

## **AUGUST** *Mary, the Mother of Jesus — The Pondering Spirit*

*So they [the shepherds] went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds had told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. —Luke 2:16–19*

Mary is honored as a lead character in the Christmas story, but it is important to take another day in the year to consider her amazing faith. The long, warm days of summer are a good climate for learning about the slow and deeply internal grappling that was Mary's way of discernment. She is the best biblical model of willing obedience and she gives us clues about how to submit to God's will.

Apparently Mary was a natural ponderer. After Gabriel's visit her first reaction was to "ponder what sort of greeting this might be." When faced with the announcement that she would become the mother of God she hit the ground pondering. Pondering is different from thinking, praying, or waiting. The Greek word that most scholars translate as "ponder" means literally "to throw or put together."

Mary took the angel's visit, the shepherd's words, Joseph's remarkable love, and the birth of her son silently into herself. She gathered them into her heart where they intermingled to create meaning from mystery. Throughout her life she pondered as she cared for the baby, worried when he lingered at the temple, realized his power at the wedding in Cana, watched him heal and teach, and finally stood at the foot of the cross.

### ***For reflection and discussion***

**What is one dilemma in the life of our congregation that could benefit from pondering?**

### ***Prayer***

**Gracious God, thank you for teaching us about faith through the life of your servant Mary. As we ponder your amazing and steadfast love, give us the desire and strength to submit to your will. Amen.**

We open our spirits to God when we follow Mary's example and ponder God's way with the church. Too often we are tempted to set aside pondering for the sake of thinking, planning, analyzing, evaluating, proposing, debating, and deliberating. Those ways of doing God's work are useful tools, but pondering is the way to bring together in our hearts all the words and signs that God sends our way, and let them inform and guide us in our ministry.

By God's grace we are held fast in a relationship of love that can never be understood but only received and pondered. Remembering Mary reminds us that willing obedience and pondering are the best ways to discern God's will and become the bearers of Christ to the world.

