

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Dec. 7-8, 2020, Cycle B**

The key to today's feast, honoring Mary as free from sin from the moment she was conceived, lies in the purifying force of her obedience to God's will.

Our Gospel passage from Luke concludes with Mary telling Gabriel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." However, Mary's total obedience to God's will would not have been possible without her Son's obedience to God's will.

As St. Paul tells us:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, 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.

We have been blessed with every spiritual gift and chosen through Jesus' total obedience to God's will. Jesus' obedience to being human, to accepting death reverses the disobedience of man and woman we read about in Genesis "Fall" story.

Jesus' obedience won life for us and freedom from sin, and God decided that the death and Resurrection of Jesus would be effective in Mary's life from the first moment she was conceived – because God chose Mary from all women to be the mother of His Son – who would be our Savior.

Mary's "yes" to God, then was unencumbered by sin. When the will of God was presented to Mary, she could see clearly what the good was. Mary may have been perplexed, (why am I chosen?) but she could see clearly what God's will was.

In baptism – Jesus' death and Resurrection became effective in our lives too – and we became like Mary – free from sin, but our struggle to free ourselves from sin continues, for unlike Mary, we were not created in the Resurrection of Jesus from the effects of the moment we were conceived. Mary's was a singular privilege, again, because God had decided to call Mary to be the mother of the Word made Flesh.

However, we should not feel cheated – for Mary is a sign of hope for what God intends all of us to become. God needs the rest of the Human Race to be part of sin, in order – with Jesus' grace, to battle sin, until all evil is overcome by Jesus through us.

Mary, then being a sign of hope, is a prime Advent figure for us – calling us to renew ourselves in our mission of watching, waiting, and preparing for that day Jesus comes in glory, when we will fully share in Jesus' Resurrected life as Mary does!