



Mary, Mother of God 2023 Luke 2:16-21

The shepherds set out for Bethlehem *without delay*. We admire and envy them because their haste is behavior typical of young people or idealists. It is typical of free people—those who have nothing to lose and everything to gain. To set forth without delay has nostalgic overtones: it harks back to a time when we did not understand how complex life is, when we believed everything was easier, when we were convinced that good will was enough. Instead, today we often delay. We come to a halt, weighed down by our fears and perhaps even by laziness.

On her part, *Mary pondered everything*. She pondered the human hunger for love; she pondered the child before her in the manger. It is not easy to ponder because we find it hard to let go of the things we ponder, and the things we do not let go of inevitably make their weight felt. A heart that ponders is a heart that is able to bear burdens. Mary's heart was burdened—weighed down by life revealing itself in all its complexity.

Without Delay

Let us reread today's Gospel starting from its conclusion. Let us try to determine if we are still capable of *gratitude*. Let us look for reasons to be grateful for life and then meditate on them. Maybe they will be only small flashes, like the memory of an infant in the night. But let us learn to ponder these realities.

*Lord, help us to enter this new year naked, fragile and needy, like you.
Teach us to seek love and help us to foster its emergence in others, without delay.*

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