**Reflecting on the Feast of the Annunciation**

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Monday the 8th of April is the feast of annunciation. Strange in a way to be thinking already about the build-up to the birth of Jesus when we’ve only just been celebrating Easter, but the cycle of the year begins again! Maybe you feel like you need a rest after the Easter season, time to catch up and take stock ready for the coming summer? We all need that, but the rest is an active rest, in that we have time, but even through the time of rest our calling is ever present. On the moment of the annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), we are witnesses of Mary’s calling. Mary receives this calling straight from the mouth of God’s messenger, Gabriel. Gabriel doesn’t hold back. Gabriel gives Mary the full picture, at least in terms of the nature of what Mary is being asked to do, to be. She is to bear a child, but not an ordinary child. Mary is to give birth to and bring up the “Son of the Most High”, the inheritor of the throne of David, the Son of God. I’m sure Mary must have found this overwhelming, yet she was willing to accept the call.

Mary had time, this wasn’t going to happen overnight and maybe there were times at the beginning when she questioned whether it had really happened, whether she had actually been called? But she had, and she had taken up the calling! Mary’s journey had begun. As we begin again the journey with her from the annunciation to the resurrection, maybe now is a time to reflect again on our calling to birth new things, sing new songs and make new wine? We cannot know what the year ahead will hold, but we can know our calling and we can say again, “Here am I, servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Oh Mary, sweet girl, strong woman, survivor, mother. How your life must have spun, how your soul must have shook, how your heart must have flown! To feel the light break through, startling in its focus. To feel the love crash in, blinding in its perfection. To hear the voice, dawn singing, clear and soft, definite yet light, soothing in its authority, caressing in its power. “Fear not!” and you did not fear! Though you did not understand, you did not run from the one who spoke, you did not shy from his sight.

Oh Mary, sweet girl, strong woman, survivor, mother. How his eyes must have shone as they looked on you. How his face must have beckoned you, embraced you and loved you. How his words must have spiralled and danced, weaving purpose and promise, colours and harmonies into a life so new. How did you feel it, did it warm your skin like the morning sun then gradually push deeper until it soaked your heart? Or did it well like a spring of frothing purity from your centre until it flowed through your veins?

Oh Mary, sweet girl, strong woman, survivor, mother. In that flicker you became the life giver, the author of light, the birther of love, the carrier of blessing. You became mother of mothers, archetype and inspiration, hope and comfort. Even then you were ordinary, even then you were normal, even then you were humble. But what is ordinary if it is not beautiful, what is normal if it is not rich, what is humble if it is not full of grace?

Oh Mary, sweet girl, strong woman, survivor, mother. How little you knew, yet how much you were willing to take on. How did you find the words, where did your language rise from? “How?” you asked, not “Why?” “Yes!” you answered, not “But…” Would I respond the same? Would my words be words of willingness or would I hesitate? Could I begin to walk the road you took that day? Could I sing your song? Could I look into Gabriel’s glow and choose to take the words as my words?

Oh Mary, sweet girl, strong woman, survivor, mother. When you saw, when you knew, when you chose, the Word began to beat.