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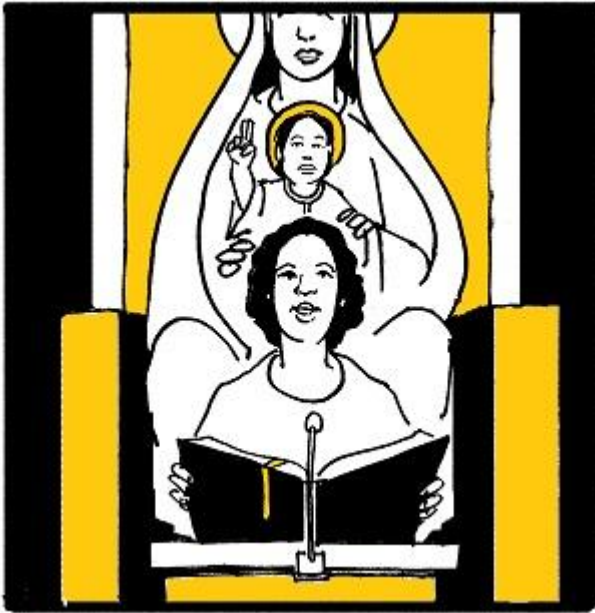
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“Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

Displacing Mary’s feast of the Immaculate Conception to December 9 because of the Second Sunday of Advent falling on December 8 only reminds us that Advent is only possible because of Mary’s assent to be the mother of Jesus. Christmas is her labor of love and gift to the world. Salvation history, flowing out of the first Covenant with all of its trembling prophets and wondrous forerunners, stopped to wait for the “yes” of a young girl in the village of Nazareth in the hill country of Galilee.

Today’s celebration is about how Mary was prepared for that moment. At her own conception, her existence was blessed by the holiness of her future son. With her consent, his conception sent the grace that filled her to the very origins of the human race to heal the gap that had afflicted every other conception since then with the fault of sin and the fact of death. Her child’s Incarnation joined and transformed the flesh of every human being -- past, present and future -- opening us to a new and glorious future: life with God forever.

What words cannot explain, faith accepts as the mystery that makes our salvation possible. Mary’s faith bridges old to new, fulfilling the scriptures, leaping from Law to Grace, from righteousness to love. She conceives, carries and gives birth to the Son of God, the second Adam and first-born of the new Age. She is joined to his redemptive suffering and the work of restoring humanity to the image and likeness

of God. She shows us what obedience under the Holy Spirit can do with a single yes to change the world.

Mary has given us a perfect response to God's invitation to each of us to conceive, carry and birth Jesus in our lives: "May it be done to me according to your word."

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