

In the midst of the joy of the Season of Christmas, in the midst of angel gloria's and shepherds' storytelling, and for us in the midst of the revelry of New Year's and the excitement of 2020, we celebrate this day in the Church with solemnity, just as Mary "*kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*" Like us, Mary pondered what things mean, she questioned her relationship with God and struggled in her life with Jesus.

She and Joseph raised him in their tradition but not without complications. From his very beginning the Son of God brings forth challenge. Mary questions Gabriel, "*how can this be?*" Surely Mary pondered Elizabeth's greeting, "*Who am I that the mother of my Lord came to visit me?*" Joseph and Mary don't get to name their child, but his name is already chosen by the angel. He is to be called Jesus – Yeshua, one who saves. A month later, when they bring Jesus to the temple Simeon and Anna praise and bless him. Mary again surely pondered when she is told by Simeon that a sword will pierce her heart. And that is just the beginning. Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem without telling his parents and they panic till they find him in the temple – "of course, where else would I be?" he asks. More reflection for Mary, that no doubt continued through her whole life.

In the early Church Mary was given the title, *theotokos*, that is, "God-bearer". In the Orthodox Christian tradition it is said that Mary's womb "contained the God whom the universe

cannot contain.” That not only caused Mary to reflect and ponder but the whole Church along with her to this day.

How does God become flesh and what does it mean to us? In addition to sanctifying the whole human race, when we reflect upon this reality in relation to us and Mary, as true disciples of Jesus, we, too, must be “God-bearers”. Mary is the first and will forever be the one who carried God into the world. We, now, in 2020 and beyond continue bearing the Holy One into the world, like carrying the lighted torch for the entire world to see. St. Paul says we are like children who have come of age, heirs to the kingdom of God. May 2020 be filled with the Light!