

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Mary as Our Model The Octave of Christmas Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of God/ABC Friday, January 1, 2016 9:00 AM Nm 6:22-27; Gal 4:4-7;
Lk 2:16-21 (Life is going toward redemption and completion in God. We are called to aid
this process, as Mary was and as Mary did.)

“And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”

Indeed, the liturgy presents Mary as the model for all of us, the model of discipleship. Now you may think to yourself: Well, how is Mary a model for me? After all, there are unusual aspects to her life; she was unusual. **She was unique, so how is she a model?** A good question, but **think of all the ways in which Mary is like you and me.** That’s this phrase Luke uses: “She kept this in her heart,” was a way of saying **she really didn’t understand. She had to keep wondering about and pondering what this is all about.** She has been called by God into service, a very unusual service, bearing a child; but what’s it all about? She didn’t know. The angel said: “And he shall save his people,” but she didn’t know what that meant or what that would entail.

And we don’t know what our lives entail either. We are also called to serve God, to aid him in the salvation of the world, but we don’t know exactly how we are supposed to do this or how we are going to fit in or what’s going to happen. In this we are just like her.

Secondly, in spite of all of the unusual characteristics of her life, **she was in no way shielded from misfortune.** Now usually around this time people say something to me like, well, I’m sure glad that this year is over; I’m sure next year will be better. Well, are we really sure? Will 2016 really be better than 2015? Is any year ever any better? Do things ever get better? No, there are blessings all the time and there are trials all the time. We can be sure of both. **2016 will bring many blessings, and 2016 will bring many trials, and sometimes they are the same thing.** It’s the way we look at them. It’s the way we deal with them. **It’s the way we allow God**

to touch us or not.

Mary learned that. And **Mary could not be shielded from suffering because she was full of love, and love always entails suffering**, because since trials occur and because bad things do happen even to good people and we love them, we will suffer when they suffer. So love actually multiplies suffering; it doesn't reduce it. Maybe that's why some people are so unloving, because they don't want to suffer. **But Mary was loving, and she suffered through her Son's entire life.** She rejoiced when he was being praised, but she suffered when he was being opposed and betrayed and tortured and killed.

If we are loving, we will also suffer; but we have to keep in mind: **"God is love"** And so **when we are loving we are united to God even in suffering**; and that is the meaning of the cross. It leads somewhere. **Life is going somewhere. It is going toward redemption and completion in God. We are called to aid this process**, as Mary was and as Mary did. So in this way Mary is a real fine example for us of what it means to follow Jesus.