Happy New Year to all!

The ball has dropped, the toasts have been made and life is returning to normalcy. It shouldn't be, though!

After celebrating the beautiful season of Advent and experiencing the holiness of Christmas, there is no way we should be settling for "normalcy." What is normal, anyway? Is it settling for the status quo? Is it letting the beautiful lessons of this season just wash over us and leave no impact? Is it putting away the Christmas decorations and closing those boxes while closing our minds too?

There is no way we should let that happen!! We need to think about the words from Luke's gospel for the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God: "The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. **And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.**
Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. (Lk 2:16-20)"

Like Mary, we need to reflect on what we have learned from the birth of the Christ Child. Like the shepherds, we need to return to our lives giving praise to God for what we have heard and seen.

If this isn't normalcy for us, then it should be! We should be transformed by the fulfillment of the prophecy and inspired by the wonder of Christ's birth. We should be in awe that God has given us his Son to be our Redeemer. We should be humbled by Mary's "yes." We should be motivated by the urgency of the shepherds to share the good news with those around them. We should follow Joseph's example of patience and adherence to God's will.

There is so much depth and richness in those sentences from Luke's gospel. We have experienced something that is far from normal, and we have been given lessons that should

sustain us for the coming year. Like the shepherds, let us make haste to spread the good news.

Wishing you a 2013 that is anything but normal!

By Pat Haggerty