

## Immaculate Conception

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception teaches that Mary, from the very first moment of her conception, was preserved from the stain of original sin by a special grace of God. This unique privilege was given to her in view of the saving merits of Jesus Christ and in preparation for her role as the Mother of God. On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX formally defined this teaching as a dogma of the Catholic Church in the apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*. It is important to understand that the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary's conception, not the conception of Jesus. The Church teaches that Mary was saved by Christ in a profound and unique way, receiving the fruits of his redemption from the very beginning of her life. This teaching reminds us that God's grace was at work in Mary in an extraordinary way, preparing her to say "yes" to God's plan. Mary stands before us as a model of faith, holiness, and openness to God's grace, showing us what God desires for all humanity.