

One week after Christmas we say goodbye to the old year and greet the new one. It's a holy thing to cross this threshold.

The gospel the Church gives us today has three different centers of activity. The first one is the shepherds. They come to Bethlehem and find the Holy Family there. They tell everyone what the angels told them about this child, that a Savior has been born. People are amazed and the shepherds go home praising God because everything happened as they were told it would.

The second center of activity is Mary. Actually, she is a center of anti-activity. She has gone through a stressful time seeking lodging for the night, giving birth to a child away from home, and now being visited by some very excitable shepherds. When they leave, she needs a little time. Luke says, "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Enough of activity – Mary needed some time to process what had happened to her.

The third center of activity concerns the new-born child. He is circumcised according to custom on the eighth day, and on that occasion his parents formally give him his name, Jesus, which means "Savior". These actions were expected of every parent. The circumcision of Jesus was an ordinary procedure taking place in the customary way.

So in a few verses of the gospel, the story catches the excitement of the first Christmas; the quiet reflection that everyone yearns for on this Silent Night, Holy Night; and the ordinariness of human life.

This is how we end one year and start the next. We've all seen amazing things in our celebration of Christmas – the gathering of families, the sharing of gifts, and the worship of faithful Christians. We're taking a little time to look back over the past year; to ponder in our heart all the things that have happened to us and what they mean. And, in the midst of it all, we have to go on with the ordinary business of human life. We have jobs to do at work and at home and soon at school. We pick up and do the things that are expected of us.

On this Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, we remember especially how Mary experienced all these things: the joy, the calm, and the ordinariness of life. As we enter a new year, we do it under Mary's protection. In all the joy and peace of life, and even in the humdrum activities that necessarily fill our days, God is there. God is there.