

**December 08, 2020**  
**Feast of the Immaculate Conception**  
**Gen 3:9-15, 20**  
**Eph 1:3-6, 11-12**  
**Lk 1:26-38**

Today we celebrate Mary, unique among all humankind to have been conceived and born without the stain of original sin.

We celebrate Mary, unique among all humankind as a virgin giving birth—birth to the Son of God. Mary therefore became the holiest of all temples ever to have existed on this earth.

We celebrate Mary, unique among all humankind to have become the very first disciple of Jesus, steward not only of His Word, but of His human existence.

We celebrate Mary, that unique ponderer who was able to absorb the most punishing blows that life can inflict and yet give back only warmth and love and patience and understanding and obedience, never a bitter or angry bone in her body.

We celebrate Mary, unique among humankind to have been taken body and soul into Heaven where she reigns as Queen of the Universe, reputed to stand by the back door of Heaven to make sure that none of us strays get left out in the cold.

We celebrate Mary with the unique ability to return to earth at moments when the world needs her the most, like when she appeared at Lourdes in 1858 to a 14-year-old girl and said, **“I am the Immaculate Conception”**.

Yes, Mary was and is uniquely Mary. But I think it’s important to remember during this Advent season as we anticipate the Incarnation that God comes to each of us in His own unique way just as He did to Mary. It’s important to remember that, because sometimes we can feel like we don’t matter; that we’re just gray spots on the gray wall of humanity; that it’s impossible for us to make a difference. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Like Mary, we are each a temple—temples of the Holy Spirit. This is God’s baptismal gift to us, just like the gift He gave to Mary at the Annunciation. With this gift comes an invitation to accept a unique calling from God as He enters into a unique relationship with each one of us.

Each of our callings is different—unique to each one of us in the context of each of our unique relationships with God. While it’s unlikely that any of us will become renowned like Mary, you can count on this: God calls each of us to greatness because He calls us

to do great things. But the great things we are called to do are not things that the world recognizes as great, but they are things that the world greatly needs.

As we progress through this pandemic and quarantine plagued Advent of 2020, may we embrace the quiet and the silence and the isolation and just listen — listen because in a way unique to each of us God is saying: **“Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”** Like Mary, may we be gifted with the wisdom to ponder this greeting and listen to the Lord’s calling. And may God give us the grace to say yes, just like Mary.