



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



### Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God January 1, 2006

The gospel we have just heard tells us that the shepherds made known all that had been told them about the child, that all who heard it were amazed, but that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” “Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” Here, in this silent, simple, fathomless inner action, Our Blessed Mother teaches us everything about how to understand and how to live the mystery of Christmas.

“Mary kept all these things . . . “: *all these things*: the visit to her by the angel, her conception of the Child, her visitation to Elizabeth, her carrying the Child, her giving birth to the Child, the visit of the shepherds -- and all these things as illumined by the words of God spoken by the angel to herself, spoken by the angel to Joseph, spoken by the angel to the shepherds. She *kept* all these things: How? By faith. “Blessed is she who believed . . . !” Elizabeth cried out to her. The only way we can keep these things, not let them fade from our memory, our being, is by faith, and that faith we can receive only as a gift of God. Let us, then, pray for an increase of our faith, pray for an increase in our share in the limitless faith of Our Blessed Mother, and do so with the certainty that the Lord is eager to give us that increase, and wishes only that we should ask him to do so.

“Mary . . . *pondered* all these things . . . “: The Greek word, and the Latin word used to translate it, actually have the sense of ‘bringing together into unity’. How did she bring all these things together into unity? Here our human language fails, falls infinitely short. We can gesture in the direction of the unity she saw by saying this: she understood that the child who had been announced to her, whom she had conceived, whom she had carried, at whose presence John in his mother’s womb leapt for joy, the child to whom she had given birth, of whom the shepherds spoke so wondrously, who now lay in her arms . . . she understood that her Child was not only uniquely chosen by God, was not only uniquely filled with God, but . . . she understood that her Child who lay in her arms *was God*. It was this that she understood, that she saw, that she contemplated. Let us, then, pray secondly that we be given some share in this contemplation of Our Blessed Mother, and so in the understanding, as much as may be given us here, of the mystery of Christmas.

Finally, Mary pondered these things, she contemplated this one thing, *in her heart*. The heart is the deepest core of our being, the seat of our deepest understanding and our most all-consuming love, the deep place from which knowing and loving originally spring, and spring as *one thing*. So, in contemplating the mystery of Christmas, of the Incarnation, in her heart, Mary contemplated not only with understanding, but also with love, and first with love



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before understanding, because the deepest things, and all the things of God, are understood only by love. Let us pray, then, that following her example we may ever contemplate the mystery of Christmas in our heart, and so understand with love. But there is more: as the deep place where understanding and love are one thing, the heart is also the deep source of all our choices, all our decisions, and so of all our actions. So it is that what we contemplate in our heart is through our heart brought to birth in our actions. Our Blessed Mother contemplated Our Lord so perfectly and deeply in her heart that she not only conceived him there and gave birth to him in her thoughts, her words, her deeds, but also conceived him in her womb and gave birth to him in the flesh he had taken from her. This for all eternity is her unique privilege, her unique prerogative, her unique blessedness -- she alone, and for ever, is the Mother of God. But let us, finally, pray that we may be given some share in her virginal fecundity, that we may contemplate the mystery of Christmas so deeply in our heart that we, on this day and all the days of this New Year, and of all the years to come, may bring forth, give birth to, the Lord in our thoughts, our words, our deeds, so build up his Mystical Body in this world, so bring him to other men and women of our time who need him, long for him, search for him.

“To keep all these things and ponder them in our heart.” This is what we learn from Our Blessed Mother on her great feast day, this is what we learn from her as to how, in such way as is possible in this life, as to how we can lovingly understand the newborn Christ, and give birth to him in our world, on this first day of the New Year, on this first day of our new life as ones newly born in Christ.

“Hail, Holy Mother, the Child-bearer who has brought forth the King, the ruler of heaven and earth forever.”

By your intercession, may the Lord, according to the measure of his grace, make us to be and to live more like you.

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