

01 January 2021

Writings: Mothers

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19)

I think it takes a special kind of faith to be a mother. A woman comes home from the doctor who confirms she is pregnant. Over the next nine months, she can eat the right food, get the proper exercise, drink no alcohol and follow her doctor's instructions. Yet, in the back of her mind lingers the possibility that something could go terribly wrong and she loses her baby. But, that doesn't happen. The bundle of joy arrives safely. A year later, she runs downstairs to put something in the dryer while her baby crawls along the kitchen floor. Suddenly, she can't recall if she locked the gate at the top of the stairs properly. She drops everything and runs up the stairs to find the gate locked and the baby intently studying a piece of fluff on the floor. Several years go by and her child has started school. She reminds the child every day to look both ways before crossing the street and never run out into traffic. As she is waiting for the child to return home from school, she hears a car slam on its brakes. A terrible thought crosses her mind. A moment later her child walks into the house with a story about how a dog almost got hit by a car. Many years later, her child now has a driver's licence. The child is going to a party where there will be drinking. For the hundredth time, she warns against drinking and driving. She doesn't fall asleep that night until she hears the click of the back door closing. Mothers seem to have the kind of faith which helps them understand and respond to what is going on around them but accept what they cannot control and place it in God's hands.

In today's Gospel, Mary treasures what the shepherds tell her and ponders it in her heart. This passage, part of the readings for the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, gives us some insight into how Christ's mother carried out her role in God's plan. Since in the First Century AD many Jewish women were betrothed between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, it is likely Mary was a teenager when Jesus was born. In Bethlehem, she was far way from her female relatives who could have supported her during childbirth. From Gabriel, she learned her child would be called "Son of the Most High". Elizabeth told called her "mother of my Lord". Now the shepherds have revealed her son is "a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord". It would be natural from someone so young and in unfamiliar surrounding to feel overwhelmed. Yet, she understood as a mother her child's needs for food, warmth and security came first. These were the things happening around her to which she could respond. Yet, she was also likely conscious of how little she understood of how God's plan involving her son, about whom so many amazing things had been revealed, would unfold. She had to accept this part of her situation and place it in God's hands.

During this pandemic, we need to develop more of this kind of faith. On the one hand, medical science and public guidelines have given us a better understanding of the events taking place around us. We know what we need to do to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. The spread of Covid 19 will not stop unless we do the appropriate actions: wash your hands often; wear a mask; maintain social distancing; avoid crowds. Faith means we do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. On the other hand, we must also accept the things we can't know or control at present. How many Covid 19 cases and deaths will there be over the next few months? Will our health care system be overwhelmed by the demands of caring for Covid patients? How fast and effective will the vaccination efforts be? Many people find it hard to live with such uncertainties. This is where Mary can teach us a lesson. We need to do all we can to look after the immediate needs of ourselves and our loved ones and then accept what we cannot control and place it into God's hands.

Mothers teach us a lot of things as we grow up. Right know their faith may be the most important of those things.

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