

## HOMILY: MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

So 2016 has rolled into 2017!

For the past week or so we have been bombarded with images of *the year that was*. These are the days when we look back and look forward, even making New Year resolutions. However, one wise man told me that he makes New Year *intentions* rather than *resolutions*. They can be easier to live with!

As we leave one year sleep-deprived after midnight fireworks, and fall into another, the Church gives us the figure of Mary, who *treasured* things and *pondered* them in her heart. Given the past year, the reflective figure of Mary is profoundly counter-cultural.

As always in the last week of the year, the media seeks one image, expression or word that sums up the year that was. The Oxford Dictionary chose the expression *post-truth* to sum up 2016. It first appeared in 1992 but increased 2000% in usage in 2016. The phenomenon is described as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”.

The *post-truth* phenomenon was clearly evident in the lead up to the American election. Ironically, while railing against globalisation, the Trump spirit seems to have gone global. Some would say that technology has interrupted truth: “I read it on Facebook, it must be true”. Journalists now speak of *fake news*!

In our new populist-led world there is a diminishing commitment to truth. Pauline Hanson takes a brief dip at the southern most end of the Great Barrier Reef and emerges to declare that the Reef is perfectly healthy. The extensive scientific studies claiming the opposite are simply dismissed. Ninety seven percent of scientists believe that climate change and global warming are real – *along with Pope Francis* - but deniers in our national leadership claim *coal is king*!

Into the lazy and unreflective world steps Mary whose motherhood we celebrate today. Mary who *treasured* what she heard from shepherds, the most marginalised in her society. Then, as Luke tells us, she *pondered* these things in the heart.

Like every parent, Mary must have continued to *treasure* and *ponder* the moments in the development of the child Jesus: the first attempts to crawl, to stand and take first steps. She must have treasured those moments of growth and pondered the future of her child. I do this in way each time I have the privilege of standing with a parents in baptising their infant. It is highly likely that the infant of 2016/2017 will live to see the twenty second century. I often wonder about the world they will grow into.

Mary comes to us today as a contemplative and calls us to be more contemplative in our lives. Sometimes we think that contemplatives are mystics who live in remote places. But let's think about the word. It is made up of two words from the Latin languages, *con* and *tempo*, *with* and *time*. Thus Mary takes *time to be with* what is happening, time to *treasure* and *ponder*.

The challenge is for us to be *with the time* in which we find ourselves. Ours is not to live in the future or the past but the present. There are no shortage of nationalist movements that want to recreate the past, *making America great again or reclaiming Australia*. There are also parallel movements in the Church who presently rail against Pope Francis and want to restore a past Church of *Latin and lace, smells and bells*!

The Word today gives us Mary the contemplative, who challenges our *post-truth* world, where everyone has their own facts. Mary encourages us to be *with the time* in which we are called to live and to drill down to the truth of the moment. She challenges us to treasure what we hear and observe, particularly among the most marginalised in our world and then, to make what is often the longest journey of life, from the head to the heart.

The beginning of this new secular year calls us to be contemplative in the spirit of Mary, to treasure and ponder the time in which we are called to live.

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