

Holy Mary, Mother of God  
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## Reflection

In today's Gospel, we hear that the shepherds went to Bethlehem, and "made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds had told them." We have shepherds too. The college of bishops with the pope at their head speaks the truth about faith and morals; they speak with the authority granted by Jesus to Peter (Mt 16:18-19); enlightened by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sends (Jn 14:26). The revelation of Jesus was complete. However, over the centuries, our understanding of what was revealed has deepened: guided by the same Holy Spirit. Not an easy process! We labour in our fallen nature with a type of ignorance. It makes it hard to understand and accept what is presented by faith. Heresies split the early church. The gnostics denied the humanity of Jesus. The Arians denied his divinity: they thought he was created and of a different substance of the Father. The Nestorians thought he was a human person to whom was joined the second person of the Trinity. The Monophysites said his human nature ceased to exist as such when the Son of God assumed it. They argued with conviction and separated the faithful into camps, compromising the unity effected by Christ (Jn 17:11). The trouble with heresy is it tries to find a simple explanation for what remains a mystery; something beyond the grasp of our reason to fully comprehend.\

Num 6:22-27  
Ps 67  
Gal 4:4-7  
Lk 2:16-21

Still, there is truth that we can know in part (1 Cor 13:12). Jesus Christ is true God and true man, like us in all ways but sin. He is one person with two natures, human and divine, without confusion, change, division or separation. He is true God and true man, and became our brother to free us from sin. By his life and his words; his passion, death and resurrection, we can be adopted as children of God and call him Father, and he will raise us to eternal life. The shepherds "made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds had told them."

Today is the solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God. She is the mother of the Father's eternal Son, so is the mother of God. She gives us her son, so is our mother too (2677). We can entrust ourselves to her, giving her our cares and petitions. She prays for us, and helps us to abandon ourselves to the will of God: "Let it be done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38)."

What did Mary do with the words she heard from these shepherds? She was already holding God within her arms; could they add anything more? According to the Gospel, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." The Magi hadn't yet arrived with frankincense, gold and myrrh; but Mary received two gifts that Christmas night; two gifts from God. First, he gave her his Son.

Second, the shepherds gave her his words, as received from the angels on high. She held God's son in her arms, and pondered his words in her heart. We have a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because she brings us to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. *Ad Jesum Per Mariam*, to Jesus through Mary. Mary keeps us in her heart, loving us and interceding on our behalf. She can also lend us her heart, so that we can love as she does. With the heart that she lends us, we can have a pondering gratitude: always giving thanks for the blessings that we receive and rarely notice; always contrite for the sins beneath our attention that have already been forgiven; and always forgiving others, in order to limit the power of evil in this world. In the words of St. Teresa of Calcutta, "Mary, lend me your Immaculate Heart."