

The Church concludes the Christmas Season this weekend with the celebration of the Lord's baptism. She has continued to savor the wonder of Christ's birth since the vigil Mass for Christmas on December 24th—very different from the surrounding culture which moved on to other things the moment Christmas Day ended.

Spiritual things cannot be appropriated quickly. They take time. The Blessed Virgin knew this.

When the angel greeted her as God's highly favored daughter, she "considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be" (Luke 1:29).

When the shepherds related to her what the angel had told them concerning her child, she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:19).

And after she and St. Joseph had found Jesus in the temple and heard him say to her, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" we are told she "kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

The New Testament presents Mary as the model disciple, the quintessential person of faith. But it is important to grasp that her faith was nourished on prayer and reflection, all of which takes time.

In the life of the Church, through her preaching and sacraments, we encounter the Mystery of Salvation—God the Father drawing us to himself through his Son and the Holy Spirit.

Like Mary, we grow into and are perfected by the Mystery we have encountered only through a long and steady process of prayer and reflection—something that cannot be hurried.

Like Martha in the gospel, we are constantly tempted to busy ourselves with many things and ignore Jesus' teaching about the one thing that is really *necessary*: sitting at his feet quietly and listening to him (see Luke 10:38-42).

It is important to ask ourselves often: "Am I making room each day for the one thing really necessary?" If not, then am I not at risk of falling victim to the unredeemed world which is only too ready to hurry me from one passing pleasure to another without really grasping the things that endure, that can alone give me lasting happiness?

The Church is wiser than the world. She offers us what the world does not possess—the saving power and presence of Jesus. And she shows us, through her daily and seasonal round of prayer and reflection, how to grow into the Truth that sets us free.

Yours in Christ,

Father Walter