



A time to ponder – Mary treasured all these things in her heart

By Bishop Greg
December 2020

This Christmas sure will be different. We won't have 24 people crammed into our small kitchen and living room this December 25th. COVID-19 physical distancing requirements will see to that.

We won't be attending two Christmas Eve services (a Lutheran AND an Anglican one) jam-packed with worshipers.

We won't be singing well-loved Christmas carols with all of those worshipers, either. Droplets and aerosols have become part of our common parlance now. Was anybody talking about aerosols at this time last year?

This Christmas, we need to think beyond the immediate. We need to remember why we are refraining from doing these things. We are doing this because of love for the neighbour, for you and me. Is this too hard to ask of us? No. We can do this. We must do this.

One of my favourite verses in Luke's telling of the Christmas story is "Mary treasured all these things in her heart." Well, of course she did!! She didn't have 24 people coming over to her house for Christmas dinner like we did last year.

"Mary treasured all these things in her heart." Well, of course she did! She wasn't able to go out to the mall and finish her Christmas shopping because there were too many people there.

"Mary treasured all these things in her heart." Well, of course she did! She was lucky to have been able to travel to Bethlehem and not enter 14-day quarantine. Maybe some of Joseph's extended family could become part of their social bubble, but if they wouldn't give up a room for a 9-month pregnant woman then I doubt that was going to be very likely.

"Mary treasured all these things in her heart." Well, of course she did! Wouldn't you, if you had a bunch of shepherds show up at your door unannounced. That would make me ponder. But at least those shepherds stayed outside and observed the importance of good ventilation. And those angels — talk about droplets and aerosols! While they might be physically and mystically distancing, they were right OVERHEAD! More pondering to do, poor Mary.

But this time will pass, Mary. When you're busy running after your 3-year-old in Nazareth, perhaps you'll look back on this moment and laugh — well, maybe not laugh, but maybe you will take a moment for quiet reflection after the toddler has gone down for a nap — and maybe you will reflect back on that time and remember what a crazy and dangerous time it was. You faced an uncertain future, everything was turned upside down, you were dis-located, you had restrictions on seeing your own family thrust upon you, and you found out that only the paid musicians were able to sing out loud. (I made up this last part about the angels being paid singers!)

Yes, I will miss having 24 people in our house. Seriously! And I will REALLY miss singing Christmas carols in a packed church. However, I know that we will still sing them at home. We're very fortunate. We have a piano, guitar and harp in our living room and we love singing. But even if we didn't, anyone with a computer or smartphone can pull up countless numbers of sacred Christmas music sites. Let that be your Christmas playlist this year. There is so much

phenomenal Christmas music — from the Renaissance to the Reformation, from folk traditions around the world to best-selling artists of 2020. Be immersed in music. And be like Mary — pondering all these things in your hearts.

And as you ponder, remember this:

Christmas is not about the gathering at my house (although that is part of it).

Christmas is not about singing carols in a jam-packed church (although that is part of it).

Christmas is not about nostalgia and family memories (although that is part of it).

Christmas is not about presents under the tree and stockings on Christmas morning (although that is part of it).

No. Christmas is about God coming to us in the flesh. Christmas is about Love incarnate.

Christmas is about turning the world right-side up again, for “he has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”

“Mary treasured all these things in her heart.” And so will you. This Christmas will cause all of us to ponder. And maybe that’s a good thing.