

Pondering His Presence

January 1, 2022, The Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Gospel of Luke 2:16-21

Fr. Brad

Our readings today talk about blessings and this is certainly a great day to wish everyone a blessed and very happy new year ahead. This is also the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God and I would like to take some time today to ponder what Mary must have gone through in her life as the mother of God.

For most of us, I suppose, the first image we think of when we think of Mary is her cradling the infant child in the nativity, having just given birth to the saviour of the world.

This image permeates the whole Christmas season but of course, Jesus eventually grows up and there is much more to Mary than the images that are presented of her in Scripture.

As we know, Scripture spends very little time speaking of Mary. It is in Luke's and Matthew's Gospel that we hear infancy narratives of Jesus which feature the Blessed Mother. But overall in the four Gospels, nothing is really said about Jesus' childhood other than the finding of Jesus in the temple. Other than that episode Mary recedes in the Scriptures and we lose the personal images that we're familiar with. So we have to use our imaginations to picture what life must've been like for Mary raising her son Jesus.

Jesus as a toddler learned to walk like everyone else, he learned discipline - - as a teenage boy he played with other kids, he went out visiting relatives with his parents. Mary probably cut his hair and cooked favourite meals once in a while. She must've been very proud to see him bond with Joseph as Joseph taught Jesus the finer points of the carpentry trade. But when Jesus turns 30, things change dramatically. One might've thought, given Mary and Joseph's knowledge of Jesus' special nature and relationship with God, that he would perhaps become trained to be a rabbi. Instead what happens? Jesus starts talking to people in the streets and hanging out with the rough around the edges fisherman down at the lake. People begin speaking about Jesus and his followers and some of the comments are not complementary. In fact some people are upset at what Jesus is saying including the religious authorities themselves.

Mary must've been very confused at the idea that Jesus might be a danger to the synagogue leaders. She must've been in a constant state of prayer. Yes she knew in her heart what God had told her through the message of an angel but she did not know how this would unfold or what was going to happen day to day. Even though she was the mother of God, she was a human mother who suffered intensely and simply was not knowing of what exactly would unfold and how it would all end. And then we come to the cross at the end of Jesus life, Mary standing at the foot of the cross simply accepting the reality of the crucified Lord, her beloved son Jesus. We can relate to Mary.

We may want to trust in faith, that God's will is unfolding but we do not like what we are experiencing.

Most of us have had the experience of what it is like to be at the bedside or graveside of a loved one. There are no words to describe how we feel or words that are appropriate for the situation. Sometimes we can just be there in silence and be present as Mary was at the foot of the cross.

It is common to be speechless in our grief with the question, 'Why does this have to happen?' Mary was not called to be a problem solver or to discover the reason why. This is important for us to recognize because as human beings we seem to be bred to solve problems. But Mary suffered patiently with deep faith and deep sorrow.

Parents, remember that sometimes we step in to try to solve our children's problems. Mary didn't attempt to solve Jesus problems. But **she was there as God called her to be as a presence in her mothering role**. This is key to us as Christians in the way we minister to one another. Being there, just showing up, can be of more value than any words. Whatever our role in life, be it mother, father, son, daughter, friend, male or female, we all take on a motherly roles in certain ways in our lives. Whether it is taking care of pets, plants, looking after friends or family, we experience a mothering role one way or another. Mothering means to nurture and to be present and to always be available. And words are not always necessary. Whether married, single, man, or woman - - don't be afraid to reflecting all that your mother experiences. The Catechism says that *'God is neither a man or a woman, but that the perfection of the man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: that of a mother and those of a father.'*

Perhaps you've heard the saying, '**Don't just do something... stand there**'. We always feel that we must DO something, particularly in the most painful of times. But in more situations than we are aware of, often the best thing we can do is just be there or stand there in silence with God.

As we think of the Blessed Mother and of her role and her example for us, perhaps we can ponder the image of Mary standing at the foot of the cross, watching with her as her heartbreaks, yet still pondering all these things in her heart.

So may we not be ashamed to stand there pondering all that is in our hearts even though we cannot articulate or understand everything. And, as Mary did, may we persevere in faith and trust in God whose ways invite us to commend our suffering and confused hearts into the heart of her beloved Son. Amen