

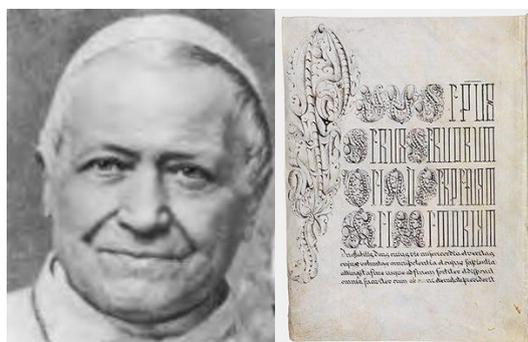
Snapshots: Threads



St. Anne , Mary, and Jesus

There are two days in the year when Sisters of the Immaculate Conception take religious vows: 9th July, the anniversary of the crowning of Our Lady of Jazlowiec, and 8th December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The first is our own special day, and the second is celebrated by the Church all over the world, and, yet, is, also, in a very particular way ours: the name day of our Congregation. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary embraces a mystery, so profound, and so supernatural, that our contemplation of it is similar to trying to see the top of a high mountain that is shrouded in mist – it towers above us, soaring beyond our ability to perceive it in its fullness, and yet, we catch glimpses of its majesty and beauty. There are threads running through history that, if we catch hold of, can give us those fleeting glances we seek.

When Blessed Marcelina Darowska heard that the Congregation to which she had committed herself was to be under the patronage of The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she felt great joy. It was 1857, only three years after the Pope, Pius IX had declared The Immaculate Conception as a doctrine of the Catholic Church on 8th December 1854:



Pope Pius IX

Ineffabilis Deus

The voice of the Sovereign Pontiff broke and tears filled his eyes as he paused before uttering the infallible words: "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."¹

The doctrine was confirmed when the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception celebrated the placing of the Holy Sacrament in the chapel of their first convent in Rome. This was on 25th March 1858, "...and, on the very same day, in a distant and, as yet unknown place called Lourdes, the Virgin Mary told Bernadette: 'I am the Immaculate Conception...'"²

¹www.piustheninth.com; *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854

²*Matka*, sr. Alma Soltan

Mary was immaculately conceived; that is, she was not stained by original sin. Only such a pure vessel could have carried and borne the child that was God Himself, incarnate, the Word Who became flesh. December is a rich month, for we prepare for the coming of Christ into the world, but no Immaculate Conception would mean no Christmas; it is the foundation of salvation history. Mother Marcelina saw this, very clearly indeed, and expressed it:

Is perfect chastity achievable for a (normal) person? ... No, not without confirmation by grace, unusual grace, because conceived in sin, their foundation is corrupted until death...The primary example of perfect chastity higher than the angels – the chastity of Jesus Christ, God-Man and the Most Holy Immaculately Conceived Virgin Mary. In them it assumed the peak of fullness towards which we may strive throughout our lives, unreachable though it is for us; we may only achieve a pale reflection of it at the conclusion of our earthly pilgrimage, and come to understand it more fully in eternity in dimensions appropriate for us to grasp.³

Pope Pius IX in 1854, Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, Mother Marcelina Darowska in 1887 – threads of history leading directly to the Sisters who stand before the altar in the Shrine of Our Lady of Jazlowiec in Szymanow in the 21st century, and weaving them into the tapestry of this mystery which is both unfathomable and intimately close to our hearts.

³ Blessed Marcelina Darowska, *Commentary on the Constitution and Spirit of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (1887)