



*And Mary kept all these things,  
reflecting on them in her heart” (Gospel)*

**THE GOSPEL**    Luke 2:16-21

And the glory of the Lord,  
uprooted, homeless.  
Poor shepherds,  
a manger,  
a star.

She  
pondered  
all these things,  
tried to make some  
sense of their meaning,  
mulled them over in her heart,  
preserving, remembering, treasuring.

There were no final answers, though.  
She searched for and found signs  
of the Spirit’s movements.  
And that was enough  
for her.

Oh God, make it enough for us.

**THE FIRST READING.**    Numbers 6:22-27

*The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!*

God says to us,

“I will bless you & keep you!  
I will look upon you kindly and let  
the splendour of my face shine upon you.  
And grant you peace and grace and wholeness!”

We invoke your name, O God.  
Look on all of us kindly.  
Please bless us,  
every one  
of us.

***THE SECOND READING. Galatians 4:4-7***

*God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*

The same Spirit  
sent to Mary  
was also  
sent to  
us.

It lives in our hearts and  
lets us cry out,

“You,  
our Father,

we are your children.”

*Anne Osdiack*

## **Calm**

“Let it be done unto me according to your will,” Mary had said. In other words: “I accept. Tell me how this wonderful birth will happen.” The travel to Bethlehem in the last part of her pregnancy did not make her promise easy.

When they finally got to Bethlehem, a very small village, the inn had no room for them. And there is nothing in scripture about a cave. The most likely place would have been some kind of barn or stable for domestic animals, since the infant was “lying in a manger.” This birth was not bathed in satin finery, not luxurious. Jesus was born into poverty and discomfort.

Today, we see Mary just days after the gruelling journey and the amazing birth ([Gospel](#)). She is carrying out the promise she made to Gabriel. All is well. The child is healthy and cute, and the angels, unable to contain their joy, have once more danced into Mary’s life. Even the animals understand. It is breath-taking.

It would seem that Mary’s calm would now seek some quiet and rest after all that had happened. But no. Unkempt shepherds, straight from the fields, “went in haste” to the shelter, announcing in their craggy voices that they knew who this baby is. Angels had told them. Wise men, or as we now say, kings, found the holy shelter and barged right in, bearing royal gifts.

Does this all impinge on Mary's peace? No. She is good to her word. The Gospel says that she quietly "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

How could she do this? Part of it was her personality, of course, but even more, it was the presence of God deep within her, so deep that she let her life become one with his, and produced a son. Life on this earth is never free from hazards and setbacks and stunning difficulties, but as Mary let her heart reflect, and as she watched each movement of the newborn baby, she breathed in a holiness, a degree of holiness that even she had not known before.

"May it be done unto me according to your will." Her acceptance was complete.

As we witness this calm, within a crowded, difficult, surprising stable, as we keep the picture of it within our own hearts, may each of us be able to echo her words, "May it be done unto me according to your will." John Foley, SJ. (*Adapted*)

### A few Christmas Poems by Ursula Fanthorpe

#### What the Donkey Saw

No room in the inn, of course,  
And not that much in the stable  
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,  
Joseph, the heavenly host –  
Not to mention the baby  
Using our manger as a cot.  
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in  
For love or money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,  
I did my best to make them feel wanted.  
I could see the baby and I  
Would be going places together.

#### ***The Wicked Fairy at The Manger***

My gift for the child:

No wife, kids, home;  
No money sense. Unemployable.  
Friends, yes. But the wrong sort –  
The workshy, women, wimps,  
Petty infringers of the law, persons  
With notifiable diseases,  
Poll tax collectors, tarts;  
The bottom rung.  
His end?  
I think we'll make it  
Public, prolonged, painful.

*Right, said the baby. That was roughly  
What we had in mind.*

## BC – AD

This was the moment when Before  
Turned into After, and the future's  
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing  
Happened. Only dull peace  
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans  
Could find nothing better to do  
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment  
When a few farm workers and three  
Members of an obscure Persian sect

Walked haphazard by starlight straight  
Into the kingdom of heaven.



### A PRAYER OF THE HOLY FAMILY

The road we take  
leads toward the promise  
of security and stability  
for we flee not solely  
in fear, nor do we make  
this pilgrimage  
for the pursuit of untold  
riches.  
We do not seek to spread  
terror,  
for how dearly do we cling  
on to hope  
in knowing that goodness  
abounds  
wherever we shall land  
as a unit, but much more  
than a statistic or a painfully  
vetted file, rather, a family,  
peculiar and unusual like  
any other:  
united, courageous, holy.