Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God
January 1, 2014

Today’s feast is called a solemnity. While Mother Church intends to emphasize that this day is of the highest rank and importance, when the Bishops started messing with Holy Days, if you are like me, they all got “down graded! What a shame! This feast is an important one indeed. It could have some other names. (Which it has had during my lifetime!)

How about the **Serenity** of Mary, the Delighted Mother of God? Or, in a spirit of inclusivity, might we celebrate the **Gladdening** of Mary, Joseph, and the Assembled Shepherds? Or we might call this celebration “The Festival of Beginnings and Blessings for Mary.”

For me, and I hope for us, it certainly celebrates Mary, and the beginning of a new year.

I was in a store today, and the proprietress said rather derisively “You know Father, all that hype for a single day!” The Church’s point in celebrating the 8th day after Christmas is that this event is far beyond
a one-day feast. According to the Gospel we just heard, this is news that astonished all who heard of it.

How quickly all that astonishment must have faded, however. I don’t recall hearing of any shepherds at the Lord’s baptism, at the cross, or among the apostles. Wonder what they did with their astonishment? Isn’t that the way it goes with us all too often as well? After the astonishment of just 7 days ago comes the un-decorating, putting the gifts away, returning the things we don’t need or like…the return to work, the everyday effort, the frequent failures, the forgetting. News of bombings in Russia, of cold paralyzing the mid west, of robberies and killings steals the front pages of the newspaper. How quickly we forget! How easily our astonishment surrenders to the routine!

Mary, though, continued to reflect on these events, treasuring them, they led her to growth in faith and courage. Now there’s a New Year’s resolution for all of us. Reflect today and every day on these events “which the Lord has made known to us.” Be astonished! Wouldn’t that change not just today, but everyday of our new year?