



'Mary, Did You Know?' Of course she did; the angel called her 'full of grace'



Catholics finding themselves singing along to the catchy Christmas carol "Mary, Did You Know?" may be shocked to discover that the song actually

undermines the truth of the Immaculate Conception.

"Mary, Did You Know," described as one of the "most loved modern Christmas songs of this century," was written in 1984 by Mark Lowry, who has described himself as a Fundamental Baptist.

Using Bible passages such as "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" as well as Mary's exclamation "My spirit rejoices in God my savior," Baptists hold that Mary was a sinner, just like everyone else.

It is no surprise that this belief shows up in Lowry's song with the words, "[Mary,] did you know that your Baby Boy has come to make you new? This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you."

But as a Catholic, I always cringe when I hear that line in what otherwise is a beautiful song, because it dishonors my spiritual mother by saying untrue things about her.

Catholic belief of Mary being created without sin in the womb of her mother St. Anne is founded on Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and reason.

God is Holy. When the time came for the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to become man, God needed a holy temple through which his beloved son might enter the world. God created Mary to be that holy, spotless, and perfect temple, the first tabernacle, to contain his son and bear him into the world.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way: "To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary 'was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.'"

When the angel Gabriel, at the moment of the annunciation, salutes Mary as "full of grace," he is not simply tacking on meaningless verbiage to his greeting, but he is speaking a profound truth about this woman. He is "naming" her as she is seen by God. He is pointing out the spiritual reality of her being.

Mary is "full of grace."

When a room is "full of light," there is no room for darkness. Since Mary is "full of grace," there is no room in her for sin. She is full of the light of God's grace and has no room in

her for the darkness of sin. She is the perfect temple to receive God, and the angel acknowledges this with his greeting.

Following this line of thinking, the Catholic Church holds that Mary was still saved by Christ's redeeming sacrifice, but she was "redeemed from the moment of her conception" in view of Christ's sacrifice. God is outside of time, so he can do something like this, if he wants to.

The understanding of Mary being "full of grace" so that she was without any stain of sin, even from the moment of her first beginning, has for centuries been such a large part of Catholic belief that it was defined as dogma — incontrovertibly true — in 1854 by Pope Pius IX.

States the dogma: "The most 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."

Catholic teaching is clear that Mary's holiness from the first instant of her conception "comes wholly from Christ" and not from herself. She is "redeemed" just like everyone else, but in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son, states the Catechism. The Immaculate Conception is really Jesus' special way of looking out for his Mom.

States the Catechism: "The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love.'"

Four years after the dogma was decreed Mary appeared to a poor uneducated peasant girl in Lourdes, France, and, when asked her name, responded: "I am the Immaculate Conception." The girl Bernadette had no idea what this meant and had to repeat the confusing phrase many times so that she would be able to speak it properly to the local priest who had directed the girl to ascertain the apparition's name.

The ancient Church Fathers have this saying about how what one prays is ultimately what one believes (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*). It is no stretch to hold that this applies to Christmas carols as well. If Catholic sing songs about a "sinful" Mary, soon they will come to believe it, disdaining the truth of the Immaculate Conception.

The Immaculate Conception is the feast day when Catholics honor Our Lady conceived without sin. Let all men and woman of good will hold fast to this great work of God, pondering with wonder the workings of his grace.

***"O Mary, conceived without sin,
pray for us who have recourse to thee."***

source: www.lifesitenews.com

Joseph, Husband of Mary

When Mary became the Mother of the Savior miraculously, this commitment received the most ineffable consecration. Her motherhood was the crowning achievement of her virginity, the divine flower of the gift, the culmination of this love that from the beginning the whole désappropriait, lily of poverty.

Taking Mary with him in the performance of the solemnity that makes its final marriage, Joseph is therefore involved in the *motherhood* of his wife in the same as it was bound to her virginity. This means that it is entirely devoted to him and it accomplishes its own fertility, as it depletes that of Mary: in this wonderful fruit which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Does not she say one day, with the most moving tenderness and exquisite humility: "*Your father and I in pain, we were looking for you.*" (Luke 2: 48)

Jesus is therefore born of their marriage, virginity is fertile, their flesh rests in a quiet exultation in surpassing the achievement of the momentum that carries life; and as the link between them is the divine person of their child, their marriage is holy as He is eternal, containing a single degree every property of a perfect union: fertility, fidelity, indissolubility; *fides, proles, sacramentum*.

Father Maurice Zundel was a Swiss mystic, poet, philosopher.

Source: www.mauricezundel.com



**Oh, Adonai, dearest Lord,
Compassionate God of justice,
so many areas of my life seem imprisoned
but you promise me real freedom
and peace in my life.
Renew my spirit and free my soul.
Please, open my heart
which you have bathed in the longing of Advent.
I am awe-struck as your glory fills the earth
and I want to follow you in caring for others.
Grant me the grace to see
how you shine your light on the poor
who have such a special place in your heart.
Come, Lord Jesus! Come!
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel!**

LECTIO DIVINA FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

We begin our prayer:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus, and do not delay, that those who trust in your compassion may find solace and relief in your coming. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(Collect for December 24)

READING (Lectio) Read the following Scripture two or three times.

Matthew 1:18-24 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel*, which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

MEDITATION (Meditatio)

After the reading, take some time to reflect in silence on one or more of the following questions:

- What word or words in this passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage comforted you?
- What in this passage challenged you?

If practicing lectio divina as a family or in a group, after the reflection time, invite the participants to share their responses.

CONTEMPLATION (Contemplatio)

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection:

How does this passage connect with the experience of your daily life? Do not be afraid. What fears and anxieties keep me from living my call to be a missionary disciple? How can I help others live their calls without fear? God is with us. How am I aware of God's presence in my daily life? How do I make God present to others? He did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. How do I discern God's plan for my life? What steps can I take to help me follow the Lord more closely?

PRAYER (Oratio)

Read the scripture passage one more time. Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you. After all have had a chance to make their prayer, all recite the Lord's Prayer and the following:

CLOSING PRAYER:

Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, He will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals. (Zephaniah 3:16b-18)

Source: USCCB.org