

# Reflections for 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## 4th Sunday of Advent

### God at the margins

The traditional themes of Advent remind us that God often seems to be at work from the margins, rather than from the centre, to bring about something new. God called unlikely people to become the 'patriarchs', the founders of his chosen people, and to be the prophets who proclaimed his word. And God called John the Baptist to stand out in the wilderness to call for repentance, and to point the way to the Messiah who was coming. And now we come to Mary, and to her place in the gospel story.

The nativity story shows us that God comes to dwell among us at the margins, because it is set in an out-of-the-way place – at the edge of the then-known Roman world, in a minor occupied country, and in an unfavoured northern province, and in the life and body of an ordinary young woman. For Mary was an ordinary young woman, except in her readiness to hear and answer God's call, and so she has been described as being 'full of readiness for God'.

Perhaps God prefers to start at the margins, away from the centres of power as we see it, because there is more space to work at the edge, and to do something new, where people may be more ready for change and hope. Like the patriarchs, the prophets, like John the Baptist, and Mary, we may often feel that our lives are at the margin of things. And, like them, we may discover that we are called to clear a space in our lives, to 'prepare the way' for God's approach, by being 'full of readiness for God'. As Mary said, so we may say:

I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me according to your word.

Revd John Waller

God our Father,  
the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary  
that she was to be the mother of your Son.  
Though Mary was afraid,  
she responded to your call with joy.  
Help us, whom you call to serve you,  
to share like her in your great work  
of bringing to our world your love and healing.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

Bible readings: 2 Samuel 7. 1-11, 16; Romans 16. 25-27; Luke 1. 26-38

Story: 'Mary and the Angel' (based on the gospel reading)