

MARY MOTHER OF GOD (NEW YEAR'S DAY)

The saying goes that 'it takes all kinds of people to make a world'. Certainly and fortunately we're not all the same. There are big picture people and those with attention to detail. There are passive people and there are active ones. There are those strong on theory and those that make things happen. There are those who talk a lot and those that do a lot. There are those who think a great deal and those that are easily distracted and cannot keep still.

Over the last eight days of Christmas, in between rushing here and there, shopping, cooking dinner, washing up, making phone calls, sending emails and cards, wrapping, giving and opening presents, you and I have been thinking a great deal. We've focussed on the different persons in the Christmas story, but most of all on the Christ-child, the very centre of every Christmas crib. We have recognised and adored him for who he is – our brother and friend, the Son of God, the King of the Universe, and Emmanuel (God with us). But most of all we have recognised and accepted him as our personal Saviour and Saviour of the world.

Like the shepherds in the story we too have had Christmas religious experiences, ones that have led us to believe in our hearts and live in our lives 'what the shepherds had to say'. In the very ordinariness and humanness of that stable of Bethlehem, then, we have gained glimpses of God. Yet again we who 'walked in darkness have seen a great light', the light shining on and from the Baby of Bethlehem, the source and inspiration of our hope, joy, love and life.

But the centre of our attention on this octave day of Christmas is Mary, the baby's mother. She is the still point around whom we and others are gathering. She does not say a word, but she treasures and ponders everything that is happening. The Greek word that Luke uses for 'ponder' is *symballo*. It means to 'throw together'. With Joseph at her side and the baby gurgling away in the manger, there is just so much for this contemplative woman to throw together in her grateful heart. Her saying 'yes' to God; becoming pregnant by the power of God; finding no room at the inn; feeling all along Joseph's strong protective arms around her; giving birth in an animal shelter; being visited by heavenly hosts and hillside shepherds; wondering about the days and years to come, etc., etc., etc.!

Birth for every mother is not just a joyful experience, but an act of painful separation, when for the first of many times, she must let go of her child. So *having* the baby means also *letting go* of the baby. For bit by bit every new-born babe must take their own place and make their own way in the world. For Mary, being the mother of Jesus is therefore not a reason for being possessive, but as with every other sensible mother, the first of many times when she must let him go to live his own life in the best ways he knows. This is surely something else that Mary is pondering, as she reflects on what her nurturing role as his mother will involve, in both the present and the future.

Mary knows and accepts that her son is indeed hers but not completely. While he does belong to her, he belongs also to others, to many others in fact as the Saviour of the human race. So while Mary is committed to nurturing Jesus in his growing, she knows that the day will surely come for him to leave house and home and start his public mission from God. As the Mother of

Jesus, then, Mary comes to realize that she has to do what God the Father himself did – let go of the beloved Son. She makes up her mind to do this, and to do it not grudgingly, but freely, gladly, and generously.

It's the same Mary, that thinking, contemplating, pondering and treasuring Mother, who is asking you and me to do what she has done already. To gladly and generously share Jesus with everyone else! That he might become for them what he is for us already – our way, our truth, and our life!

Let's make that our number one New Year resolution today as we receive Jesus, the Son of Mary, in our Holy Communion together!

bgleesoncp@gmail.com