

JANUARY 1, 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

May God be gracious to us and bless us. Today, we celebrate the great Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, on this, the eighth day of Christmas. And we also celebrate the first day of the secular calendar. So many things to reflect upon.

In the first reading, we heard from the Book of Numbers, and we hear how the Lord speaks to Moses, and He speaks to—He says "speak to Aaron and his sons, and ask for the blessing. "You shall say to them, the Lord will bless you and keep you. "The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you "and lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

So what was spoken hundreds of years before is now fulfilled in a celebration of Christmas. What is the greatest blessing that the Father can give us? His son, Jesus Christ. There is no greater gift that the Father can give us than His own heart. The second person of the Trinity, he took on flesh, as we heard in the Collect, so beautifully, that God deemed us worthy to receive His son. And through Mary, he enters into the world.

I saw something so beautiful this morning as I was reading and reflecting upon the scriptures. And then afterwards, I saw this picture and it said that the land in which Jesus walked was incredibly holy, and how holy also is the womb that bore him. And that is Mary's womb.

Well, we also know that Mary's holiness comes not just from the fact that she is the mother of God, which is a singular grace. She was immaculately conceived and everything, which is outstanding when we reflect upon it. But it's that she is Christ's greatest disciple. So she is the first to receive this great gift. Out of faith, she receives him in her heart and then in her womb.

So, for us, again, during the season of Christmastide, and then also for the first day of the New Year. Perhaps we have a lot of different anxieties because we are not sure what's going to happen this year. God knows, we have an idea of what things will take place. But we don't have that certainty about the political events, the different events we hear of, wars and rumors of wars... So many challenges that are facing us.

So there's different ways that we can approach our life in 2025, in particular. We can approach it through focusing all of our time on social media, by being overwhelmed by the news that is around us, and we can be so consumed by that, and we can lose our peace. The peace that Jesus is offering us this day, that we'll reflect upon in a particular way during the season of Christmas.

Or we can follow the path of Mary. And that means that I spend my time contemplating and pondering, as we heard in the gospel, the great gift that has been given to us. So, see, Mary, she hears all of the things that the shepherds have said. So, we know that the shepherds were there when the angels were present to them, and they were filled with joy, and they were singing The Gloria.

So we hear that Mary says that she treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. So, what does it mean to treasure the words and to ponder them in her heart? Well, we know that Mary had already given herself completely to God. So, by doing that, it means that now within herself, her mind, everything is oriented towards the will of the Father, while contemplating and holding God the Son in her arms.

So, when she is listening, so she is listening to what is being said, and that is, for us, part of the word of God in the canonical scriptures. And then she is quietly, without anxiety, reflecting upon what God has said. And what he is continuing to do in her life.

So that means for someone to be in a position where we are thinking and prayerfully reflecting, it means that we don't necessarily understand everything all at once, but we know and we trust someone who does, God Himself. And this practice, this practice which I would recommend, and which the great spiritual masters recommend, including Saint Benedict, right, within the Benedictine spirituality is the practice of Lectio Divina.

This is a wonderful spiritual practice that we can incorporate each day in our lives. And I can assure you, myself as a priest, and for all of us, even as a layman prior to ordination, spending a few minutes every day with the word of God in prayer. Especially if we can do it in the morning, is the best time. Why? Because we are putting on the lens of God. We are putting on the Lord in our hearts, so we are able to, kind of, look at all the events of life in their totality.

So, we can see the challenges. We can see the bad things, but we can also see the good things, and we see them with the eyes of hope. Because, again, we are celebrating Christmas, and we know, right, we have reason, every reason to believe that things will go according to God's plan, and that God will never abandon us.

See, Mary was certain of that, and therefore, she was able to contemplate and to entrust herself completely to the Father, as she always had. And we can do that. A lot of holy saints, they've done this. They've given themselves completely to Jesus and they've done so through consecrating themselves to Christ, through Mary.

It is a very simple, very beautiful practice. It takes place over the course of several days, where we will reflect on scripture readings from the Old Testament, the New Testament. From parts from the saints. Father Boniface Hicks, he wrote a beautiful reflection in the womb, with Jesus, right. So, we are next to Jesus as he is in Mary's womb, and it's there, in

that fragility, in that humility, and that openness to God that we are able to— to abandon ourselves completely to the Lord so that we can experience, again, a sense of peace, as well.

And there was one other thing that I saw that I thought was very helpful. Again, we're looking forward into 2025. Someone had written, they said that worry, so, "worry means that I am afraid that God may get it wrong," that He may not get it right. and when I read that, about four or five times, again, it really struck me, because it's a good reminder to myself and I'm sure for all of us, as well, to learn to not worry, or to turn that worry into prayer, and to trust God.

And who better than Mary to help us along the way? So when we feel that way, because we all have those experiences, especially in the midst of uncertainty. Just like the Virgin Mary. We turn to the Lord, and we say, "I believe, I trust in Thee. "And I surrender my life to Thee." "So I will stay within You "and I know that You will provide everything I need "at the moment as it arrives."

If we keep this attitude in our hearts, I believe firmly that we will have a blessed year. After all, the greatest blessing we can have again is Jesus Christ, and he's been given to us by the Father through the hands of the Virgin Mary.