

Day 10 - Who are you, O Immaculate Conception? (Part Two)

So the Holy Spirit is the uncreated Immaculate Conception and Mary is the created Immaculate Conception. Why not make it easier and just say that the Holy Spirit is the Immaculate Conception and Mary was immaculately conceived? Again, it's all because of Lourdes. Blame St. Bernadette!

In all seriousness, we should thank both St. Bernadette and St. Kolbe profusely, because their fidelity to grace is now opening up for us a glorious truth that undergirds the whole theology of Marian consecration. This truth has to do with the union between the Holy Spirit and Mary. Kolbe explains this in a passage that is long and difficult but incredibly rich and deserving of deep reflection:

What type of union is this [between the Holy Spirit and Mary]? It is above all an interior union, a union of her essence with the "essence" of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in her, lives in her. This was true from the first instant of her existence. It was always true; it will always be true.

In what does this life of the Spirit in Mary consist? He himself is uncreated Love in her; the Love of the Father and of the Son, the Love by which God loves himself, the very love of the Most Holy Trinity. He is a fruitful Love, a "Conception." Among creatures made in God's image the union brought about by married love is the most intimate of all (see Mt 19:6). In a much more precise, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of her very being. He makes her fruitful, from the very first instant of her existence, all during her life, and for all eternity.

This eternal "Immaculate Conception" (which is the Holy Spirit) produces in an immaculate manner divine life itself in the womb (or depths) of Mary's soul, making her the Immaculate Conception, the human Immaculate Conception. And the virginal womb of Mary's body is kept sacred for him; there he conceives in time — because everything that is material occurs in time — the human life of the Man-God.

... If among human beings the wife takes the name of her husband because she belongs to him, is one with him, becomes equal to him and is, with him, the source of new life, with how much greater reason should the name of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine Immaculate Conception, be used as the name of her in whom he lives as uncreated Love, the principle of life in the whole supernatural order of grace?

In light of this remarkable passage, I'd like to make three points. First, ponder it again, deeply and prayerfully. As you do, keep in mind that these are the parting words of one of the greatest Marian saints of all time, answering the very question to which he dedicated his life and energies. Second, if it seems that Kolbe has gone a bit overboard with this talk of Mary and her union with the Holy Spirit, don't worry. Pope Paul VI went out of his way to reassure the faithful that Kolbe's teaching is sound.³⁶ Third, if you only get one point from this challenging passage,

may it be this: Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. In fact, her union with the Holy Spirit is even deeper than what we understand by a spousal relationship. We'll pick up this thread tomorrow.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary. Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.