Tuesday Reflection 14th December 2021

Just under a week ago, the Church was celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which has always given rise to a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding, particularly among non-Catholics. What does it mean that Mary was conceived "without sin" or, as the official dogma puts it, "exempt from all stain of original sin"? This leads us into another doctrinal minefield, that of 'original sin'. There is very little scriptural support for the doctrine, which was not really formulated until Augustine of Hippo in the 4th century AD. This then brings us on to the question of 'what is sin anyway?', which is another minefield (theologically speaking).
When God created the world, and with it human beings, "He saw that it was good", which means that everything was in a state of grace, 'original grace'. One of the problems of this was that Eve and Adam were totally innocent, so were an easy prey for the evil of which they were unaware. What then happened was that they became dissatisfied with what they had and so rejected the grace that had been freely given to them.
Is this not what we do? We think we know better than God what is good for us, and we have become addicted to putting our own desires first, so the cardinal sin is one of selfishness. It is this selfishness which lends a social dimension to sin, because when we are prioritising our own desires - or those of our tribe, nation or whatever - we are denying the needs of others, including those of the rest of Creation.
What is special about Mary was that she was completely filled with God's grace - she was 'full of grace' and fully accepted God's plan for her - however she still had to make the positive affirmation "be it done under me according to Your will", regardless of the inconvenience and potential danger inherent in this for her.
And us? Every time we recite the Lord's Prayer we pray that "Thy will be done". How seriously do we mean it?

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