

Homily. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. 31/12/2022-1/1/2023.

The gospel takes up the Christmas story directly from where it ended last weekend. The shepherds, having listened to the Angel's message of good news to be shared by all, left behind in the darkness of the fields the flocks they had been guarding. They went into Bethlehem as they had been told, finding the holy family and the baby Jesus lying in a manger. Then they did something very important. They told Joseph and Mary what the Angel had revealed to them about their son. They became heralds of God's Good News to the little family living in a stable.

Luke tells us that the shepherds message of the birth of a saviour for God's people who is Christ the Lord was shared with all who came by. This news brought a sense of great amazement to all who heard it. As for Mary, Luke adds that she treasured and pondered the meaning of this message in her heart. Mary certainly had much to ponder that Christmas night and for many days and nights to come. Jesus was a gift, a blessing to her and to Joseph, but also He was a blessing to be shared and given away by them for the sake of others and of the world; much to ponder.

What we learn from this is that even amid the peace and joy of the first Christmas the future was pressing inwards and onwards and that every new beginning always begs of us a new response. This New Year is no different. A flick of the calendar, a change of date, some fireworks and maybe a party remind us that time is passing and that we have another chance to think differently and act accordingly. Time is a gift, but it's not unlimited. With each passing year our lifetime grows shorter, our time to respond and do things differently here steadily, inevitably slipping away.

Left to ourselves we can't prevent wars or famines, let alone natural disasters. This much is obvious. What we can do is approach whatever happens during the coming year with a new outlook, a fresh response, one that's informed by our faith, flowing from our values of honesty, integrity, compassion, kindness and generosity. This will be our reply to God's gift of Christ who makes His Christmas coming in us each day.

You see, no less than He did with Joseph and Mary, Jesus has chosen to make his home in you and me. Mary and Joseph responded totally to their Son in all of His joys and achievements, and in His many trials and challenges. Nurtured and shaped by them He went on through all of it to bring about our salvation; the victory of light over darkness, love over hate and life out of death. This, too, we can do by gratefully receiving God's blessings in Christ, letting them make us into Christ's blessing for all.

As the Church we find ourselves praying this weekend to God through Mary, the Mother of God's Son, God's gift of Peace to the world. Tonight/today we ask our Mother to help us welcome this new year full of things that never were so that we can better be God's blessing of healing, hope, mercy and joy for others in the time that has been granted to us.