

Mary, Mother of God 2016

What are the things people ponder?

When asking myself that question these things came to mind:

A girl meets a guy, and ponders
“Would he make a good husband?”

When the relationship takes on some complexity, she may ponder, “Where is this all headed?”

A man confronts the diagnosis of cancer, and ponders “What will this all mean for me and my family?”

On New Years Day we may ponder what the year will bring: “Will I get more behind or can this be the year I turn the corner financially?”

We may ponder the larger questions, too: Will we as a society be able to make progress on the social issues confronting us, or will they continue to plague us when the year comes to an end?

Actually, we all do a lot of pondering, I think. For many of us the pondering we do looks a lot like worrying, because the two are not that far apart.

I guess you could say worrying is pondering with a lot of fear thrown in.

When we hear in the Gospel today that Mary pondered in her heart all the things that had had happened, we don't need to jump to the conclusion

that it was based in fear. What she was a part of was an awesome mystery.

When we find ourselves pondering we can feel comfortable thinking that she and we are not so different.

Even with a “yes” to Gabriel's original invitation, there was a lot that Mary had to learn about God's will in the living out of that yes.

So many details! So many decisions to be made, always with the overall mission in mind!

She may not have felt ready when the shepherds came and it became apparent that the word that had come to her, and then to Joseph, was now out, and others were being brought into the know about God's salvation being at hand.

What would that mean? What sort of response would it require?

When Luke tells us that Mary kept all these things in her heart, the word he uses indicates a long process of discernment, trying to put together disparate pieces of a mystery.

While the process did not lead to quick conclusions, it doesn't mean that she gave up on it.

Luke portrays Mary as the one who has more to ponder than anyone else in the story.

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She had to question her experience and her response. She had to make sense of all that she had encountered while balancing it with the traditions of her people.

She must have accepted living with more questions than answers and far more hope than certainties.

In addition to all of that, she still had to change the diapers and fix dinner.

A lot of her pondering seems to have been done in the midst of the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Sort of like how ours is.

The first reading today provides an ancient blessing designed to bestow peace on the one being blessed. The actual word used is “shalom,” which really means more than peace.

It means peace, justice, integrity in relationships. It implies safety and growth in wholeness as if the entire universe was woven together and functioning as God intended.

In her pondering Mary, Mother of the God who came in the flesh of a needy infant, learned to remain open to God’s shalom, to allow her faith to go beyond her uncertainties and her hope to give her resolve beyond her power to imagine.

She sought to do God’s will as she baked the daily bread.

Whatever it is we are pondering today, we can do the same. We can honor it by bringing it into the relationship we have with the God who made us just as He made shalom, and avoid the temptation to act out of fear.

May God’s peace, God’s shalom, reside with us,

today and this year,

with each of us individually,

and in all the relationships we attempt to cultivate.

May it come to its fruition in the world we have been destined to share. The world God has seen fit to come into so that it might be led to the glory of the world to come.