

January 1, 2023 – The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
Pondering and Treasuring God's Actions
Gospel of Luke 2:16-21
Fr. John

It is indeed quite fitting that we begin the calendar year commemorating Mary as the birth mother of the One Who is the human presence of the Divine here on earth...
Jesus.

We as Catholics honour Mary in various feast days and devotional practices throughout the year...and rightly so. She was chosen by God to play a most vital role in the Incarnation - the nativity of the Messiah.

She is regarded as the closest and most intimate disciple of Jesus from the time of his birth to his death on a cross and beyond.

She was probably the oral source on which was based much of the four written gospels - especially the infancy narratives in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. Tradition also has it that she played a prominent role in the earliest post-resurrection community.

However as much as we are prone to heap praises on her for her special status in the story of salvation, we must not overlook what Mary points us to. She wasn't just simply the biological vehicle by which the saviour came into the world, she **is the model of true discipleship** for all of us.

In today's gospel reading, after the shepherds shared their story of the angels' announcement, Luke says that Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Now the word, 'ponder' certainly doesn't indicate that this was merely a glancing thought! Rather it means to consider something deeply and thoroughly. We might even use the words; meditate or contemplate.

The nativity stories surrounding the birth of Christ portray a lot of activity - among them: Joseph and pregnant Mary's arduous journey to Bethlehem; the frustration of not finding a proper place to stay; the birth of a child; then the unexpected visitation of shepherds and astrologers from the East; the threats of King Herod and the Holy Family's escape to Egypt.

This was a lot to process for Mary.

Perhaps it may remind us of some of the Christmas holiday seasons we have known - what with shopping, decorating, company coming, meals to prepare, perhaps travelling, and ... oh yes... church too!

Maybe we need some 'down time' and quiet to do a little pondering ourselves.

Sadly, a hectic Christmas season reflects something of how we live the rest of the year as well. We forget that the art of living well involves a proper balance of activity **and** contemplation.

Perhaps this is the message that Mary brings to us as we begin a New Year. Taking time to reflect on the significance of each day's encounters and experiences should provide the essence of our daily prayer.

Identifying the opportunities we are given to create and identify 'holy moments' [as the book by Matthew Kelly suggests] becomes the way to a very down-to-earth and practical spiritual life.

As one writer put it: **God comes to us disguised as our life.** Maybe this is another way we can comprehend and experience the mystery of the Incarnation.

If only we can awaken to it as Mary did!