

**Immaculate Conception  
December 8, 2010**

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**Mary has been held in a special place in the hearts and minds of believers from the very beginning. She has been honored with so many different titles; Queen of Heaven, Star of the Sea, *Theotokos*, the Mother of God (perhaps the greatest title of them all). But from very early times in church history, she has also been honored with the title Immaculate Conception.**

**It took the church over a thousand years to make the title formal; that did not happen until 1854. But from the beginning, it was a *logical* necessity. The Son cannot be separated from the Mother. The Sinless One cannot be born in sin. This became so clear once the theologies of Original Sin began to crystalize. And by the 5<sup>th</sup> century the title of the Immaculate Conception was solidified.**

**Further evidence for the long history of this title can be garnered from one of our own stained-glass windows. A parishioner asked me just last week why there was a cardinal holding a script of the Immaculate Conception in our window honoring Mary. I didn't know. But found out that the Cardinal in question is Cardinal Bellarmine, a rather famous Jesuit**

theologian during the time of the Council of Trent, who was the first bishop in the history of the church who actually petitioned the Pope to declare the Immaculate Conception a dogma. He was unsuccessful at the time, but it is further evidence that this was a doctrine of the faithful long held throughout our history. (And God bless the designer of our windows; a historian clearly.)

But what does it mean for us? Thomas Merton provides a beautiful image. He says “Mary, who was empty of all egotism, free from all sin, was as pure as the glass of a very clean window that has no other function than to admit the light of the sun. If we rejoice in that light, we implicitly praise the cleanness of the window. And of course it might be argued that in such a case we might well forget the window altogether.” And we sometimes do forget.

She was, and still is, the window through which the Light of the world is seen. Mary played a central role in the salvation of the world. This simple peasant girl from Palestine found the courage to say yes to the most bizarre invitation of all: to bring Christ into history.

With Mary’s help, that same invitation is ours. Only we can bring Christ into our own history here and now in everyday ways. Despite all her

**titles, including this one we celebrate today, she remains truly our sister in faith, the window of God's love. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us.**