



**MARY TREASURED UP
 ALL THESE THINGS
 AND PONDERED THEM
 IN HER HEART**

LUKE 2:19

Monthly Reflection

Pope Francis makes an important point about evangelisation in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel). At the end of this important document, largely on evangelisation in the world today, he states “There is a Marian ‘style’ to the Church’s work of evangelisation.” (# 288) Let us ponder on this thought for a moment. The Pope goes on to say, “Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness.” (# 288) As Christmas and New Year (2019-2020) draws us into its embrace, let us think about what it means to have a Marian “style” of evangelisation. Three points come to my mind.

First of all, it is an evangelisation of few words

When we examine carefully the New Testament and the role of Mary, we notice that she says very little. Certainly, in the first chapters of Luke’s Gospel, we hear of her incredible “Yes” response to the Annunciation and her dialogue with her cousin Elizabeth to whom she sets out “with haste.” (Luke 1:39)

Mary is always physically present but doesn’t say much in the Gospels. However, she is there at all the prime moments of our faith. The Annunciation, Visitation, Birth of our Lord, Wedding at Cana, Suffering and Death of her Son on the Calvary Cross and with the apostles at the birth of the Church at Pentecost. In all this, her evangelisation is a “wordless” evangelisation of tenderness and compassion. Let us imitate her great example.

Sometimes we think that evangelisation is all about speaking, all about talking. In Mary’s view, nothing could be further from the truth. There is no doubt there is a moment for talking but there is also a moment for simply being present to people.

Truly listening is a beautiful way of bringing forth the joy of the Gospel and evangelising. St Francis of Assisi is attributed to having said the following famous expression, “Preach the Gospel at all times, use words if necessary.” That is a very Marian “style” of evangelisation.

Secondly, Mary is very comfortable in silence

There are different types of silences but this is the silence of the presence of the Lord. It’s the evangelisation of “presence” rather than “performance”. There is the beautiful expression in the Scriptures of Mary’s prayerful silences. At the birth of Jesus in the humble manger at Bethlehem, St Luke records the profound prayerful silence of Mary by saying, “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19) Let us be comfortable either as individuals or in our communal prayer to welcome silences as being thick with the presence of God. St Benedict tells us in his teaching to those who want to follow Christ deeply, “Listen with the ear of your heart.”

Thirdly, a Marian “style” of evangelising means that we have particular sensitivity to the needs of others, especially those that we know are undergoing difficulties.

This is a sure sign that our prayer is of the Lord. It always looks for those on the periphery, those who struggle, those who have challenges in their lives. We do all that we can to stand alongside them in solidarity and compassion.

We see this with Mary in the Visitation. Although there was no great need for her to do this, as soon as she hears that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist, she rushes to Jerusalem to affirm her cousin in the faith. The encounter of Mary with Elizabeth in Luke’s Gospel could well be seen as the first Gospel example of shared prayer. (Luke 1) These wonderful women praise God and give glory to Him. They magnify the Lord and see all as grace.

Let us imitate Mary, in her compassion and tenderness, prayerful silence, sensitiveness to the needy; so that our lives become the vehicle of the gentle, loving presence of the Lord reaching out to others through us.

Saint’s Quote:

“When trying to evangelise, no tool is more effective than that of personal witness....People can argue with points of doctrine but no-one can argue with a personal testimony!” – St. Francis Xavier