Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

— Luke 2:19
Blessings
Today’s readings include another account of the story of Jesus’ birth. The reading from the book of Numbers reminds us that we are blessed. We are looked upon with kindness and grace. The psalm and Galatians remind us of the blessings given through God’s Son. Luke tells of our ultimate blessing, that Mary, a human being like us, gave birth to a child who is God’s Son. Mary, a young mother, watches all that is happening around the birth of her son. She listens as the shepherds bring messages from angels, a message she also received from an angel, about her son. Yet Mary remains silent. She keeps all this news about her son to herself. She reflects on all these experiences. The only thing she shares is the name of her son, Jesus, a name given him before he was even conceived. Her silence leaves us wondering if this is how one responds to such a great blessing.
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Saints and Special Observances
Sunday: Mary, the Holy Mother of God; The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord; World Day of Prayer for Peace; New Year’s Day
Monday: Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen
Tuesday: The Most Holy Name of Jesus
Wednesday: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Thursday: St. John Neumann
Friday: St. André Bessette; First Friday
Saturday: St. Raymond of Penyafort; First Saturday; Julian Calendar Christmas

Readings for the Week
Monday: 1 Jn 2:22-28; Ps 98:1-4; Jn 1:19-28
Tuesday: 1 Jn 2:29 — 3:6; Ps 98:1, 3cd-6; Jn 1:29-34
Wednesday: 1 Jn 3:7-10; Ps 98:1, 7-9; Jn 1:35-42
Thursday: 1 Jn 3:11-21; Ps 100:1b-5; Lk 4:14-22a
Friday: 1 Jn 5:5-13; Ps 147:12-15, 19-20; Mk 1:7-11 or Lk 3:23-28
[23, 31-34, 36, 38]
Saturday: 1 Jn 5:14-21; Sal 149:1-6a, 9b; Jn 2:1-11
Sunday: Is 60:1-6; Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

New Year
The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year, but rather that we should have a new soul.
—G. K. Chesterton

Happy New Year!
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Today’s Readings
First Reading — The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace! (Numbers 6:22-27).
Psalm — May God be merciful and bless us (Psalm 67).
Second Reading — God sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but an heir, through God (Galatians 4:4-7).
Gospel — The shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen (Luke 2:16-21).

Catholic Prayer Corner
Prayer at the Manger: With Mary and Joseph
May we follow the faithful, loving witness of Mary and Joseph as we seek to bring Jesus, your Word, into the world.
May we always follow his Gospel, now and forever. Amen.
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Remember, Reflect, Respond

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
This feast has had several names through history. Most recently, it was called the Feast of the Circumcision and then the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. The Church finally settled on a more ancient title, Mary, the Holy Mother of God. It also has a secondary title of the Octave of Christmas, the secular title of New Year’s Day, and an honorary title of World Day of Prayer for Peace. Strangely, the title that is most confusing to non-Catholics is the official one.

When we call Mary the Mother of God, we are not saying that she somehow preceded God or is equal to God. We are simply recognizing that her human son Jesus is also the divine Son of God. We honor Mary because God honored her by choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. In her humble response of "let it be done to me," she agreed to be part of God’s plan for our salvation. And so today’s Gospel records one simple action of Mary: to keep these things in her heart.

Even in this simple sentence we are given a good example of being a disciple. Like Mary, we need to both keep, or remember, what God has done, and to reflect on what we remember. First, how much do we remember about what God has done for us? How well do we know the stories of salvation found in the scriptures? How well do we know God's actions in Church history? And how much do we remember of the personal graces given us by God? Do we recall the prayers God has answered, the guidance given, the love of God that others have shown us, the times God has forgiven us?

Second, how much do we reflect on what God has done? Even if we have many memories of God's goodness to us, we also need to pray over them and ask ourselves how we have changed because of what God has done. Am I more generous to others? Do I forgive hurts more readily? Do I share my faith with my family or friends? Do I support my parish with my time or offerings? Let us ask God's help to imitate Mary by remembering and reflecting.

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Our Fascinating Faith

Resolve to Spread God’s Mercy and Peace
Imagine: two New Year’s celebrations in little over a month! In late November, Advent began the new liturgical year, and today the secular New Year 2023 begins. In today’s Gospel, everyone who heard it was amazed by the story the shepherds told of the angels’ message regarding the child. Mary herself continued to reflect on all these things in her heart. With religious persecutions raging, international and domestic conflicts seething, our family and friends suffering various difficulties, and COVID not yet entirely in the rearview mirror, not to mention our own personal problems, how much our world needs Jesus as another New Year veiled in mystery begins! As we pray for God’s mercy to enfold our world and embrace each of us in 2023, let our New Year’s resolution be to live for others, as Mary did, a channel of God’s mercy and an instrument of Christ’s peace.

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Treasures From Our Tradition
On this feast, we can see how devotion to Mary has been a beacon of hope to the sick throughout history. In the new cathedral of Los Angeles, the faithful enter through a single door topped by a striking sculpture of Mary with arms stretched down in compassion. Sculpted into the massive bronze doors are the titles of Mary most treasured by various cultures. Many of them speak of how the sick are consoled by a sense of Mary’s presence.

Dorothy Day once recalled St. Bonaventure’s remark that after the Lord’s long forty days of fasting in the desert, when he was diminished and weak from his struggle, the angels who ministered to him went first to the Blessed Mother’s house. There they saw the soup that was on her stove, and took some to the Lord so that he would delight in it even more since his mother had prepared it. “Of course,” said Dorothy Day matter-of-factly.

In praying the rosary and savoring the stories of Mary’s steadfast love in the face of all suffering, the sick are strengthened by one of our tradition’s most shining treasures, and the whole Church is enriched.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.