

**Homily**  
**Immaculate Conception - B**

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
December 8, 2020

Gn 3: 9-15, 20  
Ps 98: 1, 2-3, 3-4  
Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12  
Lk 1: 26-38

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I am a little bit melancholy this year on this Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception because twenty-five years ago on December Third, I was ordained a deacon for the diocese of Joliet. I was ordained with two other individuals who have since left the priesthood. Most probably, I served as the weakest link of these three seminarians that were ordained, yet I am the one that is left.

The other two seminarians in my class had great gifts and possessed a wonderful spirit. Both were exceedingly popular and both could preach a homily better and I could. One of these deacons left the priesthood and is now married with children; he currently is employed as a successful CPA in the business world. The other converted to another faith and is currently serving as pastor of St. Edward and Christ Episcopal Church in Joliet.

As for me, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I have fallen many times on the path of this particular vocation. I think to myself as I reflect on these readings for today, sometimes I wonder if I do not follow more of the path of Adam and Eve than of Mary and her incarnate Son, the God-Child, the Emmanuel, the New Messiah. Nevertheless, God has called me on this path, sinner that I am, knowing that there have been far greater people who have committed similar faults as I have as well, which does not justify what I am doing, what I have done or how I live today. My reflection on today's readings makes me realize that I am a sinner and like everyone else I need God's help to get me through this journey.

Today's feast reminds me of the most important of all of our saints in the martyrology of the Church and the most important line any saint has ever uttered, which is found in today's gospel reading: **"I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD; LET IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD." (Lk 1: 38) / "YO SOY LA ESCLAVA DEL SEÑOR; CÚMPLASE EN MÍ LO QUE ME HAS DICHO."**

In my reflection, I think if our Blessed Mother is willing to devote her life to taking care of her son and to sacrificing her life for his well-being so that he could save us, then, maybe in some small way, I might be able to do the same for the people of the communities I serve. I know that my vocation has been a difficult one because God has asked me to do things which are not easy. I also think of all of those whose saintly lives have suffered far worse than me.

The patron saint of our diocese, who we celebrate on December 3<sup>rd</sup> (the date on which I was ordained) St. Francis Xavier. Francis Xavier was one of six priests whom St. Ignatius of Loyola formed and sent out in this new religious order of “Jesuits” to defend the gospel and the work of the Holy Father, while preaching God’s message to the unchurched in the Far-Eastern part of the world. Knowing what challenges would fall upon him, especially in the area of Japan and the surrounding islands, was an extremely difficult task for this evangelist – many of the Jesuits in the Far-East suffered greatly in carrying out the mission of spreading the gospel to the natives that lived there.

I have learned in my twenty-five years as a deacon that so many individuals have been called by God to do so many different things in whatever vocation these individuals have been called to live. What God is asking me to do has not been easy, but neither is being a parent or a painter or a carpenter or a doctor or certainly a parish staff member!!!

Because of the struggles and challenges I have encountered throughout my specific ministry, I started writing a book on of my exploits, my memoirs, so to speak. I am up to the year 2010 and my book is already 250 pages long! Nevertheless, I think God is calling me to live this life and to do what I have been asked to do for the safety and protection of children. Just like this mother devoted her life to taking care of her child is God protective her. She protected her child. I am called to do the same as we all are.

In whatever vocation each of us are called to lead, we each are called to be good stewards of the gifts that we have been given; We are taught that the children of our society are the most sacred gifts we have and they should be protected the most. I humbly ask you to pray for our

kids and pray for all moms and dads who are commissioned to serve them. We pray that our parents remain good ones in the faith, realizing that life is sacred from that moment of conception until natural death.

In our faith, we have been taught that Mary was protected from Original Sin; Mary did not sin at all. Mary did not fall as Eve did; Mary stayed strong in the faith and sacrificed her life so that her son could persevere, dying on the cross for the sake of the rest of us. She set the model of faith that God had given to her, the same faith we are called to live as well.

May we all remain strong in whatever vocation we have been called to live, by protecting with our lives those we have been called to serve, always in God's name. May we take that devotion and dedication by offering that strength to all people that we meet. This is our prayer.