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# LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

*Thank you for allowing your teen to join us tonight at Life Teen. Below you'll find some information about tonight's topic. Please dialogue with your teen and encourage them to share what they learned.*

## LIFE NIGHT: IMMACULATA

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

At Mass, during the Liturgy of the Word, we hear a reading from one of the four Gospels. The Gospels contain stories of the life and mission of Jesus. In Genesis 3:15, after the story about creation and original sin, we also hear about Jesus. This revelation is considered so important that it is called the first Gospel or Protoevangelium.

In the Protoevangelium, the woman and her offspring are prophetic of Mary and Jesus. Jesus is the new Adam. While Adam's disobedience to God, the Father, brought evil into the world, Jesus' obedience, brought salvation. Mary is the new Eve. Mary's "yes" to the will of God, loosed the knot of Eve's disobedience. Man lost God's favor through Adam and Eve's act of selfishness. The beginning of the restoration of our relationship with God came through Mary's and Jesus' obedience and unselfishness. (CCC 411)

Because of her important role in salvation history, Catholics venerate or respect Mary. Because we have rosaries and pictures of her, some might get confused and think that we worship her. We do not. In everything, Mary's life and our devotion to her only leads us closer to Jesus. (CCC 971)

We ask for her intercession, knowing that she will take our prayers to Jesus. Mary may ask on our behalf, but it is always Jesus that answers our prayers. As parents, we want the best for our children. As our spiritual mother, Mary longs for what is best for us, to be in a relationship with her Son.

Mary plays an important role in our salvation. Jesus came to us through Mary and we can get closer to Jesus through Mary.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Can you identify ways Mary has lead you closer to Jesus?
2. How does your family honor Mary? Statues or pictures of her at home? Family recitation of the Rosary? Asking for her intercession?
3. Using Mary as an example, how do the members of your family lead each other to Jesus?

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## LIFE NIGHT: LOST ARK

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The Ark of the Covenant was a chest made to hold the symbols of God's covenant (promise) during the Israelites exile from Egypt. Contained in the Ark were symbols of the presence of God - The Manna, Bread from Heaven representing God's providence, the Ten Commandments, representing God's law, Aaron's priestly rod Aaron, representing the priestly office. A cloud overshadowed the Ark and was known as the Divine Presence. The Ark was pure and holy because it contained and was surrounded by the presence of God. The purity of God could not mix with the impurity of man. If anyone were to touch the Ark of the Covenant, they would die. (Exodus 15:10-22, Exodus 40:35, 2 Samuel 6:6-8)

In the New Testament, we learn of a new Ark, Mary. She carried the fulfillment of the symbols found in the Ark of the Covenant. Jesus is the Bread from Heaven, the fulfillment of God's law, and the true High Priest. The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary as the cloud did the Ark. (Luke 1:34)

Mary, the new Ark, just like the Ark of the Covenant needed to remain pure in order to bear Jesus in her womb. So, God preserved Mary from the stain of original sin by transferring the graces of redemption won by Jesus on the cross to her before her birth. This event is called the Immaculate Conception. (CCC 490, 492)

God loves us and desires us to be in complete union with Him on earth and in Heaven. The consequences of original sin and our own sins make this difficult. Just as Mary needed to be free from sin to bear Jesus, we too need to be free from sin to be in union with God. (CCC 604)

Justice is dispensing appropriate punishment. God can't simply overlook our sin and disobedience so He sent His Son, Jesus, to take on the punishment for our sins and redeemed us so we can be sinless. (Romans 6:23, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

As God's children, we continue to fall and ask for forgiveness. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we turn to God in our sinfulness and He continues to welcome us back into relationship. God waits for our response to His Mercy.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What are some everyday examples of things that don't mix well?
2. Does my family take advantage of God's gift of Reconciliation? How can we?
3. Is our home a place of justice and mercy?

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## LIFE NIGHT: DWELLING PLACE

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When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we become tabernacles of the Lord and are united with Jesus. Communion with God is a foundational component of the Christian life. Augustine's quote sums up this quest, "You have made us for yourself, Oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until we rest in you." (CCC 1391, Confessions)

Mary, in her immaculate nature, is the most perfect example of communion with God because she was perfectly united with Jesus when she carried Him in her womb and after His Death and Resurrection in the Eucharist.

The Jewish people had foretastes of communion with God in their practice of animal sacrifice. We, as Christians, have the fullness of communion with God in the sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of Jesus in the Eucharist.

When Moses was sent to free God's people from their oppressors in Egypt, the last plague was the death of the first-born son. To protect His people, God ordered each household to sacrifice a lamb, eat its flesh (sound familiar?), and cover the doorpost of their home with the lamb's blood. This allowed the spirit of death to pass-over any home with the lamb's blood. (Exodus 7:14-12:51)

In Leviticus, animal sacrifice is given greater meaning. Not only did it represent freedom from oppression, but also as they ate the animal's flesh they were in "communion" with the animal who had taken their place and paid their debt. Sound familiar? (Leviticus 16)

At the Last Supper, Jesus celebrated Passover and offered Himself as the Paschal sacrifice, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He instructed His disciples to "do this in memory of me." He commanded us to remember what He said at Passover and accomplished on the Cross and we are faithful to this by celebrating the Mass. (Matthew 26:26-28, CCC 613)

Mass is not only a celebration and a making present of Jesus' sacrifice, but also an opportunity to be united with the Paschal sacrifice.

As we learned in the previous lesson, the pureness of the divine and the impureness of man cannot mix. The Eucharist should not be received by someone in a state of mortal sin without first receiving Reconciliation.

It is our calling to receive Jesus in the Eucharist and live in communion with the Paschal sacrifice. It is an honor to be His dwelling place.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How important is Mass in our family? Is it as important as it should be?
2. Does receiving the Eucharist make us live our lives differently?
3. How does being a living tabernacle influence your life? The life of your family?

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## LIFE NIGHT: ETERNAL CROWN

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Unfortunately concupiscence, the inclination or tendency to sin, was not the only consequence of original sin. It also brought death to our mortal bodies. (Genesis 2:17) Because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary was not only free from sin but also from death. At the end of her earthly life, being in union with God, she was taken, body and soul, into Heaven and crowned Queen. This event is called the Assumption of Mary. (CCC 966)

Heaven is complete union with God. Perhaps you explain Heaven to your children as it was explained to you, as a wonderful place where we will be forever happy, a Disneyland in the sky? But it is so much more. We see God, as He is, face to face. It is the fulfillment of our deepest human longings, supreme happiness. (CCC 1023-1025, 1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 13:12)

The opposite of Heaven is Hell. Some might say it does not exist, but it does. It is complete isolation from God, emptiness for our soul. For a soul to go to Hell, a person makes a willful decision to turn from a relationship with God and continue that decision to the end of their life. (CCC 1035, Matthew 13:41-42 )

God wants us with Him; this is why Jesus redeemed us. He does not send us to Hell like a child sent to their room. It is a choice that we make. If we choose to follow God here on earth when we die we will live with Him in Heaven. If we choose not to follow God, He will honor our decision and we will spend eternity in Hell.

In the first lesson of this series, we heard about the Protoevangelium, the first promise of redemption. God promised Satan would be crushed by the woman and her offspring. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, tells of the completion of this promise. Mary, known also as the Heavenly Ark, gives birth so that a Son, Jesus, who conquers the "ancient serpent" with the "blood of the lamb." We have salvation, access to Heaven in Jesus. (Revelation 12:5-11)

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Share a time when you experienced glimpses of what Heaven might be like?
2. Do you desire Heaven? Why? Why not?
3. How is our eternal end our choice?