

A MEDITATION ON THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW OF
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF OUR LADY



The Chapel of Our Lady, in the Church of the Immaculate Conception
of Our Lady, Penzance.

*This window was made for the 175th anniversary of the church in
October 2018.*

In the centre of this window Mary is robed with the sun and crowned with 12 stars representing the 12 Apostles. In her left hand she holds a lily, the symbol of purity given to her by the Archangel Gabriel: see the Joyful Mysteries window.

As in the granite statue on the west façade of this church, Mary is treading under foot the serpent Satan, who lured Adam and Eve into disobeying their Creator. Since this first fall, the disease called Original Sin has vitiated so many well-meaning human efforts to do good. But God our Father never gives up on us. He showed us even then a glimmer of the Good News in which Mary would bring Jesus our Saviour into the world.

Mary is the Mother of Jesus, true God and true man. Our Church teaches that in order to become the Ark of the Covenant, one of Mary's 50 titles, "the Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first, moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin": conceived immaculate. This tenet of faith, binding on all Catholics, was defined by Pope Blessed Pius IX on 8 December 1854. The top right-hand panel shows the Holy Father and some of his Cardinals on the solemn occasion.

Although this Definition is relatively modern, as is the Definition of the Assumption of Our Lady which dates only from 1950 it is based, like all Church teachings, on what Pope Benedict XVI called "an interpretation of Scripture." And in the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "The faith which the Church hands down to you has all the authority of the Scriptures behind it." Teachings like these are not additions thought up by the Pope in 1854 or 1950. They are implicit in Sacred Scripture and in our centuries-old Tradition – classic examples of the Holy Spirit leading our Church into the "fullness of truth" over many centuries. If we play down these teachings we will weaken our belief that Jesus Christ is Son of God and Son of Mary.

The top left panel shows the façade of our church. Below it is Fr. William Daly OMI sent by the Bishop of Marseilles, Eugène de Mazenod, and founder of the Order of Mary Immaculate, who was canonized in 1995. On Fr. Daly's left is Fr. William Young (1796-1859), the "Apostle of Cornwall" and builder of this church. The bottom left panel shows the consecration of the high altar in 1868 by the Bishop of Plymouth, William Vaughan.

The bottom right panel shows the 16th apparition of Our Lady to Bernadette Soubirous on 25 March 1858, the Solemnity of the Annunciation. She was from a poor family in the small town of Lourdes, in South West France. The late nineteenth-century basilica is in the background. On this day Our Lady said to Bernadette: "I am the Immaculate Conception," and her words were faithfully relayed to the Parish Priest. These words were taken to be Heaven's confirmation of the Definition of 1854.

What we believe about Our Lady supports and confirms what we believe about Jesus. In the Holy Rosary Basilica in Lourdes there is a large mosaic of Our Lady with four words which sum up her work:

"Par Marie à Jésus" – "Through Mary to Jesus."

Recommended Reading:

1. Genesis 3:9-15 the fall of mankind
Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:27, Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37,
Romans 4:21 "Nothing is impossible for the Lord."
Luke 1:26-36, 39-45 & 46-50 Annunciation, Visitation and Magnificat
John 8:44 Satan, father of lies
John 16:12-15 the Church led into the fullness of Truth
Revelation 11:19 the Ark of the New Covenant

2. **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**

Paragraph:

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| 85-87 | Interpreting the Word of God |
| 88-89 | Dogmas: lights along the path of faith |
| 397-398 & 415-418 | Original Sin |
| 410-411 | God has not abandoned us |
| 487 | Beliefs about Our Lady confirm beliefs about Jesus |
| 490-495 and 509 | The Immaculate Conception |
| 687 | The Holy Spirit leads the Church
into fullness of Truth |

3. *Hail Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*, Scott Hahn 2001

Saints and Sinners, The Catholic Church in Penzance, A History 1843-2018
Anne Shipman, 2018