

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? ... Well toss them out, I'm going to give you a better one in a few minutes.

The Church starts our calendar year with this celebration of Mary, the woman who brought the best Christmas gift ever given, Christ himself, into the world. She had a critical role in the formation of Jesus's values and how to live them out. The Church is saying: Mary is our mentor, our model, the example for how we should live the rest of this year.

We take our cue from the Gospel. Mary takes in the excitement of the shepherds, who announce the angels' message to them: that God loves each one of us more that we can imagine – even low-life shepherds – because her newborn is the Savior, the *Messiah* and Lord, who will bring us peace; that Jesus will redeem us from our sins and make us children of God. That's the Christmas message. And Mary reflects on these things in her heart.

That's Mary's example for us. She never lets the hustle and bustle of her life, or the humdrum of the daily grind, drown out the Christmas message. She didn't know how her future would play out; she didn't know God's plan ahead of time; but she keeps reflecting on God's messages as he continued to speak to her through the events of her life. She walked in faith, one step at a time, trusting in God, pondering in her heart all of God's gifts to her, and God's words and deeds revealed in scripture.

Like Mary, we don't know how the year ahead will play out for us: for our families, our health, our jobs, our savings. Like Mary, we have to unclutter our minds and hearts from the images and sounds that bombard us everyday – on our TVs, cell phones, emails and the Internet – and from our self-absorption in our worries and regrets.

Mary shows us to reflect on the messages God is sending to us through the events of our lives. Unbelievers think things happen randomly, but Christians know God has a plan behind everything.

We do not know the future, but we know that we face the future as redeemed, adopted children of God. That can keep us happy in 2020 and beyond. Whatever happens this year, we know we've got God's blessing. Christ is born to give us hope.

As we begin this new year, Mary's example and experience in today's Gospel and throughout her whole life inspires us to start reflecting on the messages God is sending to us through the events of our lives and in scripture.

We ask God's blessing on us this day and all the days of this coming year. Let's resolve to follow Mary's example of reflection: to seek understanding and guidance from God's messages given to us through the events in our lives.

See the Christmas message that underlies them: that a Savior is born for us, who redeems us and makes us children of God, with a purpose, a plan, and a wonderful destiny ahead. Bring that Good News to others, like the shepherds did.

January 1, 2020 - The Solemnity of Mary - Fr. John Ozella