Dear Mission Partners:

As you know from our IU Academic Calendar, Immaculata is closed on December 8!   Do you know why? It is a Holy Day, comparable to a Sunday, on the Church's liturgical calendar. It is a special feast day of Mary who is the Immaculate Conception. It is a special day for our Sisters of IHM here at Immaculata! On this patronal feast of Mary,   our sisters renew the vows they made on their day of profession at the Eucharist.

Why is Mary called the "Immaculate Conception?" In our prayer, we call Mary "full of grace" as did the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, – that is the meaning of the Immaculate Conception. She is full of grace. Mary was chosen by God to become Christ's Mother. Jesus was indeed Mary's true Son.

It wasn't until December 8, 1854, did the Church declare "that Mary is all-pure, without stain, immaculate from the first moment of her conception." On that date, Pope Pius IX defined it solemnly - the Immaculate Conception of Mary is a dogma of faith.

In 1858, when Mary appeared to Bernadette in the Grotto of Lourdes in France, Bernadette asked Mary who she was. Mary did not say that her name was Mary, but rather she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Father Gillet, CSsR, founder of the IHM sisters along with Mother Theresa Maxis, had a deep devotion to Mary. Fr. Gillet wrote: "to follow Mary is to follow Jesus; to imitate her virtues is to copy Jesus."[1]

May all of us at Immaculata look to Mary as a mother who will lead us to Jesus. She will always direct us to her Son. May we esteem the virtues we find in Mary and appreciate her patronage of Immaculata University.

For anyone on campus we look forward to joining with you at the 11:00 Mass in Villa Maria's chapel. Happy holy day – happy school holiday - happy feast of the Immaculate Conception!

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[1] Immaculata, Thoughts on Mary's Litany, p. 126.