

## SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

*"Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God." Lk 2:16-21*

Fr. David Rosenberg

*"Ora et Labora"*

In our Gospel today we are told of the shepherd's extraordinary encounter with Christ. After hearing from an angel of the birth of Jesus, they visited Mary, Joseph and the baby. They were amazed, and spread the Good News. I suppose you could say these shepherds were the first evangelists. Just as we are called to do today in our time, they glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen. Their lives were forever changed, and their hearts were on fire with the love of the Lord!

Mary, we are told, *"kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."* Another word for reflecting that is seen in various other translations is pondering. To ponder can have a couple meanings: one, is more or less a philosophical pondering. In other words, to think through a problem, to solve it. This is a mental exercise. But this is not the pondering Mary did. Mary spiritually pondered, a method we now use in Lectio Divina, when we meditate after reading Divine Scripture. This meditation can lift our spirits over time to contemplation, the centering of our soul within the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When we consider the holiness of Mary, that is certainly what she did. She kept all these things, and reflected on them, and rested within the mercy of her newborn son.

Mary is, of course, the Mother of the Church. Through her "ponderings," she intercedes, and the Lord blesses us and holds us in the palm of his hand. Let us unite our prayer for peace in the world, connecting it with Mary's Motherhood, particularly this day. As Saint John Paul wrote:

"Mother, you who know what it means to clasp in your arms the body of your Son, of him to whom you gave birth, spare all mothers on the earth the death of their sons, the torments, the slavery, the destruction of war, the persecutions, the concentration camps, the prisons! Keep for them the joy of birth, of sustenance, of the development of humankind and of life. In the name of this life, in the name of the birth of the Lord, implore with us peace and justice in the world! Mother of Peace, in all the beauty and majesty of your Motherhood, which the Church exalts and the world admires, we pray to you: Be with us at every moment! Let this New Year be a year of peace, in virtue of the birth and the death of your Son!"

I close with St Patrick's Irish Blessing:

May the road rise to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
May the rains fall soft upon your fields,  
And, until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.