



The Spirit of Mary

An address for the Cosmic Mass for the 3rd Sunday in Advent
16th December 2007 ● Rev Max

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2: 8-20

Introduction

Good morning!

I've been back home in Melbourne for a few days.

I've been working away from Australia for quite a few weeks.

I feel good.

There are the familiar little things. There is the pillow on my bed, the goldfish waiting to be fed in the morning and the beautiful maple trees overhanging the pond. And there is my favourite coffee shop.

One thing in particular that stands out from my time away. It is the experience of making something new while being in an old situation.

Over and over again there were the seemingly unchangeable situations. I am sure *you* know about situations that seem to be impervious to change.

These stuck situations call for a new response.

A group of young men and women in a university in Tokyo presented me with a big challenge.

This was a large lecture hall. A small group of young men sat together and continually laughed and joked. A young woman in the back row sat hunched over and steadfastly looked down at her desk. Others were like her.

A critical moment is the point where I am being introduced as the guest teacher.

Suddenly I am caught up in an old response. I am asking myself why I accepted the invitation. I wished I were somewhere else.

Then I realised I had to build myself up a bit so I started a conversation with myself. I said to myself that the end of the three hour time slot did not have to be like the beginning.

Shortly after this I walked to the back of the class and began a brief conversation with the woman in the back row. I soon learned that she was interested in discovering new things.

On another occasion I was with two people who wanted to resolve conflicts in their relationship.

I noticed that these two people wanted to cooperate and yet time and time again become bored with one another. Even before they expressed themselves they were drawing conclusions.

Each of them was assuming that their partner was thinking the same thoughts as in the past and would continue to act in the same old way. There was no awareness of the life flowing in the other person, no awareness of the magnificence of their partner, no awareness of the small beginnings of new actions, of a softening, of new interest.

Again I am sure you know about such a situation.

But what to do? What to think in such situations?

These are ordinary situations that present themselves constantly. Let's recall such a situation.

Take a moment to remember when you wanted the people around you to be different and yet they keep acting in the old boring way.

I imagine that sometimes you have found yourself wishing that life could be easier. Perhaps you wonder why it is *you* that lands up feeling pain, or helplessness or despair.

Let's reflect on this: reflect what is happening in our lives.

What attitudes will enhance your sense of life? What is a truthful way of interpreting what is happening in you and around you?

What will enable you to create new functioning and to let go the old functioning that is no longer effective?

The Response of Mary to the Shepherds

Let's begin with a few words from the Gospel according to Saint Luke. This is from chapter 2 verse 19.

Mary has given birth to her first-born son and has laid him in a manger.

Some shepherds have found her and let her know what they were told about the child and of a choir of angels singing the words "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

And then we read the following words:

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Please notice that she *kept* all these things. She *kept* them.

In the original language this word means to hold in one's memory or to treasure up. She treasured the words "to you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

And she *pondered* them in her heart. She *pondered*.

She connected what she was hearing with other things that she knew about and in so doing her entire being began to transform.

And this took place *in her heart*. It took place in the very centre, the very core of her being. She centred herself in her heart, in the place that contains the secrets of the universe, in the seat of divine love.

Mary gave herself room to *be*, to really *be* there, to be with herself, to come to *know* the significance of what she had been told. And this brought a good result. She received what came toward her.

The Significance of Mary in the Present Age

The importance of Mary in our present age is great. It is a spirit that can enlarge our being, enlarge our experience, and make us able to respond in any situation.

This morning we will mention three of the many facets to that being.

1. *First of all, Mary is not merely a figure of past history. This spirit of Mary is timeless. It is an eternal spirit.*

It is a spirit that is there to be embraced by a person from any time or place or from any religion.

And furthermore, it is a spirit that assists. It assists in moments of success and moments of failure. It assists in the crises of living.

When there is seemingly no creative solution the spirit of Mary assists. When someone is stuck and unable to move forward or backward Mary will assist.

There is no situation on this earth in which that spirit is not effective.

It is therefore good to call on Mary.

2. *Secondly, Mary prompts us to enter into the depths of our being. Mary faces us with our real self. She presents us with the truth that there is miles more to us than our superficial front. It is so tempting to hide behind this superficial front and yet we inwardly know that there is something else that brings lasting satisfaction.*

Just remember what happens from time to time in your relationships.

Here you are in the presence of a person who is misjudging you. Your mind is outraged by the incorrect views this person holds with respect to your character. You are being told you are untrustworthy, unreliable, inconsistent.

Your mind begins to argue with this person. In fact your mind mounts a powerful argument. Your mind tells you to answer this person back, to correct their false ideas.

Your mind instructs you to do something right away. It tells you that you have been too passive for far too long.

You start to create within yourself a fighting spirit. You want to use any means to change this person's mind.

By this time you are no longer aware that you have been in this situation countless times before. You have forgotten that it has always proved impossible to change the mind of another person through force.

But this time you see that something different is happening.

This time you don't argue. This time you don't fight back. This time you keep in touch with the reality of your own being.

This time you know that you have a heart. You give yourself room to be aware of your heart.

Let's see what happens next!

As you focus on your heart you notice that your breathing is shallow, that your whole chest area is tight, and that your neck and face are hotter than usual.

You try to relax the area of your heart and it doesn't relax. But you don't give up because of that. You persist. You begin to breathe in gently and you find that soon you are less aware of the workings of your mind.

You realise that there is another reality. You realise that within your own heart there lies something else that is life-giving. You realise how precious it is and you begin to breathe much more easily. You begin to feel at one with the whole universe.

3. Thirdly, Mary opens us to the breadth of our being in such a way that we connect up different aspects of ourselves and begin to mobilise new and untried abilities.

The spirit of Mary prompts you to be still, to ponder, and to connect up with the richness of your entire being.

Mary assists you to be aware of the abilities that you have developed that may have been lying dormant in the background.

You have forgotten the resources that are waiting to be recognized and utilized. But now you begin to see that there is more to you than what your mind knows about.

You realise that you must start acting on the promptings of your heart.

And indeed you do begin to act, and as you do this you realise what the next step is, and the next, and the next.

You are writing the script of a new book and this book gives satisfaction.

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