

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

A lot of people don't like new music in a concert hall, on the radio or at church. Everyone likes music, but usually they like the music they know.

So the refrain to today's responsorial psalm does not make immediate sense: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds." It suggests that we may not like new songs, but apparently God does.

This refrain simply indicates that God's deeds are so wondrous that old music, as good as it is, cannot keep up. To praise the many new deeds of God, we need new ways of expressing them.

The Church invites us to sing this psalm on many occasions, but especially each year on this one, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. What God did for Mary was so new, so unique, and so marvelous, that it needed a new song. The old ones couldn't account for what God had just done.

We Catholics believe the testimony of sacred scripture that Jesus was born of a Virgin. We also believe that, because the angel Gabriel greeted her as "full of grace," her fullness of grace began from the moment of her conception. She was sinless, immaculate, from the moment she came into being. That is how God prepared the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, through a deed that was marvelous.

We all rejoice today at what God did for Mary, but in honesty we do not always rejoice every time we see God do something marvelous for someone else. We may behold in another person an extraordinary talent, a winning personality, riches, health, or a circle of friends unlike what we have in our own life. Sometimes this does not lead to rejoicing, but to envy, or to a hunt for faults in the other person to cut them down to size. Far from singing a new song at what God has done, we sometimes murmur words of scorn.

We don't know what Mary's friends thought about her, but we do know what she did upon learning what God had done. She sang her magnificat, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior." She came up with a new song, one that did not celebrate herself nor criticize her friends, but one that praised the marvelous deeds of God.

Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is patron of our country, our diocese, and this cathedral. As we celebrate her day today, let us join her in praising God. Let us be mindful of the marvelous deeds God has done for us, and the marvelous deeds he does for others. Let us forsake anger, envy and pettiness, and adopt the spirit of joy for all the wonders God achieves day by day. Whether they happen to us or to someone else, each of them deserves a new song.

Thursday, December 8, 2022