

Dear Friends,

Few babies come into this world without a certain amount of pain, drama and excitement. When all is known to be well, a certain calm comes and the child's parents are caught up in silence and wonder. This is the time to gaze on this unique miracle of love; the time to look at each tiny finger and toe and to wonder at the extraordinary and inexplicable gift that has been bestowed on them. This is a time of treasuring and pondering the beauty of this new life. Yet, even at this moment, there is a dream in the heart of every parent for their child's future.

Mary had a dream, too, and in some ways her heart held more than a dream for her child. Her heart carried God's dream for the world within it: God's dream to bring peace, to bring love, to bring hope was the promise Mary had carried in her womb and now carried in her arms and in her heart.

In Luke 2:16-21 we are privileged to be given a glimpse into a moment where Mary herself takes in the wonder of Jesus' birth and ponders the unique experience of being mother to the Son of God. While Mary's response to the miracle of Jesus' birth is one of pondering in silence, it differs from that of the shepherds, who are astonished and who return to the flocks, "glorifying and praising God."

We are no less blessed by God our Father, who calls us his adopted children and who loves us with that same love which he has for Jesus, his own Son. Indeed, the Lord loves us so much that he has become human like us. In Jesus, God feels our sorrow, our joy and our fears, and understands our dreams. In Jesus, God says to each one of us, "I am showing you my face." We are made in God's image and likeness. As such each person we encounter is an "image of God." Each person we meet on our journey shows us the face of Christ. Among the many people we encounter on life's journey, there will be people like the shepherds, who are poor in mind, body or resources. There will also be those, like the magi, who are rich in mind and spirit as well as in material resources. We are called to do as Mary did and welcome each one as if they were Christ himself.

Gazing and treasuring is another virtue we can learn from Mary. Mary received Christ graciously into her womb and into her heart; Mary could allow the future to unfold, allow Jesus to grow as he needed, while not standing in the way of God's plans for our world. Her ability to do this came from her silent time with the Lord and from that quiet space within her heart where she pondered and treasured life's gifts.

Similarly, our own joy comes from those same places. Firstly, from gazing at Jesus and spending time with him in silence and prayer, and secondly from our ability to reach out in love to all we meet, regardless of their station in life and simply because we believe that they are, for us, at this moment in time, the face of Christ. This week, may we ponder Christ's love in the silence of our hearts and find the face of Christ in all those we meet.

Wish Ya'll A Happy and Peaceful New Year!

Your friend in Jesus
Msgr. Zach