

“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, towards the end of his retreat, a retreat master was handed a note by a girl. He folded it, put it in his pocket, and, later, read it. It said:

“For the past 8 months, I have been in psychotherapy, a fact known to only a few people.

As a child, I experienced overwhelming fear because of hatred and abuse. A major focus of my life right now is to overcome and transform that fear.

The details are unnecessary, but much of my fear is centered on my mother. I had become so ‘turned-off’ to the concept of mothers that I consciously rejected the love ...of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

After your last talk, I walked outside—feeling terribly alone. I prayed for the grace to break through the wall that was keeping me from trusting.... I wanted to cry, but haven’t in months.

You may have noticed a small, round building near the cemetery in the back of the chapel. Out of curiosity, I walked to it and opened the door.

*When I looked inside, I was filled with terror. There stood a life-size statue of Mary. My first impulse was to turn and run away in fear. **BUT**, something drew me, slowly, to the kneeler at her feet. There, I fell to my knees, weeping, for a long time, in the folds of her blue, velvet robes.*

*When it was over, I felt cleansed and new. I felt willing to be a trusting child.... Even more important, **I felt a mother’s love had touched me—leaving in me a true desire to forgive my natural mother.”***

I share this touching story with you, because it fits in beautifully with today’s “Feast of Mary, the Mother of God.” This feast underscores two points about Mary:

1st, Mary is **our mother**. She isn’t just the mother of Jesus, who lived 2,000 years ago. She’s also **our** mother, who lives today. And, from her place in heaven, she wants to help us with a mother’s help.

2nd, Mary is our **model**. She is someone we can admire and imitate.

*I invite you to consider just one of her many, important traits—**her trust in God**.*

When** that angel first appeared to her and told her she was going to ‘be with child’ and that it would be by the ‘overshadowing’ of the Holy Spirit, she must have thought she was losing her mind. She had no idea how any of this ‘**could be.**’ What she did know was that Joseph would, surely, ‘**lose it**’ and want to divorce her—which, indeed, he almost did (but didn’t, thanks to another one of those...angels!). So, in the midst of such a tumultuous storm, what did 13/14-year-old Mary do? She put **her trust in God!

When** the shepherds reported what the angels had said, Mary didn’t understand a word of it. **But**, what did she do? She put **her trust in God!

***When** they took the baby-Jesus to the Temple, Simeon told Mary:*

“Sorrow, like a sharp sword, will pierce your heart.”

*Mary couldn’t possibly understand that old man’s words. **But**, what’d she do? She put **her trust in God.***

***When** Jesus was 12 years old--over a decade later, they found him, after a 3-day search, in the Temple. When Mary asked him to explain himself, he said:*

“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

*Why did her son talk to her so coldly? What did he mean? She did **not** understand God’s Master Plan. So, what did she do? She, simply, put **her trust in God!***

It is precisely in the area of **'trust in God'** that Mary can help us.

'Exactly how can Mary help us to **trust in God?**' you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

Recall the story I told you about the girl on retreat. She had a terrible childhood. It destroyed her ability to trust. She wanted to be able to trust, **BUT** couldn't. Then, one day, by sheer accident, she found herself at the feet of Mary. She decided to pray to her. Recall her exact words:

"I prayed for the grace to break through the wall that was keeping me from trusting."

Mary heard her prayer and the girl was able to trust again.

Mary can help us to trust, just as she helped that girl on that retreat.

For example, we may be a parent who is concerned about a son or daughter. Perhaps our son or daughter has stopped going to church or is involved in a harmful relationship. No amount of prayer, good example, or reasoning does any good.

All that is left now is to **pray and to trust**. And Mary can help us do this.

For example, we may be a young person who is concerned about the future, especially with the current, global economy. We aren't sure what we want to do. We aren't sure what God wants us to do. We've talked to our parents and counselors. We've even prayed for guidance, **BUT** ...are still in the dark.

All that's left now is to **pray and to trust**. And Mary can help us do this.

For example, we may be a person who is concerned about our personal faith. We know it isn't strong. We worry about it. We've prayed to God for help, **BUT** he doesn't seem to hear our prayers. We're beginning to wonder if He even exists!

All that's left now is to **pray and to trust**. And Mary can help us do this.

You see, today's feast reminds us of something we may have forgotten. It reminds us that Mary is our **model** and our **mother**. She is someone to whom we can turn in time of need. She is someone who can help us. She is someone who WANTS to help us. After all, her son was born, lived, and died ...**for** us! All we need do is to turn to her.

If we are looking for a New Year's Resolution, we could do no better than to resolve to...
give Mary a bigger role in our life.

I now close with this prayer, one with which I am sure you are familiar. It is the one St. Bernard said daily to Mary:

"Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence, we fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, our Mother. To you we come, before you we stand, sinful and sorrowful.

**O Mother of the Word Incarnate, do not turn away from us, but in your mercy, hear & answer us.
Amen."**

For the last time this Octave, Merry Christmas & ...may Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, as we step into the New Year... in the name of the Father, the Infant-son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.