

## Blessed John Duns Scotus and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception

Very little is known about the early life and family background of John Duns Scotus. He was born in the Scottish Borders town of Duns. After some schooling, he joined the Franciscans about 1290. As a young Franciscan he both studied and taught at Oxford, distinguishing himself in each position. After several years of teaching at Oxford, Duns Scotus left for Paris, probably in 1304, there to lecture in the famed University of Paris. Holding only a bachelor's degree from Oxford, he taught admirably.

While in Paris, he was presented for the doctor's degree. In his letter of recommendation, the Franciscan Superior General commended him as a scholar "distinguished for his ingenious and very subtle learning." Following a brief stay at Paris, the youthful doctor of theology took up teaching duties at Cologne. Here he died unexpectedly in November of 1308. Brother John M. Samaha, S.M <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/jj/john-duns-scotus-on-the-immaculate-conception.php>

The scholarship of Blessed John Duns Scotus paved the way for the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by addressing two questions that theologians had not been able to explain with doctrinal clarity. 1) How was Mary, a daughter of Adam and therefore like all human beings in need of redemption, conceived without sin? 2) And at what point in her conception was Mary preserved from the stain of original sin? St. Paul taught that sin and death came into the world through one man, Adam, and spread through the whole human race; everyone has sinned for everyone inherits sin and its consequences. Mary, as a member of the human race, would likewise inherit sin and its consequences and need to be redeemed, but Christ had not yet been born to accomplish redemption when she was born. John Duns Scotus, the Subtle Doctor, explained that Mary was not excluded from the redemption of the Savior but obtained the greatest of redemptions through her *preservation from all sin by a singular gift and privilege from God, her Immaculate Conception, in preparation for her predestined vocation and pre-eminent privilege of her divine motherhood.* This is a more perfect redemption and a more exalted role for Christ as her Redeemer, for it is greater to preserve from sin, in *anticipation* of His Redemption, than to purify from sin already incurred. **Consequently, Christ was Mary's Redeemer more perfectly by preservative redemption in shielding her from original sin through anticipating and foreseeing the merits of his passion and death. This pre-redemption indicates a much greater grace and more perfect salvation.** (Brother John Samaha)



When was Mary preserved from original sin and its effects?

Previously St. Thomas and other illustrious Doctors of the Church had reasoned that Mary was sanctified and preserved from sin either before animation, that is, before God infused a soul into the physical embryo in her mother's womb, or after animation. She could not have been sanctified before animation, otherwise she would not have had to be redeemed. If Mary was sanctified after animation, then she whom God was raising to be Satan's destroyer, was, at least for a very brief time, subject to the influence of the Prince of Darkness through contact with original sin. This line of reasoning was based on a time sequence. (Brother John Samaha.)

This thinking sees Mary first as a daughter of Adam, then sanctified as a daughter of God in a time sequence of two successive actions, but **Blessed John Duns Scotus saw the conception of Mary as a child of Adam and the infusion of grace making her a child of God as a simultaneous action producing the twofold effect at the first moment of her existence.** Thus, the Subtle Doctor championed the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception in the womb of St. Anne by arguing against a sequence of two actions. The idea that the pure, sinless flesh of Jesus should come from a mother touched by any stain of sin is unthinkable to the Christian mind. In spite of belief by many, the dogma was not defined.

In 1830, Our Lady appeared to St. Catherine Labouré and presented her with the medal of the Immaculate Conception depicting Our Lady of Grace.



The medal quickly came to be called the Miraculous Medal because so many miracles were obtained through its use. Engraved on the medal were the words, "**O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.**"

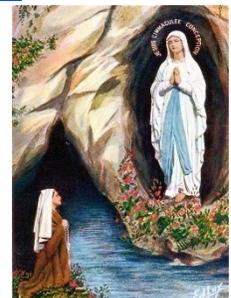


Then, in 1846, at the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore the American bishops petitioned Pope Pius IX to make Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of these United States. That petition was granted in 1847. Approximately seven years later, Pope Pius IX asked the bishops of the universal church if he should define the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Of the 603 bishops 546 said "yes." Thence, on December 8, 1854, the Pope (beatified in 2000) issued *Ineffabilis Deus* defining the dogma.

**We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful.**

Reference: <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/i/immaculate-conception-dogma.php>

Heaven smiled on that definition with Our Lady's eighteen appearances to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, beginning in February of 1858. On the sixteenth appearance, March 25, Our Lady confirmed her name, "**I am the Immaculate Conception.**" Heaven smiled again when Our Lady appeared to Sister Pierina in Montichiari, Italy from November of 1946 to December 8, 1947, identifying herself as the Mystical Rose and calling for an Hour of Grace from noon until 1:00 p.m. on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The hour could take place in church or at home and should begin with the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm prayed three times with outstretched arms, especially in



**atonement for sins against purity**, followed by prayers and meditation of one's choice. She promised great spiritual and physical blessings in the most difficult situations to those who pray this hour undisturbed.

**"I am the Immaculate Conception, the Mother of my Beloved Son, Jesus. I want to be known as the Mystical Rose. My wish is that every year on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, at noon, an Hour of Grace will be installed. Many spiritual graces and physical blessings will be received by those who pray, undisturbed, during this hour." [Our Lady asked us to pray for our nation and for the conversion of hardened sinners.]**

How similar to that message is that of Our Lady of America to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil in which she called on America to be the nation dedicated to her purity. She came in gratitude for our devotion to her as our Patroness under the title of her Immaculate Conception and asked that we make the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate



Conception a place of special pilgrimage. She asked that a statue in her image be enthroned in the Shrine, honoring her there as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin and she will work great miracles, not of the body but of the soul. She appeared later holding a globe in her hands while weeping over it, saying: **“I am the Immaculate One, Patroness of your land.”** In further affirmation of her great privilege she inspired Sister Mildred to write **The Prayer to the Immaculate Conception** and asked that we

pray it every day, one or more times. She also appeared with a replica of the unfinished shrine and asked that we hurry to complete it and promised to make it a place of wonders. On November 15 she gave Sister the powerful ejaculation, **“By thy Holy and Immaculate Conception, O Mary, deliver us from evil.”** She now waits for her beloved sons to fulfill her ultimate request, to have a statue made in her image as Our Lady of America carried in solemn procession and placed in a position of honor in **her** Shrine. (Quotes from the Diary of Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, OUR LADY OF AMERICA.) Now let us pray the novena Sister Mildred wrote in honor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception and say the Prayer to the Immaculate Conception she wrote each day after each reflection.



*Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil  
2 Aug 1910 - 10 Jan 2000*

Day 1: After the fall of the first man, God spoke to the serpent, Satan, announcing that a woman would come and crush his head, that is, destroy his power, and all Catholic interpreters and holy Fathers agree that this woman is the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is therefore, placed by God Himself as Satan’s enemy, and was freed from original sin from the first moment of her conception. **Prayer.**

Day 2: And the Angel being come in, said unto her: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed art you among women.” The angel, by the direction of God, called Mary full of grace, that is, more than any of the just endowed with God’s sanctifying grace. **Prayer.**

Day 3: The Immaculate Conception teaches us to know in some measure the infinite sanctity of the holy Trinity which makes sin so hateful and detestable to Him. The Heavenly Father could not see His beloved daughter for one moment stained by sin. The Divine Son could not wish to choose for His mother a virgin upon whose soul there was a vestige of sin. The Holy Spirit whose most pure bride Mary is, was not willing that her heart, His dwelling-place, should ever be for one instant soiled by sin.

God’s hand did indeed preserve Mary: by His grace and by the infinite merits of her divine Son she remained free from every stain of sin, and holy Mother Church most justly applies to her the words of Holy Scripture: “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.” **Prayer.**

Day 4: “It is an article of faith that the Blessed Virgin Mary by a special grace and privilege of God, on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, was from the

first instant of her conception protected and preserved from every stain of original sin.”  
**Prayer.**

Day 5: Mary was filled with grace even before her birth. As we are all conceived in sin, being children of a sinful ancestor, we are, therefore, burdened by sin before our birth. Mary was free by the privilege of the Immaculate Conception from all sin; her pure soul, pure and adorned with sanctifying grace, came forth from the hands of the Creator and without the least prejudice to its purity and sanctity was united to her most pure body, from which the Savior was to take His humanity. She could not from the first instant of her existence be wanting in that original sanctity and justice, which were the most beautiful adornments of our natural ancestress, Eve.  
**Prayer.**

Day 6: Mary, from the first moment of her conception, was not only in grace but full of grace because God appointed her for the highest dignity of being the Mother of His only-begotten Son, and had consequently endowed her with the full measure of corresponding plenitude of graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The measure of grace which the Blessed Virgin received at the Immaculate Conception was greater than that which all the angels and blessed possess now in glory.  
**Prayer.**

Day 7: Mary ever increased in grace: The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forward and increases even to perfect day. (Prov iv.18) These words of the Holy Spirit are verified especially in the life of the Blessed Virgin. What abundance of grace did she not receive, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and the divine Son, Who is Himself the infinite plenitude of grace, was conceived in her most pure body! Above all this, there yet came that rich supply of grace by which her zealous, constant, perfect and faithful cooperation made Mary increase every moment in grace. Thus St. Bonaventure says: “As all the waters meet in the sea, so all the graces were united in Mary.” **Prayer.**

Day 8: The Angel Gabriel said to Mary: Blessed are you among women, etc., Because the Angel desired to honor Mary as the most blessed of her sex, since she alone was chosen of all the others to be the Mother of God. The first woman brought the curse, but Mary, the salvation of the world. Mary, Mother of God! An honor, indeed, which in its exaltation is second to divinity. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God! Mother and Virgin at the same time, what a wonderful prerogative! Though the greatest and most glorious of all mothers, she is the purest and most spotless of virgins, the queen of virgins.

Mary is truly that woman, promised to our first and sinful parents in Paradise, who would crush the serpent’s head; she gave to her Son the body with which He, by His death on the cross accomplished the great work of salvation. How wonderful that God gave Mary to us to mediate for us and for the whole world. “Praised and blessed be the holy and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary!” **Prayer.**

Day 9: The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived: neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out: the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth: he had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was present; when, with a certain law and compass, he enclosed the depths; when he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when he compassed the seas with its bounds, and set a law to the

waters, that they should not pass their limits; when he balanced the foundations of the earth. I was with him, forming all things, and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times, playing in the world; and my delights were to be with the children of men. Now, therefore, ye children, hear me: Blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my door . He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord. (Prov,viii 22-35.) **Prayer.**

## **Prayer to the Immaculate Conception**



O Immaculate Mother, Queen of our Country, open our hearts, our homes, and our Land to the coming of Jesus, your Divine Son. With Him, reign over us, O heavenly Lady, so pure and so bright with the radiance of God's light shining in and about you. Be our Leader against the powers of evil set upon wresting the world of souls, redeemed at such a great cost by the sufferings of your Son and of yourself in union with Him, from that same Savior, Who loves us with infinite charity.

We gather about you, O chaste and holy Mother, Virgin Immaculate, Patroness of our beloved Land, determined to fight under your banner of holy purity against the wickedness that would make all the world an abyss of evil, without God and without your loving maternal care.

We consecrate our hearts, our homes, our Land to your Most Pure Heart, O great Queen, that the kingdom of your Son, our Redeemer and our God, may be firmly established in us.

We ask no special sign of you, sweet Mother, for we believe in your great love for us, and we place in you our entire confidence. We promise to honor you by faith, love, and the purity of our lives according to your desire.

Reign over us, then, O Virgin Immaculate, with your Son Jesus Christ. May His Divine Heart and your most chaste Heart be ever enthroned and glorified among us. Use us, your children of America, as your instruments in bringing peace among men and nations. Work your miracles of grace in us so that we may be a glory to the Blessed Trinity, Who created, redeemed, and sanctifies us.

May your valiant Spouse, St. Joseph, with the holy Angels and Saints, assist you and us in "renewing the face of the earth." Then when our work is over, come, Holy Immaculate Mother, and as our Victorious Queen, lead us to the eternal kingdom, where your Son reigns forever as King. Amen (200 days)

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