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant**;*

God demanded that only the finest materials and the purest gold be used in the construction of the Ark (Ex 25:10-22). Similarly, the Holy Spirit used only the purest material to tabernacle the Divine Son. For in Mary "the Word became flesh and dwelt [literally "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent"] among us" (Jn 1:14).

The Ark carried the Word of God. Mary carried the Word of God made flesh when she was pregnant with him. Originally the Ark of the Covenant contained the word of God etched on stone by God's own hand. The Ark was not the Word itself but it was nevertheless very important. Mary carried the "word made flesh" inside her the same way the Ark carried the 10 commandments which were the Word of God manifest in the real word. (Jn 1:1)

This Ark prefigured the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary.

There is a huge difference between what is commonly written about many Biblical characters, "He (or she) was filled with the Holy Spirit" and what is written in the Gospel about Mary, "the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you."

Take a look comparatively at the two arks. First we have the Ark of the Old Covenant. In it was housed the tablets of the law, the Word of God etched in stone. In it also was placed manna, bread from heaven. And in it also was the rod of Aaron, the sign of priestly office.

Now we have the Ark of the New Covenant in which is the incarnate Word, the Bread of Life and our new high priest.

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant, overshadowed by the the Spirit of God, was the instrument through which God came to dwell among men; in the New Testament, Mary, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, is the instrument through which God came to dwell among men. She is the Ark of the New Covenant.

This is how God regards people and even inanimate objects that are in close proximity to Him. Thus, Mary, as the ark of the new covenant, *Theotokos* ("bearer of God"): the one who had the sublime honor of carrying God incarnate in her womb, had to be exceptionally holy to do so.

And we'll discover in Revelation after 580 years without an Ark, Jewish Christians look up and see a sign. It's the Ark of the Covenant in heaven which had not been seen in 580 years approximately. It's been lost for that long. John sees it in Revelation up in heaven and the very next thing he sees is a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars, a Queen Mother. The Ark is no longer an empty throne.

In the book of Revelation our vision is directed to the double symbol of the Temple and the Woman, the dwelling-place (or New Ark of the Covenant) of God our Savior. Did John see the "old Ark of the Covenant" in God's temple in Revelations? The answer is: No he didn't. The specific purpose of the old ark was to represent the visible presence of the invisible God to the Old Testament Hebrews. The new covenant with Jesus as the High Priest has done away the Old Covenant with its ordinances and the old earthly sanctuary as Heb 8:1 to 13 and Heb 9:1 to 12 says. In the temple **in heaven**, God is present in person, he doesn't need the old ark. The fact is, the ark John sees is the new ark, "the woman clothed with the sun."

*"Then God's temple in heaven was opened and **the ark of the covenant** was seen within his temple...and a great portent appeared in heaven, **a woman clothed with the sun**..." (Rev 11:19; 12:1).*

Mary, who is the embodiment of the Church, the Daughter of Zion, and the Dwelling of God on the day of the Incarnation, will take her place once more in the heart of the people of God, and after having been the Ark of the Covenant by bearing the Son of God, she will be like any member of the mystical Body of His Son, the Church, the Dwelling of God, who bears Him spiritually in her heart. But, because of her unique vocation as **the Mother of God**, she will remain the privileged **type of the Church**, the symbol of a virginal motherhood which the Church will have to re-live without ceasing in its ministry as Mother of the Faithful. Thus Mary, the Mother of the Lord, who has borne the physical body of Christ and is the dwelling of God and the Ark of the Covenant, remains the figure of motherhood for the Church.

The biblical truth is that that Christ *alone* is sinless (cf. Heb 4:15; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:22; etc). Only God is without sin, and to maintain this it is important that the flesh and blood God partook be sinless as well. When appearing at the burning bush the Lord says even the place He has appeared is holy and asks for the sandals to be removed. And of the Mount Zion, that any man or animal touching the mount shall be put to death.

Ex:19:10-15 & 23: And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

19: 23: And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

Ex:34:3: And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

Ex:3:4: And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Ex:3:5: And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Ac:7:33: Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

Jos:5:13: And it came to pass, when Joshua **was by Jericho**, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood **a man** over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? Jos:5:14: And he said, Nay; but as **captain of the host of the LORD** am I now come. And **Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship**, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? Jos:5:15: And **the captain of the LORD's host** said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for **the place whereon thou standest is holy**. And Joshua did so.

Would this same Lord permit His own Son to live in a sin stained womb or a sin stained Ark?

The Ark of the Old Testament, a chest made from wood, that carried only the word written in stone, is pronounced as highly revered and highly holy by God. Uzziah merely reached out to steady it when it was toppling over, and was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:2-7). Others died when they simply looked inside of it (1 Sam 6:19; cf. Ex 33:20). Mary the bearer of the Word in the flesh is more than a wooden chest having carried in her womb not just stone tablets or manna or a rod, but the real Word of God, the Son of the Most High Himself, our High Priest and the Bread of Life Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Chief Shepherd. She was conceived holy and immaculate. She bore in her 'the Son of the Most High. She lived and assumed into heaven and remains a virgin forever.

## Mary, full of grace

The main Bible text that suggests the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, is the Angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary:

"Hail, full of grace (*kecharitomene*), the Lord is with you!" [Luke 1:28, RSVCE]

Grace in the New Testament is seen as the **antidote** to sin. Rom 3:24, Rom 5:15 Rom 5:20 Rom 6:14

So being **filled** with Grace strongly indicates sinlessness. And since Mary required the grace of redemption before her own birth, it is quite fitting that this happened at her conception.

The Greek word used by the angel is **Kecharitomene**. The root of this word is **Charis**, meaning **Grace**. The prefix **Ke** means that the grace was already perfectly present before the angel appeared. The suffix **mene** means that Mary was the recipient of this grace.

This is not the first time that angels appeared to women: but we find not that they were ever treated with that respect which the angel Gabriel shows to Mary. Sarah and Agar were visited by these celestial spirits, but not with an honour like that wherewith the angel on this occasion addresses the Blessed Virgin, saying, <Hail! full of grace.>

Now Charis can also be translated simply as favour. So Highly-favoured could be a conceivable translation - **but this would only be acceptable if the word "favour" were used as a translation for "Charis" everywhere else in the New Testament.** But THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN. Even those bibles which translate "Charis" as Favour" when referring to Mary, translate it as "Grace" everywhere else. This is highly misleading because in the New Testament the word "**Grace**" has a **particular meaning** distinct from "Favour". In the New Testament "Grace" is a gift of God that saves from sin and its effects. So translating the word any differently is wrong. The correct translation is rightfully "Full of Grace". The translation "**Full of Grace**" instead of "**Highly Favored**" is far more accurate to the Greek., the *Ancient Syriac, Arabic and Latin versions*. It was also approved by the early Christian fathers

*Kecharitomene*, in any event, is derived from the root *charis*, whose literal meaning is *grace* (it is translated as *grace* 129 out of 150 times in the KJV). *Kecharitomene*, is the perfect passive participle of the Greek verb, *charitoo*, meaning to grace or favor. The perfect tense denotes completion or fullness. It can be translated as "completely graced" or "fully favored." This word conveys a sense of completion and perfection that was already present at the time of the Annunciation. According to Greek grammatical lexicons, the perfect stem of a Greek verb means the 'perpetuation of a permanent result or completed action'. The traditional translation, "full of grace," is more accurate than the one found in many recent versions of the New Testament, which give something along the lines of "highly favored daughter." Mary was indeed a highly favored daughter of God, but the Greek implies more than that (and it never mentions the word for "daughter"). The grace given to Mary is at once permanent and of a unique kind. So, the grace Mary enjoyed was not a result of the angel's visit, and was only as "full" or strong or complete as possible at any given time, but it extended over the whole of her life, from conception onward. She was in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence to have been called "full of grace."

The RSV has "O favored one" in place of the Catholic edition's "full of grace" (*gratia plena*), which is the traditional interpretation of the Greek, as passed down by St. Jerome in the Vulgate. Even setting aside St. Jerome's outstanding personal sanctity, the fact that he performed the translation only a couple hundred years after the writing of the Gospel, when knowledge of the dialect of its composition was still in recent memory, should lend authority to this translation. St. Jerome in the 4th century translated it into Latin as, *gratia plena*, or "full of grace." This is a unique title given to Mary, and suggests a perfection of grace from a past event. Mary is not just "highly favored." She has been perfected in grace by God. "Full of grace" is only used to describe one other person - Jesus Christ in John 1:14. Even some Protestant Bibles render it as "*highly favored one*" (NIV & KJV). In addition the tense in Greek indicates "from the beginning," implying that, that Mary was full of grace from her conception by a special act of God.

Luke 1:28 indicates a unique abundance of grace (Gk: "charis"), a supernatural, godlike state of soul, even before Christ's redemption; which finds its explanation only in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. How can a soul enslaved by sin of any kind be *full of the Divine Grace of God*? The answer should be obvious, it *CAN'T*, God *HATES ALL SIN*.

We see 'grace' or 'favor' destined for Mary by the Creator centuries before she was born, at the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15. Then how is it hard to believe that she was born with grace or favor. She is the destined woman to bear the 'seed', the Son of God, the child of the Holy Ghost. A woman foretold centuries before her birth, to be in enmity toward satan, and destined to receive the grace to bear the sinless one in her womb, the virgin to bear the anointed Lord as again foretold in Isaiah 7:14.

Clearly, here we have Gabriel the angel of God declaring Mary free of all Sin. This is also verified by the angels next words "...the Lord is with thee". St. Augustine in A.D. 415 wrote:

"We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honour to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin." (Nature and Grace, 36:42, in NPNF1, V:135)

Next, we see that sacred scripture tells us;

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for **THOU HAST FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD**. And, behold, **THOU SHALT CONCEIVE IN THY WOMB, AND BRING FORTH A SON, AND SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS. HE SHALL BE GREAT, AND SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST**: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:" (Luke 1:30-32)

Again, we see the angel of the Lord single Mary out as having "Found FAVOR With God". Then he goes on to tell Mary she was to become the mother of God ("The mother of my Lord" Luke 1:43). Understanding God's justifiable hatred for sin, would God choose to spend nine months in a sin stained temple (womb)? To the Christian there is only *one answer* **NO**, there is an incongruity in the supposition that the flesh, from which the flesh of the Son of God was to be formed, should ever have belonged to one who was the slave of that arch-enemy, whose power He came on earth to destroy. as Jacob of Sarug in A.D. 521 tells us:

"[T]he very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary, if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary." (ante, in CE)

We can see that at least at the time of the Annunciation Mary is without sin. This is evident by the words that the Angel Gabriel speaks to Mary in Luke 1:28. The Angel, a messenger, is not speaking his own words, rather he is delivering God's message to her. He says in **Luke 1: 28 "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women."** In the Greek the word for "full of grace" is "kecharitomene." She is full of grace so there is no room for sin in her.

The salutation of the Angel Gabriel is different from the usual angelic greeting. It indicates that Mary was exceptionally "highly favored with grace" (Greek: caritovw, *charitoo*, used twice in the New Testament, in Lk 1:28 for Mary – before Christ's redemption; and Eph 1:6 for Christ's grace to us – after Christ's redemption).

Lk 1:28                      And coming to her (Mary), he (the angel Gabriel) said, "Hail, favored one (*kecharitomene*)"

Eph 1:4–6                      (God) chose us in him (Jesus), before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace (*echaritosen*) that he granted us in the beloved.

Note that the angel's salutation *preceded* Mary's acquiescence. Mary was *already* highly favored. God's grace was not given in time after Mary accepted the angel's word. The Church believes that this grace was given from the very beginning of Mary's life. It is clearly *grace* because at the time of Mary's conception she could have done nothing to earn it. She was seen at the beginning of creation and in Isaiah 7:14 to bear the Son of God, the child of the Holy Ghost and so obviously was needed to be born immaculate or without stain of sin.

In this verse Gabriel does not address her as "Hail, Mary" but as "*Hail, full of grace*." Gabriel uses this participle as a name or title for Mary. The angel is here, in effect, giving Mary a new name (*full of grace*), as if he were addressing Abraham as *full of faith*, or Solomon *full of wisdom* (characteristics which typified them). Throughout the Bible, names were indicative of one's character and essence, all the more so if God renamed a person. So, if Mary is "Full of grace," how can this be if she was a sinner? One cannot be sinful and "full of grace" or "perfectly graced." That's a contradiction. The Bible goes on to say, "But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind **what sort of greeting this might be**." (Lk 1:29). What those other translations take great pains to hide is that Gabriel said she was "full of grace". It was, indeed, an unusual greeting.

In **Acts 6:8**, St. Stephen is said to be "full of grace" according to the RSV, but this phrase is used as a description and not as a title. Also in that verse, the phrase is *pleres charitos*, not *kecharitomene*. If the Greek terminology is different, then the argument loses most or all of its relevance and force.

Mary is named "Full-of-Grace", which includes sanctifying grace. Grace is opposed to sin (Rom. 5:21). This verse may not prove the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, but it would be an odd greeting otherwise. Elsewhere in the Bible, Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares to Mary:

"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" [Luke 1:42, RSV; also see 48]

In this poetic parallel, Mary's blessing from God is compared to the blessing that rests on her Son - the fruit of her womb. Jesus was blessed in His humanity by being sinless (Hebrews 4:15) even while in her womb. Mary was blessed by God as the mother of His Son and in her freedom from sin.

In his 1986 encyclical on Mary as Mother of the Redeemer, Pope John Paul II teaches that .the messenger greets Mary as full of grace.; he calls her thus as if it were her real name. He does not call her by her proper earthly name: Miryam (= Mary), but by this new name: full of grace. (Redemptoris Mater 8). .According to the belief formulated in solemn documents of the Church, the Pope adds,

this glory of grace is manifested in the Mother of God through the fact that she has been redeemed in a more sublime manner. By virtue of the richness of the grace of the beloved Son, by reason of the redemptive merits of him who willed to become her Son, Mary was preserved from the inheritance of original sin. In this way, from the first moment of her conception which is to say of her existence she belonged to Christ, sharing in the salvific and sanctifying grace and in that love which has its beginning in the .Beloved, the Son of the Eternal Father, who through the Incarnation became her own Son (Redemptoris Mater 10, footnotes omitted).

[the following is an excerpt from Karl Keating's bk. Catholicism and Fundamentalism; 1988 Ignatius Press.]

"This is the traditional rendering, based on the Latin Vulgate. The phrase "full of grace" is a translation, by way of the Latin, of the Greek *kecharitomene*. Theologically the word indicates a transformation of the subject ". The sense is not just "to look upon with favor, but to transform by this favor of grace." The newer translations leave out something the Greek conveys, something the older translation conveys, which is that this grace is at once permanent and of a singular kind. The Greek indicates a perfection of grace. The grace Mary enjoyed must not only have been as "full" or strong or complete as possible at any given time, but it must have been extended over the whole of her life, from conception. That is, she must have been in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence to have been called "full of grace" or to have been filled with divine favor in a singular way. This is just what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds: that Mary, "in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."

For Mary this signifies a state granted to her, in which she enjoys an extraordinary fullness of grace. *Charis* often refers to a power or ability which God grants in order to overcome sin (and this is how we interpret Luke 1:28).

*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by the renowned Protestant Greek scholar A.T. Robertson, expounds Luke 1:28 as follows:

"Highly favoured" (*kecharitomene*). Perfect passive participle of *charitoo* and means endowed with grace ("charis"), enriched with grace as in Ephesians. 1:6, . . . The Vulgate *gratiae plena* "is right, if it means 'full of grace which thou hast received'; (Plummer).[Robertson, Archibald T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930, 6 volumes, vol. 2, p.13]

*Kecharitomene* has to do with God's grace, as it is derived from the Greek root, *charis* (literally, "grace"). Greek scholar Marvin R. Vincent noted that even Wycliffe and Tyndale (no enthusiastic supporters of the Catholic Church) both rendered *kecharitomene* in Luke 1:28 as "full of grace" and that the literal meaning was "endued with grace" (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1946, four volumes, from 1887 edition: New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; Vol. I, 259).

Likewise, well-known Protestant linguist W.E. Vine, defines it as "to endue with Divine favour or grace" (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., four volumes-in-one edition, 1940, Vol. II, 171).

It is certain that *kecharitomene* is directly concerned with the idea of "grace," since, as Vine noted, it is derived from the root word *charis*, whose literal meaning is "grace." *Charis* is translated by the King James Version, for example, 129 times (out of 150 total appearances) as "grace."

All these men are Protestants, and so cannot be accused of Catholic translation bias.

"It is permissible, on Greek grammatical and linguistic grounds, to paraphrase *kecharitomene* as *completely, perfectly, enduringly endowed with grace*." (Blass & DeBrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961, p.166; Smyth, H.W., *Greek Grammar*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968, sec. 1852:b. ) Thus, in just this one verse, pregnant with meaning and far-reaching implications, the uniqueness of

Mary is strongly indicated, and the Immaculate Conception can rightly be deemed entirely consistent with the meaning of this passage.

The highly regarded Protestant Greek reference work, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich; translated and abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985, 1304-1305, defines *charis*, *charizomai*, *charitoo*, *acharistos* as follows:

Distinctively *charis* in Paul expounds the structure of the salvation event. The basic thought is that of free giving. In view is not just a quality in God but its actualization at the cross (Gal. 2:21) and its proclamation in the gospel. We are saved by grace alone . . . it is the totality of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1) that all believers have (1 Cor. 1:4) . . . Grace is the basis of justification and is also manifested in it ([Rom.] 5:20-21). Hence grace is in some sense a state (5:2), although one is always called into it (Gal. 1:6), and it is always a gift on which one has no claim. Grace is sufficient (1 Cor. 1:29) . . . The work of grace in overcoming sin displays its power (Rom. 5:20-21) . . . In Col. 1:6 *charis* means the gospel . . .

*Charis* (grace) often means *favor*, it is true, but it can also refer to a state. The latter is how Catholics usually think of grace: or more specifically, as a power or ability which God grants in order to overcome sin (and this is how we interpret Luke 1:28). This sense is a biblical one, as well, as seen in the above citation, and in the following, from Greek scholar W.E. Vine:

. . . in another objective sense, the effect of grace, the spiritual state of those who have experienced its exercise, whether (1) a state of grace, e.g., Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12; 2 Pet. 3:18, or (2) a proof thereof in practical effects, deeds of grace, e.g., 1 Cor. 16:3 . . . ; 2 Cor. 8:6,19 . . . the power and equipment for ministry, e.g., Rom. 1:5; 12:6; 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:2,7 . . . (Vine, *ibid.*, Vol. 2, 170, "Grace" / "Charis")

Instances of "grace" in the English Bible are translations of the Greek *charis*, the root of the word used by an angel in Luke 1:28 to describe Mary: *kecharitomene*. Certainly all mainstream Christians agree that grace is required both for salvation and to overcome sin. For a person to be *full of grace* is both to be saved and to be completely, exceptionally holy. To be full of grace is to be devoid of sin.

Some say that the root word for *kecharitomene*, *charitoo*, is found elsewhere in Scripture (in the same participial form as in Luke 1:28); therefore, Catholics should consistently regard others to whom it is applied as sinless also:

. . . *charitoo* . . . occurs in the same participial form in Sir. 18:17 with no theological significance. It also occurs in Eph. 1:6 where it is applied to all believers . . . Are we to conclude on this basis that all believers are without original sin?

Ephesians 1:5-6 reads, "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

But the variant of *charitoo* (grace) here is different (*echaritosen*). According to Marvin Vincent, a well-known Protestant linguist and expert on biblical Greek, the meaning is:

. . . not "endued us with grace," nor "made us worthy of love," but, as "grace - which he freely bestowed."

Vincent indicates different meanings for the word *grace* in Luke 1:28 and Ephesians 1:6. He holds to "endued with grace" as the meaning in Luke 1:28, so he expressly contrasts the meaning here with that passage. A.T. Robertson also defines the word in the same fashion, as "he freely bestowed"

For Mary, Luke 1:28 uses a special conjugated form of "charitoo." It uses "kecharitomene," while for every other like in Ephesians 1:6 uses "echaritosen," which is a different form of the verb "charitoo." *Echaritosen* means "he graced (bestowed grace.)" *Echaritosen* signifies a momentary action, an action brought to pass. (Blass and DeBrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, p.166.) Whereas, *Kecharitomene*, the perfect passive participle, shows a completeness with a with permanent result. *Kecharitomene* denotes continuance of a completed action (H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) 108-109, sec 1852:b also Blass and DeBrunner p.175.

Apart from the different meanings of the specific word used, as shown, grace is possessed in different measure by different believers, as seen elsewhere in Scripture:

**2 Peter 3:18:** "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

**Ephesians 4:7:** "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." (cf. Acts 4:33, Rom 5:20, 6:1, James 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5, 2 Peter 1:2)



The "freely bestowed" grace of Ephesians 1:6, then, cannot possibly be considered the equivalent of that "fullness of grace" applied to Mary in Luke 1:28 because it refers to a huge group of people, with different gifts and various levels of grace bestowed, as the verses just cited show. Grace is given in different measure to believers. Therefore, the argument that Ephesians 1:6 is a direct parallel to Luke 1:28 collapses. The mass of Christian believers as a whole possess neither the same degree of grace nor of sanctity, and everyone knows this, from experience and revelation alike.

The expression (Greek *kecharitomene*) in the angel's salutation, represents a proper name of the person being addressed by the angel, and must on this account express a characteristic quality of Mary. Mary (as an individual person) was addressed in an extraordinary fashion by a title that, biblically, means the one so addressed is particularly exemplified by the characteristics of the title. Mary was "full of grace"; *kecharitomene* here takes on the significance of a noun.

The perfect stem of a Greek verb, denotes, according to Friedrich Blass and Albert DeBrunner, "continuance of a completed action" (*Greek Grammar of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], 66). Mary, therefore, continues afterward to be full of the grace she possessed at the time of the Annunciation. That cannot, of course, be said of all believers in Ephesians 1:6, because of differences of levels of grace, as shown earlier.

Some point to the Deuterocanonical Sirach 18:17, where the word is in the same form (*kecharitomene*), that verse also applies generally: "Indeed, does not a word surpass a good gift? Both are to be found in a gracious man."

Moreover, this is *proverbial*, or wisdom literature. According to standard hermeneutical principles, this is not the sort of biblical literature on which to build doctrines or systematic theology (or even precise meanings of words). The reason is that proverbial expression admits of many exceptions. Proverbial language is, therefore, too imprecise to use in determining exact theological propositions. Meaning depends on context, as any lexicon will quickly prove.

Even apart from the important factor of the proverbial style of writing found in Sirach, linguists attribute different meanings to *kecharitomene* in the two verses. As Joseph Thayer, another great biblical Greek scholar, writes:

Luke 1:28: "to pursue with grace, compass with favor; to honor with blessings."

Sirach 18:17: "to make graceful i.e., charming, lovely, agreeable."

(Thayer, 667; Strong's word no. 5487)

Mary is the only one addressed as 'full of grace' as like a title. The angel Gabriel said, "**Hail, full of grace**, the Lord is with you" unlike he addresses the other two set of people, Zacharias the father of John the Baptist and later the shepherds. The phrase "full of grace" is a translation of the Greek word *kecharitomene*. This word represents the proper name of the person being addressed by the angel, and it therefore expresses a characteristic quality of Mary. The Bible stressing "But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind **what sort of greeting this might be.**" (Lk 1:29) points to the fact that she was being addressed by a title.

Catholics believe that God gave her the grace at her conception so as to avoid the original sin which she inevitably *would* have inherited, being human, *but* for God's preventive grace, which saved her from falling into the pit of sin by avoidance rather than rescue, after she had fallen in. In a very simple sense, the Immaculate Conception is God giving Mary the grace to be as sinless and innocent as Eve originally was, a thing quite fitting and not at all strange or implausible for one chosen to bear the Lord God in her own body. It was a grace from God which could not possibly have had anything to do with Mary's personal merit, since it was granted by God at the moment of her conception, to preserve her from original sin (as appropriate for the one who would bear God Incarnate in her very body).

The Lord tells Jeremiah in Jer:1:5: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee'; Also we see the prophecy about John the Baptist in Isa:40:3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness. Even for Judas, the one who betrayed the Lord we see Ac:1:20: For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. These prophecies were more than 700 hundred years older than the time they were fulfilled. Did the omnipotent not have in mind these persons as to how they were to be and what their lives would be. Even for the common man the Lord has fixed plans. Plans for their good as well as one for their destruction. It is one's choice to take the one they wish

Jer:21:8: And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you **the way of life, and the way of death.**

Likewise for Mary, the one who was destined to bear the Son of God in her womb, we see her prophesied at the beginning of creation in Genesis, as well as in Isaiah 7:14. Did the Lord who even had the end of the world and the new heaven and earth before His eyes centuries before they all were to be, did He not have had Mary in mind at these times of Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14, or did He just leave it for later. The Lord always has a clear picture of His creation. Likewise, even at the Garden of Eden the omnipotent had Mary in mind when He foretold of the 'woman' who would bear the seed and likewise when He through Isaiah prophesied of the virgin who would bear God Jesus. This 'grace' was then destined to Mary since the time of Genesis, and in short, she was conceived with this grace, she was conceived immaculately to bear the holy God, the 'child of the Holy Ghost'.

The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love" [cf. Eph 1:3-4]. [Vatican II, LG 56].

Did the Omnipotent, all knowing Lord not have foreseen the person who was supposed to bring into the world the 'seed' when He foretold of the same in Genesis and later in Isaiah? God created Eve without sin, would He not create His own Mother without sin, also? St. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. His father, the priest Zecharias was told: If God can fill St. John with such grace in his mother's womb, why can't He do the same for Mary? And why *wouldn't* He?

### **But Only a sinner needs a Savior**

A reason of protestants for objecting to the Immaculate Conception and Mary's consequent sinlessness is that we are told that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Besides, they say, Mary said her "spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47), and only a sinner needs a Savior.

Let's take the second citation first. Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way—by anticipation. **In order to be, and remain, sinless she needed that grace before her own birth.** The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception thus does not contradict Luke 1:47.

We can see that in Luke 1:46 Mary speaks of God as her Saviour, but she speaks in the **present tense**. She does not say "God, **who will be** my Saviour." She has already been redeemed.

**Luke 1:47** - Our Blessed Mother says: "my spirit rejoices in God my savior." (Mary did need a savior but she was saved prior to and in anticipation of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord.)

Mary's Immaculate Conception indicates that she had a greater salvation. We have been saved curatively, that is, we contract Original Sin but Christ's atoning death frees us from it. Mary, on the other hand, was saved preventatively, that is, she was saved from contracting Original Sin because of the infinite merits of her Divine Son.

By receiving Christ's grace at her conception, she had **His grace** applied to her before she was able to become mired in original sin and its stain.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that she was "redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son" (CCC 492). She has more reason to call God her Savior than we do, because he saved her in an even more glorious manner!

Christ, as the Church teaches, "conquered the enemy of the human race alone (solus)" (D711); In the same way, He alone acquired the grace of Redemption for the whole human race, **including Mary...** (Dr. Ludwigg Otto, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma 212-13)

Mary is sinless by a special, unmerited gift of God and not by her own power. Even though we have free will, concupiscence inclines us to sin (Rom. 7:15-25), while Mary's gift inclined her towards God. Like us she needed redemption, but Almighty God redeemed her at conception by the anticipated merits of her Son. She did not have to be sinless because Jesus is sinless. So her mother did not need to be sinless and so on. God the Father simply gave Mary this singular privilege for being the mother of His only begotten Son (John 1:14,18). Nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37), Who is not limited by time. As the British monk, Eadmer reasoned: "*God could do it; God should do it; so God did it.*"

As Blessed Duns Scotus (d. 1308), known as the .Marian Doctor., explained, .Mary would greatly have needed Christ as a Redeemer, for she would have contracted original sin by reason of human propagation unless she had been preserved through the grace of the Mediator. In other words, what we receive as a .remedy. through the Sacrament of Baptism, Mary by a special grace received by way of .inoculation. through the merits of the Divine Physician.

Mary was saved by anticipation and not by forgiveness. We are saved by forgiveness, since we sinned. But by anticipating the merits of Christ, God saved Mary before she fell in the mire of sin. As an example, a child can be saved from drowning after he falls into a swimming pool. He also could be saved from drowning by grabbing him before he falls in the pool. Our redemption is "healing medicine," but her redemption was like a "vaccine." She was always immune from sin, even venial sin (CCC 493). This is the most perfect kind of redemption.

## Misunderstanding about Romans 3:23 ("All have sinned")

Some Protestants use the words 'all have sinned' from Rom 3:10, 11 and 23 in an attempt to prove that Mary was also with sin. They say it means everyone commits actual sins. They conclude it means Mary must have sinned during her life, and that certainly would speak against an Immaculate Conception.

Ro:3:10: As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one:** Ro:3:11: There is none that understandeth, there is **none that seeketh after God.** Ro:3:12: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is **none that doeth good, no, not one.**

Ro:3:23: For **all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

Rom. 3:23 does not apply to all universally. "all have sinned" also refers only to those able to commit sin. This is not everyone. **Jesus is an exception to this rule** (Heb 4:15).. But if we know that Paul's principle has an exception for the Second Adam, then it also has an exception for the Second Eve: Mary. Then, Mary could be another exception without contradicting Romans 3:23 and 11:32. In addition, unborn babies are not capable of personal sin because they do not have the use of reason. St. Paul, for example, speaks of the time when Jacob and Esau were unborn babies as a time when they "had done nothing either good or bad" (Rom 9:11). So if an infant dies while still in the womb, or while he is still a young infant, he has not committed any personal sins, and so he obviously counts as an exception to the principle Paul lays down in Romans 3. Also Father Abraham who is highly featured in the letters as an example of 'righteousness' and faith, is he also to be grouped among the 'all have sinned'. The verses above also say '**there is none that seeketh God**' and **none that doeth good**', also '**all have come short of the glory of God**'. What about Luke 1:6 which speaks of St. John the Baptist's parents, the priest Zacharias and Elisabeth, who "were both righteous before God, walking in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*'? We know of Elijah and Enoch who were directly taken up into heaven, elsewhere Noah, Daniel, Job (Ezek. 14:14,20), are said to be righteous. and, looking at the Books of the Old testament we see many who sought God and were even martyred for the love of God, we see many of them detailed by Paul in his Letter to the Hebrews highlighting their righteousness and faith, are they as well part of this 'all have come short of the glory of God', 'none that seeketh God' and 'none that doeth good'. Not at all. Likewise 'all have sinned' does not apply to all and everyone.

Look at Psalm 14 & Psalm 53 which is the basis of the verses.

Psalms:14:1: The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. **They** are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. Psalms:14:2: The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. Psalms:14:3: **They are all gone aside**, they are all together become filthy: **there is none that doeth good, no, not one.** Psalms:14:4: Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? **who eat up my people** as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. Psalms:14:5: There were they in great fear: for God is in **the generation of the righteous.** Psalms:14:6: Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge. Psalms:14:7: Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

This psalm does not teach that all humans are sinful. The psalm draws a distinction between the wicked and the righteous, between those who are with God and those who are apart from God, and it is those who are apart from God that the psalmist says are not righteous. It only teaches that, among the wicked, all are sinful. The righteous continue to seek God. 14:4 still talks of 'my people' who are persecuted by the wicked, thus revealing that there existed the wicked that seeketh not God and also those that were 'His people'. Paul is contrasting the "they" in Ps 14:1, those who do no good, who are filthy, who are not righteous, who do no

good -- not one -- -- with God's people who *are* righteous in Ps 14:5. This passage cannot be used to prove the universal sinfulness of mankind because it does not have all of mankind in view.

Note that the Greek word used in Romans 3: 23 for 'all' is "pantes." The Greek word in many verses in Scripture simply means a '**great number**', '**most of**', or '**a lot**'.

1 Cor. 15:22 - in Adam all ("pantes") have died, and in Christ all ("pantes") shall live. This proves that "all" does not mean "every single one." This is because not all have died (such as Enoch and Elijah who were taken up to heaven), and not all will go to heaven (because Jesus said so).

Rom. 5:12 - Paul says that death spread to all ("pantes") men. Again, this proves that "all" does not mean "every single one" because death did not spread to all men (as we have seen with Enoch and Elijah).

Rom. 5:19 - here Paul says "many (not all) were made sinners." Paul uses "polloi," not "pantes." Is Paul contradicting what he said in Rom. 3:23? Of course not. Paul means that all are subject to original sin, but not all reject God.

Paul's comment to the Christians in Rome thus would seem to have one of two meanings. Despite the phrasing, it might be that it refers not to absolutely everyone, but just to the mass of mankind (which means young children and other special cases, like Mary, would be excluded without having to be singled out).

It took a positive act of God to keep her from coming under its effects the way we have. We had the stain of Original Sin removed through baptism, which brings sanctifying grace to the soul (thus making the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven) and makes the recipient a member of the Church. We might say that Mary received a very special kind of "baptism" at her conception, though, because she never contracted Original Sin, she enjoyed certain privileges we never can, such as entire avoidance of sin.

What was the purpose behind the verse? St. Paul was attempting to eradicate the division between the Jewish converts and those of the Gentiles. St. Paul was specifically talking to those Jews and Jewish converts who felt themselves spiritually better than the Gentiles. It is this error that St. Paul wishes to dispel "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;"(3:9). St. Paul goes on to explain that even the Law states that they by themselves and are not righteous (3:10-18) he explains that those outside the law are just as equally accountable to God as those inside the law. "...So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." (3:19) St. Paul explains, observance of the Jewish law is not enough to bring righteousness, but knowledge the Law does bring consciousness of sin(3:20). And that we can achieve the righteousness of God apart from the Jewish law (3:21). This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew or gentile (3:22). For both Jew and gentile are in need a salvation "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*"(3:23) but that true justification comes freely by God's grace through the redemption of Christ Jesus (3:24-26) St. Paul teaches that those of Jewish dissent should not be "boasting" and explains On what principle justification is achieved, On that of observing the Jewish law? No, but on that of faith.(3:27)and that we as Christians maintain that a man is justified by faith in Christ apart from observing the Jewish law.(3:28) "Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."(29-31)

So we see the true reason behind Romans chapter three verse twenty three was to promote Christian unity and not to denounce every single solitary human beings (including Christ's mother Mary) as having sinned and offended God, as some people attempt to distort the verse as meaning.

Some Fundamentalists think this verse means more than that everyone is subject to original sin. The problem with this line of thinking should be obvious, the word "have" shows distinct action on the part of the person, therefore St. Paul could not have been referring to original sin in this verse.

Another objection is also raised that if Mary were without sin, she would be equal to God. In the beginning, God created Adam, Eve, and the angels without sin, but none were equal to God. Most of the angels never sinned, and all souls in heaven are without sin.

Another related issue, Mary makes a "sin offering" in Luke 2:24 to fulfill the Law. This duty does not prove her sinfulness but her obedience. Similarly Jesus underwent John's "baptism of repentance" even though sinless.

In Luke 1:48 - Mary calls herself lowly. But any creature is lowly compared to God. For example, in Matt. 11:29, even Jesus says He is lowly in heart. Lowliness is a sign of humility, which is the greatest virtue of holiness, because it allows us to empty ourselves and receive the grace of God to change our sinful lives.

## Mary the New Eve

According to the proto-gospel Genesis Mary is the one to come in place of Eve who was beguiled by Satan, as part of avenging Satan's doing. Mary is the Second Eve in a different way. St Paul says Adam 'is the figure of him that was to come'. (Ro:5:14) .i.e Adam was the figure of Jesus. Just as there were similarities between the First Adam and the First Eve, so there will be similarities between the Second Adam and the Second Eve. We know that the First Adam and the First Eve both started their lives in a sinless, immaculate state, there being no Original Sin before the Fall. **Both made their decision to disobey God when free of Original Sin.** We also know that the Second Adam, Jesus, started his life in an immaculate state -- He had no Original Sin or its stain. **Christ made the free decision to do God's will.** So what of the Second Eve -- Mary? She had the same choice to make, at the Annunciation, whether to obey God or disobey. With the same choice to make, she too must needs be in the same moral state. If the First Adam and the First Eve were both immaculate, and if the Second Adam was immaculate, then we should expect the Second Eve to also start her life in an immaculate state. Mary is greatly blessed than Eve as the Holy Spirit in Lk 1:42 proclaims her as 'blessed among women'.

Sinlessness is the only true 'blessing', and Mary is the most blessed woman who ever existed because, by God's grace, she never sinned." (Fr. Mitch Pacwa, in a response to *The Cult of the Virgin* [Baker, 1992] by Miller/Samples, page 164)

If the First Adam and the First Eve were immaculate, and if the Second Adam was also immaculate, then the Second Eve will be immaculate as well. We can thus see how naturally the fact that Mary is the Second Eve leads into the teaching that God gave her the grace of being immaculate early.

Paul wrote of "**..Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.**" (Rom 5:14.) The Church fathers spoke of: "**Death through Eve, Life through Mary.**"

In A.D.155, Justin Martyr wrote,

".. Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her" (*Dialogue with Trypho*)

St Irenaeus wrote:

"the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith."

(Against Heresies 180-199 A. D.)

The Fathers proclaimed so forcefully that because she is the New Eve, she, like the New Adam, was born immaculate, just as the First Adam and Eve were created immaculate. Because she is the New Eve, she is mother of the New Humanity (Christians), just as the first Eve was the mother of humanity. And, because she is the New Eve, she shares the fate of the New Adam. Whereas the First Adam and Eve died and went to dust, the New Adam and Eve were lifted up physically into heaven.

According to the Catholic Church, God restored to Mary the innocence of Eve before the Fall, and filled her with grace, in order to prepare her for her unspeakably sublime, sanctified task as the Mother of God the Son. The Son of Mary, Jesus whose brothers we are, and sharing a common Father, then of course sharing the same one mother. Then Mary is the mother of us all like Eve is the mother of all mankind physically as seen in Genesis 3:20.

## Mary gave birth without pain

Even before the terms "original sin" and "immaculate conception" had been defined, early passages imply the doctrines. Many works mention that Mary gave birth to Jesus without pain. But pain in childbearing is part of

the penalty of original sin (Gen. 3:16). Thus, Mary could not have been under that penalty. By God's grace, she was immaculate *in anticipation* of her Son's redemptive death on the cross. The Church therefore describes Mary as "the most excellent fruit of redemption" (CCC 508).

After bringing forth her Son, Mary "wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7), a sign that she did not suffer from the pain and weakness of childbirth. This inference agrees with the teaching of some of the principal Fathers and theologians: St. Ambrose [56], St. Gregory of Nyssa [57], St. John Damascene [58], the author of *Christus patiens* [59], St. Thomas [60], etc. It was not becoming that the mother of God should be subject to the punishment pronounced in Genesis 3:16, against Eve and her sinful daughters.

## How come it took Catholics 1800 years to decide Mary was conceived without sin?

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. When Fundamentalists claim that the doctrine was "invented" at this time, they misunderstand both the history of dogmas and what prompts the Church to issue, from time to time, definitive pronouncements regarding faith or morals. They are under the impression that no doctrine is believed until the pope or an ecumenical council issues a formal statement about it.

Actually, doctrines are defined formally only when there is a controversy that needs to be cleared up or when the magisterium (the Church in its office as teacher; cf. Matt. 28:18–20; 1 Tim. 3:15, 4:11) thinks the faithful can be helped by particular emphasis being drawn to some already-existing belief. The definition of the Immaculate Conception was prompted by the latter motive; it did not come about because there were widespread doubts about the doctrine. In fact, the Vatican was deluged with requests from people desiring the doctrine to be officially proclaimed. Pope Pius IX, who was highly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, hoped the definition would inspire others in their devotion to her. Before that time, it was merely what we call a theologoumenon (a theological opinion). Thus, before the Church solemnly defined it in 1854, Catholics were free to either believe in the Immaculate Conception or reject it.

Since the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic theologians had argued the question of whether or not Mary had been subject to original sin. In general, the Franciscans argued in favor of her "immaculate conception", the doctrine that she, from the moment of her conception, had been preserved by God from all sin and all tendency to sin; the Dominicans, on the other hand, including most notably Thomas Aquinas, argued that Mary's sinlessness is a grace granted to her at some time after her conception. Indeed, even some of our greatest Catholic saints, such as Thomas Aquinas and Bernard of Clairvaux (who had profound devotions to Our Lady) had serious problems with the idea that she was conceived without original sin (although they believed she was personally sinless). Yet, despite this, there were also others in the Church, such as St. Bonaventure and Blessed Duns Scotus who championed the Immaculate Conception. By the 14th century, John Duns Scotus resolved the objections. So, the Immaculate Conception was a debated question in the Church for centuries.

However, what was **NOT** a matter of debate was Mary's sinlessness. So, the Tradition of Mary's sinlessness was always there. The only question was: When did this sinlessness begin?

For centuries, it was the prevailing belief that Mary was "saved" and thereafter preserved from sin from the moment of her birth (not her conception). This is what St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) argued for when they disagreed with the Immaculate Conception. Yet, neither these two medieval fathers, nor any of the ancients, ever questioned Mary's sinlessness. Rather, Mary's sinlessness was a given; and all Christians until relatively recent times, including Martin Luther himself, maintained that Mary's sinlessness is taught in the Bible.

The Bible proves her sinlessness or enmity towards Satan beyond doubt in Genesis 3. In 1854, Pope Pius IX effectively ended the debate for Roman Catholics by proclaiming the dogma of the "Immaculate Conception", stating that "the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin by a singular privilege and grace granted by God (cf. Luke 1:28), in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race." ("*Ineffabilis Deus*", issued on 8 December 1854).

The universal witness of the Church, from Pentecost until today, has always professed that Mary was without sin. The only question was: "When did her sinlessness begin"? And it was from this question that we arrive at the Immaculate Conception. Indeed, even those saints of the Church (like Aquinas or Bernard) who rejected the Immaculate Conception, **STILL** taught that Mary was sinless; and they suggested that her sinlessness

began at the time of her **birth**, rather than at her conception. And we see in the testimonies of the church fathers of this belief in Mary's sinlessness going back to the earliest days of the Church.

## Other objections to Mary's Immaculate Conception

*1. Why would Mary have to be baptized? Was not her conception immaculate thereby making baptism, for her, redundant?*

Our Lord's conception was also immaculate -- but still he was baptized! This was as Our Lord Himself said 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'. (Mt:3:15). Our Lord who was Himself God come as man and the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, though Himself being God and did not need to be baptized by Himself, He let it be so.

2. In Luke 2:24, Mary makes the sin-offering commanded in Leviticus 12:6-8. (The context is verses 1-8.)

She did this, not because she was guilty of moral failing in having conceived and borne a child, but because she and Joseph were faithful observers of the Mosaic Law (Luke 2:23,24,39). They did what the Law commanded.

Temple sin-offerings never implied moral guilt, but were sacrifices made to expunge legal and ritual uncleanness. This is very evident, not only from Leviticus 12:1-8, but even more from Leviticus 15, where involuntary emissions, menstruation, hemorrhaging, and sexual intercourse produce ritual uncleanness, some of which requires the making of sin-offerings.

Leviticus clearly distinguishes sin-offerings (which did *not* imply moral guilt) from guilt offerings (which *did* imply actual sinfulness). The former are discussed in 6:17-23, the latter in 7:1-6. The distinction is reaffirmed in 7:7 and in Ezekiel 40:39.

In Ezekiel 43:18-27, directions are given for purifying the altar and making atonement for it. Verses 19, 21, 22 and 25 call for sin-offerings on behalf of the altar. Of course, an altar can be ritually unclean, but it cannot be guilty of moral guilt. Yet "sin" offering was made for it!

An example of guilt-offering being made to atone for actual moral failures is found in Ezra 10:10,19. The people's sin was in taking foreign wives in violation of the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 7:3). For this, they were truly guilty.

3. Some say that the Immaculate Conception can't be squared with Mary's own description of herself: "he has looked graciously on the lowliness of his handmaid" (Luke 1:48). If she understood herself to be lowly, doesn't that mean she understood herself to have sinned?

The key is that sin is not the only motive for lowliness. Compared to God, any creature, no matter how perfect, is lowly, Mary included. Jesus, referring to his human nature, said, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29). Certainly he was without sin, and if he could describe himself as lowly, there can be no argument against Mary describing herself the same way.

4. Some Christians may claim that this doctrine makes Mary into a god. Somehow these people confuse sinlessness with divinity. Adam and Eve were human creatures but sinless before the Fall. Ironically Adam's sin was an attempt to become a god (Gen. 3:5). Also the angels in heaven are only creatures yet sinless (2 Peter 2:4). In the same manner, Mary's gift does not make her divine, but allows her always to respond to God's call.

The reality is that there is no biblical basis for rejecting Mary's Immaculate Conception, but there is compelling evidence to support it.