

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

MARY, DID YOU KNOW?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters? ... Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb? This sleeping child you're holding is the Great I Am, Oh Mary did you know?

Those words are from the lyrics of a relatively new Christmas song called *Mary Did You Know* written by Mark Lowry in 1991.

No one knows the definitive answer to the question the song asks, "Did you know?" But if we look at this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 2: 16-21), we might conclude the answer might be NO. Mary did not know everything about the child she was holding in her arms.

But someone might say, how could she not realize who her child was? She was visited by an angel when he was conceived, and when he was born there were angels in the heavens singing and announcing his birth.

However, when the angel Gabriel told Mary that her child "will be great and will be called Son of the Most High ... and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end," he did not explain the meaning and the implication of his words.

And as far as singing angels, they did not appear to Mary and Joseph but to the shepherds. In Sunday's Gospel we learn that the shepherds came in haste to the stable in Bethlehem because they were visited by an angel who told them, "Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord."

The shepherds were told that Jesus was the promised Messiah and they were the ones who saw and heard the heavenly host proclaiming, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the shepherds arrived at the stable and saw Mary and Joseph and the child, Luke says that "they made known the message that had been told them about this child." Mary and Joseph and all who heard the report of the shepherds were "amazed" at their news. "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

Through the report of the shepherds Mary grew in her appreciation and realization of who her child was and that was something that continued to happen as she watched Jesus grow. Mary was "amazed" at what Simeon said about her son when she and Joseph presented him in the Temple. And when Jesus was "lost and found" in the Temple at age 12, Luke tells us that Mary "his mother kept all these things in her heart."

Throughout her life, Mary kept reflecting and growing in her appreciation and understanding of the identity and mission of her son. If Mary had to do that, so do we!

This Gospel perfectly fits this New Year's Day. It reminds us that of all things we can do in 2017, one of the most important is to grow in our understanding of Jesus the Son of God. The one we call our Messiah, our Lord, our Savior, and our Brother.

If we fail to do so, then Jesus just remains the baby boy born in a stable, he remains the one we really do not know.

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Best Wishes for a New Year Blessed with God's Presence and Peace!