
Immaculate.

A "macula" is a stain, a blotch, a blemish. The term has been applied by the ancient spiritual writers to sin, which is the most disfiguring blemish known to God or man. We come into this world bearing the "macula" of original sin: "Behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 50.) Even the souls of those who retain their baptismal innocence until death, have begun their existence in sin, under the power of Satan, and with the taint of his rebellion of their souls.

There is but one exception -- "our tainted nature's solitary boast:" Mary, the Virgin Mother of the Virgin Christ, of all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, was preserved, by an eternal decree that applied the merits of Christ to her soul in anticipation, from every stain of sin, whether original or actual. This is what we call her Immaculate Conception.

We reverence purity in women; we love it; we fairly worship it. But it was not always so. One of the most repugnant features of the state of the world at the coming of Christ was its treatment of women. Lust always breeds cruelty (since in its course it tramples under foot all the finer instincts); and the position of the wife in the home of the Roman at the coming of Christ was little better than the position of the Indian squaw among our own aborigines. She was relegated to a corner of the house, and cast aside at the will of her lord and master; even her own maternal instincts were so stunted that women of that age offered their own children as human sacrifices.

It took the Catholic Church centuries to change this condition, to awaken in the hearts of dissolute Greeks and Romans, and hardy, coarse barbarians, the domestic virtues that make home dear to us today: conjugal fidelity, filial love and affection, -- the things that make homesickness possible.

The Church accomplished this colossal task by her devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God. God had given her to us as the model Virgin and Mother; these two states of life came into their own through devotion to her. Hard men came to appreciate and cherish maidenly reserve and motherly sacrifice; they came to know and love the womanly instincts that could inspire men; chivalry came into its own; woman became the "helpmate" God had created her to be.

The stand of the Church for the recognition of virginity and motherhood received a rude shock when an apostate monk married an ex-nun and a king of England divorced the mother of his children to marry a court flapper. Both of them took up a political and moral fight against the authority of the Church, the consequences of which are very evident today. Without the authority of the Church the position of woman is questioned: a Columbia professor, Dr. Montague, describes the six-months-trial marriages of Russia as a "tremendous experiment in human social science;" a Cleveland judge orders a woman to be the plaything of her husband for the next three years but forbids her to bear him children -- to quote only two examples, and those from this week's news. The new woman tells us that she is willing to fight for her rights -- but she forgets that she must get down from her pedestal to fight, and that in such fights woman gets kicked into the gutter by her huskier antagonist.

Tomorrow we renew our devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, whom we still honor, and in whom we still believe. Ask Our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion to send grace into the hearts of men that will turn them from the paganism that threatens to engulf us.

Prayers:

Jack Rockne had another operation yesterday morning; Edmund Hogan expects a blood transfusion today. The father of Mr. Wall, of the Education Department, died yesterday. Harold Stelzer's grandfather died two days ago.