

Christmas: January 1st Mary, Mother of God

Gospel text (Lk 2,16-21): The shepherds came hurriedly and found Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the manger. On seeing this they related what they had been told about the child, and all were astonished on hearing the shepherds. As for Mary, she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them. The shepherds then returned giving glory and praise to God for all they had heard and seen, just as the angels had told them. On the eighth day the circumcision of the baby had to be performed; he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

«The shepherds came hurriedly and found Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the manger»

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Today, the Church gratefully reflects on the Virgin's maternity as a model of her own motherhood of all of us. Luke offers the “meeting” of the shepherds and the Boy, who is with Mary —His mother— and with Joseph. Joseph's discreet presence reflects his important mission as guardian of the great mystery of the Son of God. All together, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, «with the baby lying in the manger» (Lk 2:16) form a beautiful image of the Church in adoration.

“The manger”: Jesus is placed there as a veiled reference to the Eucharist. It was Mary who put Him there! Luke speaks of an “encounter”, of a meeting between the shepherds and Jesus. Faith does not materialize without the personal experience of an encounter with the Lord. Only that meeting, which has brought with it “seeing”, and in a way “touching”, allows the shepherds to become witnesses of the Good News, true evangelists who can «relate what they had been told about the child» (Lk 2:17).

A first fruit of the “encounter” is pointed out for us here: «and all were astonished

on hearing the shepherds» (Lk 2:18). We need to ask for the grace of being able to arouse that fascination, that admiration in those to with whom we talk about the Gospel.

There is still a second fruit of this encounter: «The shepherds then returned giving glory and praise to God for all they had heard and seen» (Lk 2:20). The adoration of the Child fills their hearts with enthusiasm for communicating what they have seen and felt, and the communication of what they have seen leads them to prayer and thanksgiving, to the glorification of the Lord.

Maria, example of contemplation —«she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them» (Lk 2:19)— gave us Jesus, whose name means “God Saves”. His name is our Peace too. Let's accept his holy and sweet Name in our hearts and have it on our lips often!