

Mary's Reflection on her Annunciation

By Pat Kennedy MPS.

Joseph has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. He worked from his Father's workshop, he'd help me with the bucket when I went for water, he made me a stool for my 13th Birthday, that was when we became betrothed. I was so happy that day. Joseph had always looked out for me, kept me safe and now I knew that he would do it for the rest of my life.

Often at night we would sit on the roof of my home, in the cool of the evening, and we'd plan the house we would build, the animals we would keep, what furniture he would make for us; he was such a skilled man, such a beautiful man; I felt so blessed to be part of his life. I thanked God every day for him.

Sometimes when I looked at him I would imagine what our children would look like, would they look like him? But then maybe they might look like me.

That, however, was in the future and part of my daydreaming as I sat in front of the house crushing the grain for the next day's bread.

I was in a world of my own; it was the light, which caught my attention, the world seemed to halt for a brief moment; there was no sound, no breeze, only absolute silence, peace, light and a feeling of presence; yes presence, but of what I wasn't sure.

It was then I heard the voice, *"Do not be afraid."* How could anyone have been afraid? It was a voice which found a home in me, deep within- a voice I seemed to have known all my life- and yet not heard before.

"You have been chosen. God is with you. God is in you!"

"With me, in me? I am to have a child!"

Have you ever had a moment when in an instant you hear, you sense, you become, you are frozen in time. One moment it wasn't and the next moment it is.

"But how can this be, I know no man, I have been with no man?"

Joseph is my intended, my friend, my protector, my husband to be.

"DO NOT BE AFRAID this is all God's doing".

From that moment I knew that life for me, for us would never ever be the same again. Life for me had changed. Truth found its home in me. Truth was conceived in me and I knew it without a shadow of doubt.

As the spirit moved over the water and created life, so he had done with me at that moment. Joseph, home, children, being settled, where was that all now? I couldn't tell. I pondered it all, but arrived at no answer, but somehow in the midst of it all there was a peace, somehow in the midst of it all there was a *"Yes!"*

I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be done unto me as he wills; my dreams and aspirations moved aside and the space was filled with awe and wonder, that this was happening to me here in Nazareth.

All around me was as before, but not me, no not me, it could never ever be the same again.

When I heard that my cousin Elizabeth was pregnant I immediately knew that I had to go. An old woman childless till

now; was this of God too, was it part of my journey, I had to know and she would need help. It would give my parents and Joseph time to come to terms with what I had told them.

It was a long journey; as I approached their home she ran out, she called my name, clasped me and blessed me and the child in my womb. How did she know?

I felt my sacred treasure leap within me; it was the first time I had felt movement; it was beginning, I wondered how it would all end?

Elizabeth's baby was eventually born, he was a healthy boy and Zachariah named him John. Zachariah had lost his voice, but suddenly it returned. I think both were the result of the shock of becoming a father at last; on one hand he found it hard to believe yet he was married, I'm not married, which is a problem for some, but I know I believe.

All was well, time to come home, time to discover the next stage of the journey.

How do you tell? How do you explain? How do you help people to believe, what appears to be an impossibility?

I saw the joy in my Father's face turn to shock as he greeted me, it was difficult to avoid noticing my altered shape. My mother gathered me in her arms and led me indoors. I told them not to worry, I told them all would be well, it was all God's doing.

My Father left the house, I knew he was going to see Joseph. I waited, I lifted my eyes to the heavens from where my help will come.

Before long Joseph returned with my Father, I could see he was upset. I tried to put his mind at rest, but he turned and left the house. I watched him almost running down the road. I watched until he was out of sight; was it out of my life? What lay ahead for me now?

A single woman with child, the law was strict, stoning, death, was that what I was waiting for? And yet my soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices, my God has done marvellous things, yes he has! So in all of this I still glorify his name, he has blessed me greatly, lowly as I am, in Him alone will I trust.

The sun was almost set when out of the window space I saw the shadow of a figure appearing on the horizon, I knew it was Joseph. He was running, running towards the house. He burst through the door his arms reaching towards me, his face glowing with joy and love. My heart was singing, I knew my hope had not been in vain.

He greeted me, he knelt down before me, he asked for my blessing, my blessing, me a woman bless a man! I shared with him all the blessings I had received till this moment just as I would share with him all that was to come. But deep within me there is a wonder, a deep stirring and I continue to ponder.

Walk with me, let us all ponder and reflection on what this Annunciation means for all of us. What is God saying to you? Who or what are you called to give birth to? Together, let us look to our God and hope in Him, no matter what is to come.