

Reflection Monday 2nd Week Advent The Immaculate Conception Year C 2024

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is that the Virgin Mary was conceived without *original sin*, that twist in our nature that makes our will tend not to follow what it knows to be right. It was this grace that enabled Mary to give a true and considered “Yes” to the request, conveyed by the Angel Gabriel, that she should consent to be the mother of the incarnate God.

Being so old it is a Marian doctrine that Islam shares with the Catholic Church, though of course the theological details are different. ‘In a famous *Hadith* attributed to the Prophet, it is affirmed that: “Every child is touched by the devil as soon as he is born and this contact makes him cry. Excepted are Mary and her Son”. From this *Hadith* and from verses 35-37 of Sura III, Moslem commentators have deduced and affirmed the principle of Mary’s original purity.’

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was almost universally believed over the centuries but was only formally defined as a doctrine of the Church by Pope Pius IX in 1854. The solemn declaration stated:

"Ineffabilis Deus, "clarified with finality the long-held belief of the Church that Mary was conceived free from original sin. Mary was granted this extraordinary privilege because of her unique role in the history of Salvation. This divine grace prepared her to be the perfect and spotless tabernacle to carry and nurture Jesus Christ in her womb. Just as the tabernacle in a church holds the Eucharist, the living presence of Christ, Mary's womb was sanctified to be a pure and holy dwelling place for the Incarnation.