

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: VICTORY OVER ORIGINAL SIN

VATICAN CITY, 8 DEC 2008 (VIS) - At midday today, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Benedict XVI appeared at the window of his study to pray the Angelus with 40,000 pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square below.

Today's solemnity, said the Pope, "reminds us of two fundamental truths of our faith: original sin, ... and the victory over that sin of the grace of Christ, a victory that shines out sublimely in Mary Most Holy".

"The existence of what the Church calls 'original sin'," he explained, "is unfortunately overwhelmingly obvious, if only we look around ourselves, and above all within ourselves. The experience of evil is, in fact, so consistent that it is self-evident and raises within us the question: where does it come from? For believers in particular, the question is even deeper: if God, Who is absolute good, has created everything, whence does evil come?"

"The first pages of the Bible", the Holy Father added, "answer this fundamental question which faces every human generation, with the story of creation and the fall of the first fathers. God created everything for existence, in particular he created human beings in His own image. He did not create death, this entered the world through the envy of the devil who, rebelling against God, also drew men into deceit, inducing them to rebel. This is the drama of freedom, which God accepts completely for the sake of love, while promising that a Son born of woman will crush the head of the ancient serpent".

He went on: "From the beginning, the 'eternal counsel', to use Dante's expression, has a 'preordained term': the Woman predestined to become mother of the Redeemer, ... of the One Who humbled Himself to the utmost in order to lead us back to our original dignity. This Woman ... has a face and a name: 'full of grace', as the angel called her ... in Nazareth. She is the new Eve, wife of the new Adam, destined to be mother of all the redeemed, ... the first to be liberated from the original fall of our first fathers".

"In Mary Immaculate we contemplate the reflection of the Beauty that saves the world: the beauty of God that shines out on the face of Christ".