

LESSON 5

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

BACKGROUND READING



Adam and Eve broke the first covenant and the unity between Heaven and earth when they gave in to their pride and disobeyed God. As a result, we are all born with Original Sin. God sent His only Son to repair our hearts by dying on the Cross for us, thereby replacing sin and death with new life. When the Son of God assumed a human nature and conquered our sin, He became a “new Adam” for us. As Adam was the first human being, Jesus is the first Child of God. On the Cross, Jesus replaced pride with obedience and love, meriting new life as God’s children for everyone.

A woman would have a role to play, too. A woman’s disobedience had brought sin and death into the world, and a very special woman’s obedience would deliver the Savior. She is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the “new Eve.”

The Annunciation

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption” (Galatians 4:4).

The phrase “fullness of time,” means that God’s perfectly appointed time had arrived. God sent the angel Gabriel from Heaven. Gabriel appeared to a Jewish maiden named Mary and greeted her with the words, “Hail,

favored one! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). The first lines of the Hail Mary prayer come from this verse.

The angel announced to Mary that she had “found favor with God” and that she would bear a son and “name Him Jesus” (Luke 1:31). Mary did not understand, and asked, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” (Luke 1:34). Gabriel explained to Mary, “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” (Luke 1:35).

“Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38).

Created in the image of God with intellect, free will, and the capacity to love, Mary freely chose to respond to God’s call to love.

The Immaculate Conception

God prepared Mary in a very unique way for her role as the Mother of Jesus. As we have learned in previous lessons, all human beings inherit the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. But God preserved Mary from Original Sin through the merits of Jesus Christ. We call this truth the Immaculate Conception.

God knew before the beginning of time that Mary would be the woman to cooperate with His divine plan to bring the Savior into the world and redeem all people from their sins. Luke 1:28 tells us that Mary was “full of grace.” This does not mean that Mary, as a human person, did not need the redemption that her Son would accomplish for the world. She did need to be redeemed, but God – who is outside of time – gave the redemption that would be won by her Son’s death and Resurrection to Mary at the moment of her conception. Thus Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb free of Original Sin. This truth has been held by the Church from the earliest teachings of the Church Fathers and was proclaimed a dogma of our Faith on December 8, 1854. God gave Mary this special and unique grace because she was to become the Mother of Jesus. The *Catechism* explains that “Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role” (CCC 490).

The Incarnation

The Incarnation is the mysterious truth that the Eternal Word of God entered time and took on a human body and nature. The word *incarnation* comes from the Latin *in* (in) and *carnis* (flesh). Having a human nature means that Jesus had a human body, a human mind, and a human soul.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son” (John 1:1, 14).

Jesus Christ is true God and true man. He is the Son of the Virgin Mary and the Son of God. His biological father was not Joseph, as the world presumed, but the Eternal Father, God Himself. As the Second Divine Person of the Trinity, Jesus is fully God. But in time He took on a human nature and was born of the Virgin Mary – thus, as the son of Mary, He was fully human and like us in all things except for sin.

The *Catechism* explains, “Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother” (CCC 469).

Why did the Son of God become man? The *Catechism* gives us four reasons:

- ▶ to restore our friendship with God
- ▶ so that we would know God’s love
- ▶ to be a model of holiness
- ▶ to allow us to share in God’s divine life and to make us sons of God

God Himself entered into human history by sending His only beloved Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to become human, like us in all things but sin. Jesus fully revealed the Father and communicated His grace to us in and through His life and teaching. He performed miracles as signs of God’s love and mercy and to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. And then He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of many. By His Cross and Resurrection we are freed from sin and made holy. Our salvation has been won!