

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

We are a sensual people.
We gather all information through our five senses.
Everything we learn comes to us through these senses.
As Catholics, we love signs and symbols.
Our sacraments are signs themselves and are full of symbols.
We have water, burning candles, aromatic oils, incense.
Signs and symbols are full of meaning.

Of the five senses, smells are unique: they evoke strong memories and they can influence moods. Aromatherapy
Our olfactory nerve is hard-wired to our “nostalgia node,” in the limbic system.
Our Olfactory bulb has a strong input into the amygdala, which process emotions.
The kind of memories that it evokes can be good or bad; fight or flight - But, they are powerful!

I can't bring to mind what the perfume, Taboo, smells like, but just a whiff of Taboo and I'm at the prom again.

If I smell Old Spice, my dad is right there.
Pipe smoke and you imagine your father or grandfather sitting behind you.
The smell of clothes dried on a clothes line in the sun.
Wood smoke and summers past.
Do you remember Robert Duvall saying, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning!" in the movie "Apocalypse Now"
Well, I love the smell of jet exhaust on a cold morning -
it is so powerful to me with so many memories
Frankincense reminds brings me to my early years serving Mass.

Christmas time is coming; what smells are most nostalgic to you? Pine, Balsam, Pumpkin spice, egg nog?
Millions spent on candles that remind us of Christmases past.
Flowers, some remember weddings, yet others, remember funerals.
If you lost someone close, if you smell their shirt, their blouse or their pillow, does it bring a flood of memories?

It can also work in reverse? A memory can bring on a smell.
One of our youth said, when he touched the talith, he was flooded with the smell of Christ from his Baptism

We can also exude smell; people who eat raw garlic.

Can spiritual events evoke smell?
They say, great evil smells like sulphur.
And the bodies of saints exude the odor of sanctity, i.e, flowers or lilies, or
Is the smell in our souls?

The odor of sanctity is the scent of Jesus and Mary.
If some people have the wounds of Christ, couldn't we have the odor of Christ or Mary.

This subject fits right in with today's Solemnity, Immaculate Conception.
From the first moment of her existence, Mary had the odor of sanctity.
Actually, Mary is the odor of sanctity.

When a saint dies and we notice the odor of sanctity, maybe it's because Mary was just there to bring them home!

Today, we celebrate, we commemorate, we honor Mary who was conceived in her mother's womb without the slightest taint, the slightest hint, the slightest fault of any kind.

Through the foreseen merits of her Son, Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin.

- ★ She is God's perfect work.
- ★ She is the only human person who was entirely and passionately subject to God's will every moment of her life.
- ★ She is the only human person whose humility never failed for one instant to be perfect.
- ★ She is the only human person who never failed to love God with her whole heart and her whole soul, with her whole mind and with her whole strength.
- ★ She is the only human person who completely fulfilled God's plan on earth, and whose being and whose life perfectly corresponded to the ideal that God wished to realize in her, so that she could truly say of herself to St. Bernadette:
"I am the Immaculate Conception!"
For in her God's conception was truly realized—immaculately!"

The "Immaculate Conception: is not just an honor given to Mary!
This was all very, very necessary to God's plan of Redemption.

As Adam and Eve stood filled with guilt by the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" in the Garden of Eden, having stunk up the whole human race by their pride and disobedience, God promised a new Eve and a new Adam when He said to the devil:

"I will put enmities between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed: she shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel".

So too, as the new Adam and the new Eve were together on Calvary, this time, God spoke again - and He revealed the esteemed role of the new Eve in the promised regeneration of His creation.

But this time, the new Adam was nailed to the "tree" the "Tree of the cross; and it was He, the New Adam, Himself, as both God and Man, who gave utterance to His dying bequest, saying now to the new Eve:
"Mother, behold thy son," and to the disciple, St. John, in whose person He addressed the whole human race: "Behold thy Mother."

Calvary was but the climax, on earth, of that association of Jesus and Mary in the painful work of our Redemption. It first became evident in Today's Gospel in the humble and obedient virgin's "Fiat" when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that

- ★ she was full of grace, that she
- ★ She was actually filled with grace,
- ★ there was no more grace left that God could have given her.
- ★ And that she was to be the Mother of Christ, the Son of God.

Back in the Garden of Eden, as it filled with the smell of sulphur and rotting flesh, the "fallen angel" invited Eve to disobey God and to entice Adam to join her in disobedience and together they did and they ruined the lives of their children,

Now, in Nazareth, amidst the scent of lilies and roses, at the angel, Gabriel's, word, Mary, by her humility and submission accepted her share in her Son's work of restoration and thus commenced to fulfill her vocation as the new Eve and the mother of men.

In that scene, as throughout all her entire life, Mary gives us an example of faith, hope, charity, humility, and abandonment to the will of God."

- ★ Mary alone was exempted from the stain of original sin - forever!
- ★ From the very first moment of her conception she was "full of grace."
- ★ So much so, that many theologians believe that even then, her initial grace at conception was greater than the final grace of all the angels and all the saints put together.
- ★ Certain it is - that her life on earth gave God more glory than the rest of all creation—her son's human nature alone excepted.
- ★ So even if all else were lost, it would be no more than a drop of water beside the ocean of grace and glory that Mary represents in God's creation.
- ★ She is the Immaculate Conception in every sense of the word, and
- ★ she alone would signal "the success of God's creation."
- ★ If we began to sing the glories of Mary, we should never finish, except with the realization that comes from complete failure.

You and I must consider her place in our own lives. There is no better way of summing that up than by saying that Mary is the Mother of the Whole Christ.

And, all of us therefore, who are united to Christ are members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones, have issued from the womb of Mary as a body united into its head.

Therefore, in a spiritual and mystical fashion, we are all said to be children of Mary, and she is the Mother of us all.

She is our Mother, spiritually indeed, but truly Mother of the members of Christ, which we are.

Just as:

- ★ Mary provided for the human needs of Her Son, including gathering and preparing food which she ate while He was still in her womb.
- ★ This food was transformed into His Flesh and Blood.
- ★ And even after that intimate physical union between Christ and His Mother had been severed by the birth of Christ,
- ★ He still remained for a time dependent upon her very substance for His nourishment as He nursed at her breast.
- ★ When His growth as a child gave Him a fuller independence of His Mother, it was still her hands that transformed the raw materials and prepared His food, and cared for His growing body.

And just as the fruits and animals of the earth are the food of the human body of Christ, so, too, ourselves, our lives, and our actions are the food of the Mystical Body.

And just as the food of the human body of Christ was prepared by Mary
So we ourselves, with our lives and our actions, have to be prepared by Mary,
and in some mysterious way made hers, in order to become members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

God didn't have to save us through Mary, some would say, but He chose to;
it was the Eternal Will of God. And

I can only assume that it was because god knew it was the best way.

We have to belong to Her; we have to give ourselves to Her, we have to dedicate our lives to Her and ask for Her help and intercession in everything we do!

In our consecration to Mary, we sit at Our Mother's feet with Jesus, Her Son, to learn from her as Jesus did.

Maybe, if we give ourselves to her sufficiently, If we sit close enough to her We could smell her scent.

Babies can smell their mothers, especially when they are nursing.

Maybe we could even smell Jesus on her clothes.

What did Mary smell like? I wish I knew and I hope someday I will.

But, if we let her form us into Jesus, besides our acting and loving like Jesus, maybe we would smell like Jesus?

When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, when we act like Jesus, when we are Jesus, we should smell like Jesus to other people, Will people associate our smell with that of Jesus?

At our Baptism we were imprinted with the scent of Jesus and Mary

And when we die - if we have prepared well, if we have lived well, if we have loved well, if we have worn her scapular, her clothing

we can hope and pray - that Mary will come personally and retrieve our soul and leave her scent on our body.

I hope this homily imprints this idea in your limbic system -

I hope Mary imprints her scent in your limbic system.

And may every beautiful scent you smell from now on remind you of Your Immaculate Mother and may it bring good memories and always a smile to your face.