

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God – January 1, 2019 – Reflection

It would be understandable if people were to cry out right in the middle of Mass today, "Enough already! Enough with the feasts and the holydays; enough with the Masses and the ceremonies; enough with the lights and the decorations; enough with the choirs and the carols; enough with the sermons and the collections. I've had it up to here!"

I said it would be understandable if someone were to shout that out loud, right in the middle of today's Mass ... but, please don't. Look at it this way: this is the first feast we've celebrated all year! And what a feast it is ... three all rolled into one! First, we welcome in this New Year of Our Lord 2019 with prayer that it might be a blessed year, a year of favor from our God. Second, people all over the world, even people who are not Christian or people of any faith, lift up a prayer on this day that the New Year might truly be a remarkable year, a year when we hear less of wars breaking out and more of peace on the earth! Third, we Catholics begin the New Year by honoring Mary, the Mother of Jesus the Savior, Mother of God the Son.

It is said that Luke the evangelist might have known Mary; that she might even have lived with him for a time near the end of her life; that she would have been the source behind many of the stories of Jesus' infancy and childhood that are found only in the gospel he wrote. Today's little passage from the night of the Savior's birth in Bethlehem with angel announcements and marveling shepherds seems to touch

Mary deeply, "And Mary kept all these things, treasuring them in her heart."

Mothers are not all cast from the same mold. Not all our mothers are nurturing, sweet, and loving. But, many, many are and they would be the very people in the family to keep the family archives, to hold on to the pictures and the keepsakes, to treasure the lives of the family members, especially those of her children. Quite a few years ago now ... I think it might have been around the time she retired, my Mom was looking for something to keep herself occupied and she decided to go through all the hundreds of photos she had of our family and put them in some kinda order. She made a "This Is Your Life" album for each of her four children and surprised us with our own story in pictures. What a beautiful gift ... what a labor of love ... what a treasure to keep ... what a lasting testimony to the power of a Mother's love.

Today, we honor Mary, Jesus' Mother. We rejoice in the stories she treasured in her heart and then shared with the Church. Why? It's because, not only is Mary the Mother of Jesus, but she's the Mother of all His sisters and brothers born from her immaculate womb in the waters of Baptism. And, as she did for her Divine Son, so she does for each of us: she treasures our stories; she watches over us; she intercedes for us; she marks the great moments in each of our lives; she worries over us when we lose our way; and most of all, she prays for us and gathers all those prayers for each one of us into a book of our lives which she lovingly presents to her beloved Son.

Today's feast is about her prayer that remembers me and treasures me: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."