



## Mary, the mother of Jesus

For many of us the Christian story told year after year is comforting in its familiarity. There is a danger that it is so familiar that we lose sight of some of the meaning. The characters have become fixed in nativity play mode. Take for instance Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus – who was she this young woman who said of herself that “from now all generations will call me blessed”? She didn’t come from an important family and her parents weren’t priests or teachers, the religious “professionals”. She came from a backwater or so Nazareth was regarded by the elite in Jerusalem. Solemn marriage promises had been made to Joseph.

Her life changed forever when one day the angel Gabriel appeared before her with a message from God. The sceptic might begin to question at this point but there are those amongst us today who have encountered angels. We could point to the exact place in our kitchen where a number of years ago an angel stood, calm and strong. When the angel addressed Mary as “highly favoured” her thoughts must have been in turmoil. Gabriel is quick to re-assure her, “Do not be afraid”. How often those words come in our Bible.

A message from God cannot come true unless it is believed. Many of us fall at this first hurdle. The Sister who saw an angel in our kitchen wanted desperately to believe the message the angel brought to her but doubt was stronger. It is the amazing grace of God that what the angel said that evening did come about despite the doubts on the part of the hearer. Not so with Mary, she was asked to believe in defiance of all human reason, that she would become pregnant not by a man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. The baby would be God Himself coming into the world. She believed what the angel said.

She must have seen immediately what the future held for her – the disgrace of being a woman who bore a child outside marriage. Her marriage to Joseph would no longer go ahead. She would be alone. Adultery was punishable by stoning. Suffering and humiliation would mark her path. Yet Mary gave God her, “Yes”. Our pride would have stepped in the way but Mary was humble and so Israel’s God chose her to bring Christ into the world.

It is to the humble that the Lord still comes. Those who know their inward poverty are those favoured by God. We are blessed as we look at the life of Mary – believing, humble and trusting.

May the Lord through his grace enable us to follow her example.