

Epiphany 2010

I don't know about you, but to me it seems as though we have been in church almost every day for the past two weeks. When we put together the celebration of Christmas last week on Thursday, Christmas Eve, and Friday, Christmas Day, followed by the weekend Masses celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family, and then the repetition of this same schedule for this week for the celebration of the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, on Thursday and Friday, followed by the weekend Masses celebrating the Epiphany, we realize that there have been four successive days of celebration, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, for each of these two weeks, and that during these days we have made our way through four different feasts: Christmas, the Holy Family, Mary the Mother of God, and now Epiphany. Next week we will celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, and with that the Christmas season will be over and we will return on the following Sunday to the Ordinary Time of the Church's liturgical calendar.

With the exception of this last feast, the Baptism of the Lord as an adult, all the other feasts have dealt with the infancy of the Lord, and by celebrating them we can say that we have assisted at Jesus' birth, reflected on his family and the circumstances of his birth, on

the importance of his mother for him and for us, and on his being revealed to the non-Jewish world, for that is the meaning of today's feast, the Epiphany, which means the revelation of Jesus to these three wise men from the East who represent the entire world.

Each of us can select a favorite theme from all these feasts and reflect on it. The variety of these selected themes will be great, I am sure. Let me mention two. The first is the emphasis in these readings on Mary's reflectiveness. It came up in the Gospels we read on Christmas Day and again on January first, the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. Both Gospels are from Luke 2, 15-21, where we read: "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

Our lives are often very busy ones. We have all heard retired people say that they don't know how they ever found time to work because now, as retirees, they seem to have so much to do. If we are truthful, I believe we all have to admit that we like things this way. We like to be busy. We like to have something to do. We plan our days and filled them with activities. And if we find ourselves with time on our hands, we ask ourselves what is wrong and what have we forgotten to do. Maybe only at night when we are tired does it seem right to us that we should have nothing to do.

Then we don't feel guilty having some "down time," some free time, some time to relax. And some of us have another problem. We not only have to have something to do, but we have to feel rushed or we think there is something wrong. We are always beating the clock, our own internal clock. We rush through what we are doing and thereby often do it poorly. We don't give what we are doing its proper attention, its proper worth. Therefore, at least for some of us it would be good to take Mary as our model, for we are told that she was a woman who took time to reflect on what she has experienced.

And the second theme which I would select is the object of Mary's reflections. Ultimately, all her reflections center on one reality, that of her son Jesus. There are many religions in our world, and many of them teach that the divine reality is so mysterious that there is no way our poor human minds can get hold of it, and that we can only walk around it and approach it from many different angles. Therefore there have to be many names to describe the divine reality. As Christians we can accept that kind of thinking. But, on the other hand, we also believe that this divine reality has translated itself into a human reality, a human life, a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. God has given us a translation of His own reality so that we can understand Him more easily. We could

therefore say that our faith is Religion for Dummies. We look at Jesus and see the divine in a human translation.

So let us mediate, as Mary did, and let us mediate on Jesus and what he means for us and our lives. The more we study him, the more we learn about him in and through the Scriptures, the more we then try to live as he teaches us to live, the better off we are going to be. We might even find then that four successive days in church is not a burden but a break, a time to reflect on Jesus and our lives lived in imitation of him, in his spirit which is in us and operating in us if we will just let it do so.