

Ponderous thoughts

I picked up the newly weds at the airport during the holidays. They were spending part of their honeymoon visiting with me. It was interesting to watch their interaction as they continued to discover the joys and implications of life as a married couple. It was reassuring to see two mature young people embrace the journey. Beginnings are always exciting, filled with hope as they embrace the implications of their wedding vows. But, they also can be a leap of faith into the unknown.

One year has ended and another begun. Lots of folks make resolutions, but after a few days, the novelty of the promises wears off and the promises themselves become threadbare. I gave up on making New Year resolutions many years ago. My resolve to fulfil them became a chore rather than a blessing. My stubbornness to make the resolutions happen was replaced by the excuse -what is the point in making resolutions when I know I am not going to follow through with them.

I celebrated New Year's Day Mass in a local parish so I tried to decide what the homily might say. I knew that the day was seen as a day for resolutions, but I knew that, in a few days, the best planned resolutions would end up on the cutting room floor. I also knew that there was no point in telling the locals to eat black-eyed peas on that day in order to bring them good health and good luck.

I needed to dwell more on the religious aspect of the day rather than the popular secular culture of resolutions. Seeing that it was the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, one thought kept surfacing from the gospel of the day. Following the visit of the Shepherds, "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Luke:2:19)

Maybe, I thought, our New Year should be filled with ponderous thoughts rather than castaway resolutions.

We all make promises to keep in touch but, as time goes on, other thoughts cloud our resolve and we lose contact. During the Christmas holidays, I found out how easy it is to lose touch with folks. Some parishes place the names of retired priests on the Church Christmas tree and ask folks to pick a name and touch base with that priest over the holidays. Now retired for ten years, many contacts were lost. Yet because of such parish practices, there were some surprises. One surprise was from a former parish bookkeeper that I hadn't heard from in over twenty years. As I opened her card, I still recognized her name and wondered that happened to her two children since.

Another communication was an email that arrived after Christmas. It said: "Hopefully, you now must realize that we haven't fallen off the face of the planet though I'm sure you've often wondered.

We're alive and kicking, but definitely not the way we used to!

It is 9:00 pm our time and 3:00 am your time so I'm sure you'll see this email tomorrow!

The past two weeks have been a Comedy of Errors in regard to our participation in the St. John Retired Priests Christmas program!

Father Satish announced that rather than having a Christmas tree with little ornaments with the names of the retired priests from the Diocese (and Sister Mary) for everyone to pick a name from (without looking at the name) that he would hand out the names himself... Father, who was outside, gave Johnny the ornament that had your name on it! Johnny was so excited to show me that we got your name!... You may be here for the Carlow Mass on January 10th! If you are planning to be here we would love to see you!

We are sincerely sorry for our lack of correspondence! There is no excuse for not being in touch with you. Thanks to Father Satish and Divine Providence we are reconnecting!

It would take way more than a month of Sundays to catch up! It would be wonderful to sit and visit!

We certainly haven't been your way but that would be a life long dream come true! Ireland has always been at the top of our bucket list!

I'm sure Mary had many things to ponder during her lifetime. She, like most mothers, spent a lifetime pondering her special calling; her mysterious choice by God, her journey to the cross; a heart that was pierced by sorrow but gifted by being the first to be redeemed.

Her invitation to is to invite us to live life more deeply, see more clearly, embrace more freely and realize that our bucket list should include less resolutions and more ponderous thoughts.