

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God: Amazed and Reflective

Today's celebration gives us an opportunity to reflect further on the Christmas Miracle. The Gospel presents amazed people and shepherds and a reflective Mary.

The people are amazed because the shepherds told them about the message they heard from the angels. Everything took place as it was. They would find an infant in a manger who would be the Savior of Israel. If you look at the eyes of the statue of the shepherd here, you'll see the amazement look. We are very much like the shepherds. We are common, everyday working people who have been called by angels to witness the miracle of God's salvation in the form of Jesus Christ. You may say that you don't remember an angel coming to visit you or a heavenly host singing "Glory to God in the highest," but at Christmas we are called by God to the manger. This is a grace. We have been called by God to witness His Presence on earth.

And we are amazed. When life's troubles weigh on us, we still experience the reality of His Presence. We know that no matter what the future holds, positive or negative, we will not face it alone. The very names we read in scripture confirm this. He is called Emmanuel, God is with us. His name is Jesus, the name that means Yahweh saves us. The Almighty Creator of the Universe cares so much for each one of us that He guides us to a life full of meaning, to a life united to His own life, to salvation. We are amazed.

In today's Gospel Mary reflects in her heart the events of Jesus' birth. She knows better than anyone that this child is both her's and God's. She hears from the shepherds their account of the angels directing them, singing to them, and she knows that the world has been changed due to the Presence on earth of the child that was within her. Perhaps the title of co-redemptor is a bit overstated, there is just one redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ, but certainly Mary has a unique role to play in mankind's salvation. She gives birth to the Savior. She stands beneath the Cross. She becomes the mother of mankind. Her role in the work of the Lord does not end with His birth, it just begins and continues even now as we call upon her as the Mother of God and our mother.

Recently someone asked me about the title Mother of God. Is that title turning Mary into some sort of female deity? No. What the title is doing is acknowledging that there is only one Second Person of the Trinity, although after the conception within Mary this person has two natures, both divine and human. We can understand the distinction with the words *what* and *who*. *What* am I? I am a man. *Who* am I? I am Joseph Anthony Pellegrino, Msgr. Joe. The two natures of Jesus, human and divine, refer to what He is, He is both God and man. The one person of Jesus refers to who He is, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Mary is the mother of the human nature, not the divine nature of God, therefore, she is not a deity. But there is only one *who*, one person of Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Mary is mother of Jesus, therefore she is Mother of God. Perhaps an analogy of this mystery would

be to recognize that all mothers are mothers of the human being who is their child, the *what*, but with baptism their child received God's life and becomes both human and spiritual. *Who* is your child? He is yours, and he is God's. All the baptized are sons and daughters of God. Mothers, and fathers for that matter, are parents of the total children, including their spiritual existence. They are mothers and fathers not just of a human child, the *what*, but they are parents of people, the *who*. Your daughter, Sarah, your son, John, is a child of God. You are mothers and fathers of sons and daughters of God.

Over and over again we pray in the Hail Mary, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." When we do this we are asking her to use her unique relationship to God to call upon Him to care for us. That is why the Rosary is such a powerful prayer. In the rosary we are recognizing Mary's role in our salvation as the Mother of God and our mother. Today, on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, I commend the Rosary to you. Sometimes people will say to me, "I try to say the rosary, but I get distracted easily." To these people I say two things: 1-Me too. And 2-Say it anyway. Just pray the rosary and let Mary take your cares to her Son.

Mary has a unique relationship with the Divine. She is the Mother of Jesus. She is the Mother of God.