

The Golden Legend or Lives Of The Saints
Compiled by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, 1275
Englised by William Caxton, First Edition 1483
From the Temple Classics Edited by F.S. Ellis

HERE FOLLOWETH THE CONCEPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY. OF THE FEAST OF THE CONCEPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

Caxton added this to his edition of the Golden Legend, but it was not a part of Voragine's original.

Maria invenisti gratiam apud Dominum. Luca primo capitulo. ["Mary, you have found favor with the Lord." Luke, chapter 1]

When the angel Gabriel had greeted our Lady for to show to her the blessed conception of our Lord, for to take from her all doubts and dreads, he comforted her in saying the words aforesaid: "Mary, thou hast found grace at the Lord."

There be four manners of people, of which the two be good, and the two be evil. For some there be that seek not God nor his grace, as people out of the belief, of whom may be said as it is written: "Who that believeth not on his Lord God shall die perpetually." And other there be that seek God and his grace, but they find it not, for they seek it not as they ought to do, as covetous men that set all their love in havoir and in solace of the world. Such people be likened to them that seek flowers in winter: well seek they flowers in winter that seek God and his grace in the covetise of the world, which is so cold of all virtues that it quenbeth all the devotion of the love of God.

And well is called the world winter in holy scripture; for its evils and vices make men sinners and cold to serve God. And therefore saith the Holy Ghost to the soul that is amorous (*Canticorum cap. ii.* [*Song of Songs, chapter ii*]), "Arise up thou my fair soul, the winter is past, *jam enim hiems transiit*, for thou hast vanquished the temptations of the world which kele my love."

And therof as is said (*Judith, cap[chapter]. xv.*, *Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia, etc.*), "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art all the honour of our people."

Cap. eodem Confortatum est cor tuum, eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum, alterum nescieris: ideo et manus Domini confortavit te. et ideo eris benedicta in aeternum: "Thou hast kept chastity, and therefore thou shalt be blessed permanably."

Judith viii. Ora pro nobis, quoniam mulier sancta es, etc. Item cap. xiv. Benedicta es, etc. It was said to Judith the widow this, that we may say to our Lady: "Pray for us, for ye be an holy woman, ye be a daughter that is blessed of the sovereign God above all the women that be on the earth."

Thirdly, she is compared to the star, for she hath dwelled all her life stedfastly in all works of virtue, without doing any sin, like as the star holdeth him on the firmament without

descending to the earth. For as St. Bernard saith: If it were demanded to all the saints that ever have been: have ye been without sin? Except the glorious Virgin Mary, they might answer this that is written Johannis, cap. i. *Si dixerimus quoniam non peccavimus, etc.*: “If we say that we have do no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.”

This glorious virgin was, in the womb of her mother, sanctified more plainly and more specially than ever was any other, for as saith St. Thomas Aquinas *in Compendio*: There be three manners of sanctifications, the first is common, and given by the sacraments of the holy church, like as by baptism and other sacraments, and these give grace but to take away the inclination to sin deadly and venially, nay, and this was done in the Virgin Mary, for she was hallowed and confirmed in all goodness, more than ever was any creature, like as saith St. Austin: She did never sin mortal nor venial. For she was so much enlumined by the Holy Ghost which descended in her, that through the conception of her blessed son Jesu Christ, which rested in her nine months, she was so confirmed in all virtues that there abode in her no inclination of sin.

MIRACLES OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

A Storm at Sea

And therefore the holy church doth her more reverence and honour in ordaining to hallow the feast of her conception, because this feast is common to the knowledge of holy church by some miracles, like as we find reading in this manner:

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury and pastor of England, sendeth greeting and benediction in our Lord perpetual unto the bishops that be under me, and to all them that have remembrance of the blessed Virgin Mary mother of God.

Right dear brethren, how the conception of the glorious Virgin Mary hath been showed sometime in England, in France, and in other countries by miracles, I shall rehearse to you.

In the time that it pleased to God for to correct the people of England of their evils and sins, and to constrain them to his service, he gave victory in battle to William, the glorious Duke of Normandy, to win and conquer the realm of England. And after that he was king of the land, anon by the help of God, and of his prudence, he reformed the estates and dignities of holy church into better reformation than it had been. To which the devil, enemy unto all good works had envy, and pained him to emperish [obstruct] and let [hinder] the good works, as well by falseness of his servants as by encumbering of his strangers.

For when the Danes heard say that England was subject unto the Normans, anon they made them ready to withstand it. When king William understood this, anon he sent the Abbot of Rumsey, which was named Helsinus, into Denmark for to know the truth. This Abbot after that he had done well and diligently the charge of his commission, and that he was returned a great part of the sea homeward, anon arose a great tempest on the sea, in such wise that the cords and other habiliments of the ship brake. And the masters and governors of the ship, and all they that were therein, lost the hope and trust to escape the peril of this tempest, and all cried devoutly to the glorious Virgin Mary, which is comfort to the

discomforted, and hope to the despaired, and recommended themselves in the keeping of God.

And anon they saw coming tofore the ship, upon the water, an honourable person in habit of a bishop, which called the said abbot in the ship, and said to him: Wilt thou escape these perils of the sea, and go home whole and safe into thy country?

And the abbot answered, weeping, that he desired that above all other things.

Then said the angel to him: Know thou that I am sent hither by our Lady for to say to thee that if thou wilt hear me and do thereafter, thou shalt escape this peril of the sea.

The abbot promised that gladly he would obey to that he should say. Then said the angel: Make covenant to God, and to me, that thou shalt do hallow the feast of the Conception of our Lady, and of her creation, well and solemnly, and that thou shalt go and preach it.

And the abbot demanded in what time this feast should be kept. The angel answered to him, The eighth day of December. And the abbot demanded him what office and service he should take for the service in holy church.

And the angel answered: All the office of the nativity of our Lady, save where thou sayest nativity, thou shalt say, conception.

And anon after the angel vanished away and the tempest ceased. And the abbot came home safely into his country with his company, and notified to all them that he might, that he had heard and seen. And, right dear sirs, if ye will arrive at the port of health, let us hallow devoutly the creation and the conception of the mother of our Lord, by whom we may receive the reward of her son in the glory of paradise celestial.

The Virgin Appears to a Fiancé

It is also otherwise declared: In the time of Charlemagne, king of France, there was a clerk which was brother germain [i.e., having the same two parents] to the king of Hungary, which loved heartily the blessed Virgin Mary and was wont to say every day matins of her, and the Hours. It happed that by counsel of his friends he took in marriage a much fair damsel, and when he had wedded her, and the priest had given the benediction on them after the mass, anon he remembered that that day he had not said his Hours of our Lady, wherefore he sent home the bride, his wife, and the people, to his house, and he abode in the church beside an altar for to say his Hours; and when he came to this anthem – *Pulchra es et decora filia Jerusalem*, that is to say, “Thou art fair and gracious, daughter of Jerusalem” – anon appeared tofore him the glorious Virgin Mary with two angels on either side, and said to him: I am fair and gracious, wherefore leavest thou me and takest thou another wife? or where hast thou seen one more fair than I am?

And the clerk answered: Madam, thy beauty surmounteth all the beauty of the world, thou art lift up above the heavens and above the angels; what wilt thou that I do?

And she answered and said: If thou wilt leave thy wife fleshly, thou shalt have me thine espouse in the realm of heaven, and if thou wilt hallow the feast of my conception, the eighth day

of December, and preach it about that it may be hallowed, thou shalt be crowned in the realm of heaven. And anon therewith our Blessed Lady vanished away.

Let us then pray to that glorious virgin our Lady Saint Mary, that we after this short and transitory life may be crowned in heaven in glory celestial, to which God bring us. Amen.

The [iconography of this saint](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. bob_blackmon@mindspring.com.

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halsall@fordham.edu

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