If it had not been sadly removed from the Roman Missal in 1956, we would find ourselves observing today the Octave of the Immaculate Conception. On this Advent Saturday, a day particularly dedicated to Her, let us continue thanking Almighty God for this singular privilege granted to Our Lady. St. Padre Pio, especially devoted to the Immaculate Conception, provides us with much, beautiful inspiration for mental prayer.

Eternal Love, Spirit of Light and Truth, make a way into my poor mind and allow me to penetrate as far as it is possible to a wretched creature like myself, into that abyss of grace, of purity and of holiness, that I may acquire a love of God that is continually renewed, a love of God Who, from all eternity planned the greatest of all the masterpieces created by His hands: the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

From all eternity Almighty God took delight in what was to be the most perfect work of His hands, and anticipated this wonderful plan with an outpouring of His Grace.

Man, created innocent, fell by disobeying Him; the mark of Original Sin remained engraved on his forehead and that of his progeny who will bear its consequences until the end of time.

A woman brought ruin, a woman was to bring salvation. The one, being tempted by a serpent, stamped the mark of sin on the human race; the other was to rise through grace, pure and immaculate. She would crush the head of the serpent who was helpless before Her and who struggled in vain under Her heel; for She was conceived without sin, and through Her came grace to mankind.

Protected with grace by Him Who was to be the Savior of Mankind that had fallen into sin, She escaped all shadow of evil. She sprang from the mind of God as a pure ray of light, and will shine like a morning star over the human race that turns to Her. She will be the sure guide who will direct our steps toward the Divine Son Who is Jesus Christ. He makes Her radiant with divine splendor and points to Her as our model of purity and sanctity. No creature surpasses Her, but all creation defers to Her through the Grace of Him Who made Her Immaculate. He Whom She was to carry in Her womb is the Son of God participating with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the glory of Her conception.

Clothed in light from the moment of Her conception, She grew in grace and comeliness. After Almighty God, She is the most perfect of creatures; more pure than the angels; God is indeed well pleased in Her, since She most resembles Him and is the only worthy repository of His secrets.

In the natural order She preceded Her Divine Child, Our Lord, but in the Divine Order,

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

Jesus, Divine Son, arose before Her, and She received from Him all grace, all purity and all beauty.

All is darkness compared to the pure light that renews all creation through Him Whom She bore in Her womb, as the dew on the rose.

The Immaculate Conception is the first step in our salvation. Through this singular and unique gift Mary received a profusion of divine grace, and through Her cooperation She became worthy of absorbing infinitely more.

My Most Pure Mother, my soul is so poor, all stained with wretchedness and sin cries out to Your maternal heart. In Your goodness deign, I beseech You, to pour out on me at least a little of the grace that flowed into You with such infinite profusion from the Heart of God. Strengthened and supported by this grace, may I succeed in better loving and serving Almighty God Who filled Your heart completely, and Who created the temple of Your body from the moment of Your Immaculate Conception.

The Three Divine Persons imbue this sublime creature with all Her privileges, Her favors and Her graces, and with all of Her holiness.

The Eternal Father created Her pure and immaculate and is well pleased in Her for She is the worthy dwelling of His Only Son. Through the generating of His Son in His bosom from all eternity, He forecasts the generation of His Son as Man in the pure womb of His Mother, and He clothed Her from Her conception in the radiant snowy garment of grace and of most perfect sanctity; She participates in His perfection.

The Son Who chose Her for His Mother poured His wisdom into Her that from the very beginning, by infused knowledge, She knew Her God. She loved and served Him in the most perfect manner as He never until then had been loved and served on this earth.

The Holy Ghost poured His love into Her; She was the only creature worthy or capable of receiving this love in unlimited measure because no other had sufficient purity to come so near to God; and being near to Him could know and love Him ever more. She was the only creature capable of containing the stream of love which poured into Her from on high. She alone was worthy to return to Him from Whom came that love. This very love prepared Her for that "Fiat" which delivered the world from the tyranny of the infernal enemy and overshadowed Her, the purest of doves, causing Her to conceive and bear the Son of God in Her womb.

Oh my Mother, how ashamed I feel in Your presence, weighed down as I am with faults! You

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

are most pure and immaculate from the moment of Your conception, indeed from the moment in eternity when You were conceived in the mind of God.

Have pity on me! May one compassionate look of Yours revive me, purify me and lift me up to God; raising me from the filth of this world that I may go to Him Who created me, Who regenerated me in Holy Baptism, giving me back my white stole of innocence that Original Sin had so defiled. Dear Mother, make me love Him! Pour into my heart that love that burned in Yours for Him. Even that I be clothed in misery, I revere the mystery of Your Immaculate Conception, and I ardently wish that through it You may purify my heart so that I may love Your God and my God. Cleanse my mind that it may reach up to Him and contemplate Him and adore Him in spirit and in truth. Purify my body that I too may be a tabernacle for Him and be less unworthy of possessing Him when He deigns to come to me in Holy Communion. Amen.

We, too, redeemed by Holy Baptism, are corresponding to the grace of our vocation when in imitation of our Immaculate Mother we apply ourselves incessantly to the knowledge of God, in order that we may ever learn better to know Him, to serve Him and to love Him.

These reflections appeared in the Spring/Summer 1998 issue (#57) of *The Fatima Crusader*.

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.