

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

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a newspaper reporter by the name of Fulton Oursler. Oursler had covered Methodist meetings, Baptist conventions, and outdoor revivals. He had even waited for ghosts in darkroom-séances.

He says, **“Out of all this, I emerged at the age of 30 a self-styled agnostic, believing in nothing.”**

Instead of finding peace, his unbelief left him totally empty inside. It also left him unhappy. Eventually, the emptiness and unhappiness turned into gnawing depression.

Then, one day, serious trouble threatened his family. He needed help. But the kind of help he needed was not the kind of help friends could give. There was no one to whom he could turn, not even God—for he didn't believe in God.

One windy day in New York City, he was walking down Fifth Avenue. He came to St. Patrick's Cathedral. He stopped, looked up at its high spheres, and thought. He was desperate.

Shortly thereafter, he found himself sitting inside. After a few minutes of collecting his thoughts, he bowed his head and asked for ...the gift of faith.

He sat there a while, then got up, and walked to the Chapel of Our Lady in the cathedral. He went inside, knelt down, and prayed this prayer:

“In ten minutes or less, I may change my mind. I may scoff at all this and love ‘error’ again. Pay no attention to me then. For this little time, I am in my right mind and heart. This is my best—take it and forget the rest, and ...if you really are there ...help me.”

At that moment, he said, there began a remarkable transformation in his life. The transformation ended in his becoming a ...deeply, committed Catholic. He would go on to write Boys Town, released as a movie in 1938, starring Spencer Tracey, based on his book about Fr. Flannigan. He also wrote The Greatest Story Ever Told, released as a film in 1965.

Fulton Oursler's search for God ended in the House of God. And his spiritual birth into a new life began in a chapel dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God.

And what an appropriate place for it to happen. Mary is not only the Mother of God. She is the spiritual mother of all humankind as well. For, when Mary gave birth to Jesus, she gave birth, also, to a new humanity. This mystery, Paul expresses in today's 2nd reading:

“When the fullness of time had come, (i.e. ‘the right time’), God sent his own Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (& daughters, i.e. his children).” ^{Mt. 4:4-7}

So, Mary is not only the Mother of God; she is the mother of us all!

Because Mary is our mother, she is a powerful advocate for us in heaven. To ignore Mary's motherly concern for us is to ignore God's gift of Mary's motherhood to us.

And, finally, this brings me to the New Year.

A new year is a time of ...new hope.

A new year is a time of ...new life.

A new year is a time to ...begin again, to begin ...anew!

*A new year is a time to ...perhaps break from things that drag us
down.*

*A New Year's resolution we might make could be to **pray more fervently to our mother, Mary.***

Regardless, last year, 2014, is past and over.

*We should be wise, **learn** from our mistakes, and –**let the rest 'go!'***

*If there are a few dangling, 'loose ends' to deal with from 2014,
they should be dealt with ...with utmost dispatch!*

For this year, 2015, has just been born and lies ahead.

Remember the cliché:

"Life is God's gift to us. What we do with it... is our gift to God."

*As I mentioned recently: when the Christmas celebrating is over,
the work of Christmas and, now ...the work of the New Year...*

both begin!

I sum-up and close, once again, with this simple poem:

(Remember how this goes?)

***"When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When kings and princes are in their palaces,
When the shepherds are back in the field..."***

The works of Christmas, and now, the New Year, begin:

***"To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the political prisoner,
To build the nation,
To bring peace among brothers & sisters,***

And

To make music ...with the heart."

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

