

Today's gospel takes us back one week in time; the scene is once again the stable in Bethlehem, where the newborn child lies in a manger. The focus today, however, is on the young mother, Mary. This final day of the Octave of Christmas is called the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

And the principal spirit of the feast is revealed in that one line, where Luke observes:

“Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” You can be sure that, as

Mary cradled the Baby Jesus in her arms and cared for his needs, she was certainly awed by all the events of the previous months and days – all the many ways that God was acting in her life and on her behalf.

Today's feast invites us into a similar kind of reflection:

- How do we experience God's special presence in our lives during this Christmas season – the season of Christ's coming into our midst? Are we changed by our deepening appreciation of God's presence?
- New Year's is traditionally a time when many people reflect back on the year just past: what has happened in our lives over the past year? According to a recent AP poll, 73% of Americans said that 2009 was a bad year for the country, and 38% said it was a bad year for themselves and their families; they're happy to see it end. How bad it was is reflected in this year's *World Champion Liar* competition. Maybe you saw it in today's paper: Larry Legro of Sun Prairie said, “I recently bought a new toaster oven, and as a complimentary gift, I was given a bank.” As we reflect on the year ending, the more important question is: what meaning does all that happened have on us? We're encouraged to do what Mary did: she “kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”

- New Year's is also a time when many people look ahead, reflect on what they see coming, and make resolutions for improvement over the next year: where do we want our lives to go during 2010? Or perhaps the all-important question would be: where is God leading us? What does God want of us in 2010?

Today and tomorrow is a good time to be reflecting on these things in our hearts.