

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Mary-Mother of God Sunday Year A1

Today we celebrate Mary's role as mother of Jesus under the title of 'Mother of God'. This feast invites us to think about how she *processed* all the events of Christ's conception within her by the Holy Spirit and his birth from her in Bethlehem. When I step back and take a look at the whole nativity drama, maybe even only the nativity scene as it unfolded, it seems pretty chaotic and action filled. So, how did she handle all of these events. I suggest today's tells it all "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Luke 2:19)

Moms are really good at holding things together. In how many families, isn't it moms that serve as the anchor, amid all the hustle and chaos of the home? Doesn't everyone say, "Go ask mom"? Or in my case, after asking my brothers a couple of times, "Where are my shoes-Have you seen my shoes?" and I get no response from them, then I go to the top, asking "Where is mom?" or even just call out 'Mom'! Because moms know things. They may or may not say a lot, but they know a lot. My mom always told me, or us "You guys know that I have eyes all over place (this is long before Ring cameras & location trackers were everywhere). We figured it out, that her eyes were other adults around school or our neighbors' moms who didn't hesitate to pick up the phone and call her saying 'Guess what Brian did?' No matter how they know, moms do know what all is going on, even though they may not say a word about it. I find Mary to be this way: she reflects upon all these things happening around her-maybe not saying a lot, but she pieces together her own angel visit with Joseph's dream angel, with Elizabeth's experiences with the shepherds story, with what Simeon & Anna will add, with what the Wise Men bring, with what her own prayer inspirations indicate- maybe without saying very much, she reflects upon and knows....

When I witness the busy-wild scene of the nativity, I think of Mary as the calm point in the storm, yet aren't moms the glue, or foundation in our homes? We say, "They keep the lights on" or we used to say in the old days, "they keep the home fire lit---literally the hearth --that they kept the wood stoves stoked. Maybe I'm thinking this because of the time of year it is, with its emphasis on eating certain seasonal types of food to make the holidays official (I have friends who say it just isn't Christmas, until they have had their fried oysters) --which by the way, make sure you have your cabbage and black-eyed peas today- but thinking of moms, calm things and kitchens, I think of my mom, her sisters and

their mom who has the custom every year of a couple Sundays before Christmas of having a candy baking party day together for all of our families (it was such an economical thing to do and it gave them quality sister time together). They made peanut butter fudge, chocolate fudge, peanut butter balls, peanut brittle and apparently the most difficult (it required special equipment- thermometer down in the pan and lots of stirring) , they made a candy called 'divinity'. It was a fluffy lite (melt in your mouth-like marshmallows) crème type candy. Divinity-some pieces had a whole pecan on top and others not (before I knew about Mounds and Almond Joys-that sometimes you feel like a nut & sometimes you don't). But my point in remembering their *kitchen* quality time together, is that, don't we mentally associate moms with kitchens usually? That they keep the home hearth fires lit, and keep it all together, even if the whole rest of the house is wild with kids all running all around (like the haste we hear about it in the gospel?

In our gospel I pick up, that in an otherwise hectic scene, Mary is the one who is holding it together and keeping a peaceful bearing for everyone else. Because looking closely at the reading, there is a lot of activity going on around her. Think of those 'shepherds moving *in haste*', they come around praising, (which means 'singing' I bet and louder than normal as it said 'all were amazed') It mentions that they returned to the fields, glorifying & praising God (I think it'd be hard to do that quietly- & further, I imagine shepherds that because of their job calling-yelling to sheep constantly, that they don't have an 'inside voice'.)

Yet, despite all the chaotic rushing in and out of Joseph Mary and Jesus' temporary abode in Bethlehem, ***Mary seems to be the still spot, the solid center*** in all of this. And we hear a great line that demonstrates this in Luke 2:19 "*And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*" That has to describe her peaceful, serene disposition through all of this-and that had to be a strength to everyone around her. More than just a quick description of that exact moment in history for Mary, I find that line to reveal so much about Mary's character herself. It tells us about her approach, outlook and demeanor. (I suggest that her reflective character is how the rosary evolves to be her unique prayer form (type of prayer) of the rosary. She is meditative, contemplative and centered purely in God, considering His movements of grace within and around her. Like a rosary being prayed, whose purpose is to let the words of prayer soak into us, fill us with

calm receptivity to God's work. Rosary invites us to deeply consider (reflect upon mysteries) how God's Holy spirit inspires and moves us.

We hear about Mary being this way, in other places too. For example, in Luke 2:51 after the finding of the Jesus in the Temple, we read that "his mother ***kept all these things in her heart***" and way back when the angel Gabriel first came to Mary, we heard in Luke 1:29, that she "***pondered*** what sort of greeting this might be." So I think all of these examples, show us a way to pray and a way to best approach or sense God working around us- even if there is a lot of busy & hectic action going on. Maybe that is why in our calendar, we have this Feats of Mary, in the middle of the Christmas season- after Christmas day but before The 12th day of Epiphany! A lot of celebrating is going on, but Mary teaches us to keep things together amid the chaos, to stay focused even with all of the 'coming and going'. I've always thought the nativity scene over the whole Christmas season gets pretty busy. But Mary, she shows us: Keep calm and pray on. Mary as Mother of God and by our kinship to Christ, our Mother too, she teaches us to take time to slow down and let the Christmas message of God soak in to us. God loves us so much to come be born among us, to live and walk through this world with us, and ultimately to suffer and die a human death like us, to show us the way through. Mary is our model of staying close to Christ, by 'treasuring, reflecting upon and holding these things in our hearts.'