



The Holy See

***PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY***

Tuesday, 8 December 1998

1. O Mary!

Here we are again at your feet on the day we celebrate your Immaculate Conception, and we beg you, as the beloved daughter of the Father, during this year of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, to teach us to walk in unity to the Father's house, to make all humanity one family.

2. O Mary!

From the very first moment of life you were preserved from original sin through the merits of Jesus, whose Mother you were to become. Sin and death have no power over you. From the moment you were conceived, you have enjoyed the unique privilege of being filled with the grace of your blessed Son, to be holy as he is holy. For this reason the heavenly messenger, sent to announce the divine plan to you, greeted you saying:

"Hail, *full of grace*" (*Lk 1:28*).

Yes, O Mary, you are full of grace; you are the Immaculate Conception. In you is fulfilled the promise made to our first parents, the primordial Gospel of hope at the tragic moment of the fall: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed" (*Gn 3:15*). Your seed, O Mary, is the blessed Son of your womb, Jesus, the immaculate Lamb who took upon himself the sin of the world, our sin. Your Son, O Mother, has preserved you, to offer all humanity the gift of salvation. For this reason, from generation to generation, the redeemed ceaselessly repeat the angel's words:

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (*Lk 1:28*).

3. O Mary!

From East to West, from the very beginning, the People of God profess with faith that you are the all pure, the all holy, the sublime Mother of the Redeemer. The Fathers of the Church unanimously attest to it; pastors, theologians and the greatest confessors of the faith proclaim it. Then, in 1854 my venerable Predecessor, Pope Pius IX, officially recognized

the truth of this your privilege. In everlasting memory of that event, this column was erected here, in the heart of Rome, from where you watch over the city with a mother's love. Every year since then, on this solemn feast, the Church and the city of Rome come here with their Bishop to Piazza di Spagna, to honour you, a sign of sure hope for all men and women. With this annual act of veneration, we profess that we want to return to the original, eternal plan of our Creator and Father, and with the Apostle Paul we repeat:

"Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.... He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (*Eph 13-4*).

4. O Mary!

You are the witness to this primordial choice. Guide us, O Mother, who know the Way! Today the People of God and the whole city of Rome entrust themselves to you, the Immaculate Conception. Protect us always and lead us all on the ways of holiness. Amen!

The Holy Father then spoke extemporaneously:

We sang of this Mother in the Liturgy of the Word. We beheld the Lord's marvels. In today's liturgy, the first words of our hymn were "Tota pulchra es Maria": you are all beautiful, O Mary. In the presence of this beauty, perhaps we find ourselves thinking of the words of the great Fyodor Dostoevski, who wrote that beauty can save the world: your beauty, Mary, which is expressed in the Immaculate Conception. We entrust our city, the Church and the whole world to you. May you be the "Tota Pulchra" who guides us in all hope through the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 towards the future, because you, O Mary, are the Mother of hope. Praised be Jesus Christ!

At the end of the prayer meeting, the Holy Father added:

Let us conclude this contemplative celebration: we have beheld your marvels, O Lord. Yes, the "Tota Pulchra" must save the world in the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

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