



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



### **Immaculate Conception**

Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of our country. What specially does she have to teach us under this title? Very much could be said in reply to this question. What I say, and what I omit, and the emphases I give, are perhaps more than a little subjective, but the teachings themselves will be acknowledged by all as her teachings.

She teaches, then, that there is no happiness and goodness but by way of purity. And I speak here of purity of the flesh, as well as of purity in all its other forms. We live in a very impure age. Sexual immorality is very widespread, in many ways almost, one might say, all-pervasive. This is true on the level of acts, but equally true, or even more true, on the level of thoughts, words, images. What one sees daily on the television, in the films, etc. is shocking beyond belief -- although its routineness deadens us to its shockingness. Many are confused, and have been drawn down into one or another form of impurity of mind, spirit, body with little or no malice or ill will; and yet the objective impurity of their mind and heart is still very harmful to them, deadening, making gross and imperceptible, their spirit. In short, there is no substitute for purity, for chastity, whether marital chastity, chastity for the unmarried, or the chastity of those who are celibate for the sake of the Kingdom. Each of us is called to one or the other of these forms of chastity. Let us ask Our Lady's help.

Then, of all the privileges of Our Lady, this is the one which is most secret, most inward, most without any outward glory -- though its inner glory is beyond anything we can imagine or conceive. But because of its lack of outward glory, this privilege of Our Lady brings to the fore her lowliness, her humility, her poverty. "He who is mighty has done great things for me . . . ; he has looked on the lowly . . . ; the rich he has sent empty away." How appropriate that, with these qualities to the fore, she should be the patroness of our country. For there is no way around it: we cannot be followers of the Lord Jesus, we cannot be saved, unless we are poor, or poor in spirit. Those are the only two possibilities. Our country remains the most powerful and wealthy country in the world. We must all examine ourselves daily, as a constant dimension of our life as Americans, on this question of poverty. Are we sharing the goods which the Lord has given us? Are we sharing our wealth, are we sharing our talents, are we sharing our time and energy, are we sharing ourselves? Are we sharing all this with the materially poor, with the homeless, with the unemployed, with the uneducated, with the victims of racism, with the victims of sexism, with the sick, with the mentally and emotionally disturbed, with the sorrowing and the grieving, with the young -- the young, who are so in need of help, so in need of hope. Are we sharing all that we have with the people in our own country? Surely not as well as we should be: why, only miles from here, are there people living in the streets, people living in tenements and hovels without adequate heat or cleanliness, people without jobs



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and without hope of jobs, people in terror of going out into the street because of violence. Are we sharing as we should be with people outside our own country? Again, it would not appear that all is as it should be, to say no more.