

Mary, Mother of God
1/1/2022

The gospel today takes us once again to the stable and the arrival of the shepherds. The gospel then shares a simple but profound statement: *Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*

The Virgin Mary is a model of both activity and contemplation. At the Visitation, she shows us faith in action carrying the word of God to others. Now she models for us reflection and contemplation. She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. What was Mary exactly thinking? We don't know but hopefully we can ask her some day. Obviously, she would have been thinking about Jesus, but perhaps she was also thinking about her role in all this. Her role, among others, was to be the Mother of God and what we celebrate today is the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

For those unfamiliar with that title it may seem shocking, scandalous or even blasphemous. Mother of God? How can God, the origin of all life and the origin of everything, have a mother? This celebration of Mary, Mother of God, obviously doesn't mean that Mary existed before God the way our mothers existed before us. The title, Mother of God is significant for what it tells us about Mary but it's even more significant for what it tells us about Jesus. It's not as if there's a divine Jesus over here and a human Jesus over there. There's one Jesus. If Jesus is truly God, then Mary can be called the Mother of God just as a mother of a doctor can be called a mother of a doctor.

This celebration reminds us that Jesus is truly God and truly human. Truly God in order to save us. Truly human to give us an example. Mary as Mother of God, tells us that Jesus is truly God. Mary as Mother of God, tells us that Jesus is truly human.

Despite being the Prince of Peace, the life of Jesus was marked by violence, it was framed by violence. As a child he and his family had to flee violence and Jesus died a violent death. If Jesus' life is marked by violence, so too is the life of Mary.

It's appropriate that this Celebration of Mary, Mother of God and the beginning of the new year is also the World Day of Peace. For 55 years now, popes have issued a message for this day of peace.

In his address for 2022, Pope Francis speaks of *tools for building a lasting peace* and he mentions three in particular: *dialogue between generations, education and work*. The Holy Father speaks of an architecture of peace to which different social institutions contribute and of an art of peace to which each one of us can contribute.

One way to build this architecture of peace is through dialogue, specifically through dialogue between generations. He says, *Young people need the wisdom and experience of the elderly, while those who are older need the support, affection, creativity and dynamism of the young*.

Another way is through education. Pope Francis teaches that *education provides the grammar for dialogue between generations and can promote the culture of care*.

A third way that the Pope mentions is labor which is the *foundation on which to build justice and solidarity in every communion* and that *it is urgent to promote decent and dignified working conditions oriented to the common good and the safeguarding of creation*.

In conclusion, the Holy Father appeals, *let us walk together with courage and creativity on the path of intergenerational dialogue, education, and work. May more and more men and women strive daily, with quiet humility and courage, to be artisans of peace. And may they be ever inspired and accompanied by the blessings of the God of peace!*

Mary the Mother of God, is also the Mother of the Prince of Peace. Inspired by her example, may we live lives of intentional faith, of action and contemplation reflecting on who Jesus is but also on what our role is in his story that continues every day. Assisted by her prayers, may we become more faithful disciples of her Son who gives peace but not as the world gives. May each of us, each in our own way, become artisans for peace in our hearts, our homes, our communities and our world.