

Getting service can be frustrating. You sit at a restaurant and can watch waiters serve every other table but yours. You wait 6 weeks for a part for your car. You stand in line to pay your taxes and find out you've stood in the wrong line. You make a phone call to get some answers and they tell you to call another number, where they tell you to call another number, where they have you call another. Many employees limit what they do. That can help the employee, but it can frustrate the consumer.

Now, imagine that God was an employee whose job was creation. He was probably a slow worker. Genesis tells us that he went from the creation of the world to the creation of the human race in six days. Scientists tell us it was more like 13 million years. And then it took another 2 million years before someone wrote the book of Genesis. Suppose at this point someone said to God, "Don't you think it's time you did something again?" "Like what?" "Like redeem what you created?" Now, God could have said, "Look, I've done my job. I created all this. I made canyons on the planet Mars more spectacular than the Grand Canyon on planet Earth. I made human reproduction unintelligible, scientific, fun, and guilt-laden all at the same time. I invented the common cold, a disease right under their noses and no one knows what to do with it." God could have said, "Leave me alone, I'll redeem them when they die."

But he didn't. God stopped creation and started a new creation. God worked a miracle we've come to call Christmas. In fact he worked three miracles, the Church tells us. The third miracle was that God took flesh in Jesus and redeemed us. The second miracle was that Jesus was born from a virgin. The first miracle was that the virgin was conceived without original sin. We call those three miracles the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, and the Immaculate Conception. God created the rules, then God broke the rules in order to save us.

Mary, the Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of our diocese and the patroness of our country. This is our feast. More than any other feast of Mary, it tells us what God expects of us. The Immaculate Conception is a symbol of how God broke the rules for salvation. It is a feast which challenges us to unstick our rigidity. To challenge our customs, our habits, our politics, our service. To make us less quick to say, in the words of an exasperated waiter, "Sorry, you're not my table."

Let this feast prepare us to go the extra mile for others, as God did for Mary, and God does for us.