

When we commit sin, we have no one to blame but ourselves. When we experience grace, we have no one to thank but God.

In the Book of Genesis, Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. She had been looking at the tree bearing fruit that God asked her not to touch. She said the reason she disobeyed God was that, “the serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.” With her husband, Eve was banished from paradise, but she still became the mother of all the living. After we sin, we can still experience God’s grace.

In Luke’s gospel, the angel Gabriel asked Mary to bear God’s son. Mary said yes. Eve listened to a messenger of evil; Mary listened to a messenger of good. When Eve disobeyed, she swallowed fruit into her stomach. When Mary obeyed, she accepted the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus. Eve became our mother in the world of nature; Mary became our mother in the world of grace.

We call Mary the Immaculate Conception because of the way the angel greets her in the gospel. He says she is “full of grace.” Logically, if she was filled with grace, then this applies to her complete life - even before she was born, from the moment of her conception. We believe that throughout her entire life, Mary was free from sin. She always did God’s will. She never had to blame anyone else for the choices she made.

Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is the patron of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph and the United States of America. We can never reach the perfection that she obtained. But we have her as our example. If we do God’s will in the difficult choices we make, we will experience grace. When we don’t know what to choose, we feel unsure. When we choose the wrong thing, we want someone to blame. But when we choose God’s will, we will experience the grace that guided the life of Mary, the Immaculate Conception.