

## **Donnybrook**

8 December 2021

### **Welcome**

During the summer, there was an article in one of the papers by a first-time father. He was reflecting on bringing home the baby, for the first time. There was some kind of receipt from the hospital, but no exam or licence on becoming a parent, no instructions and no returns policy.

### **Topic**

Today's feast marks the preparation of Mary to become the mother of the Son of God.

### **Steps**

Her preparation had two sides. The first side is simply God's grace – or as the second reading puts it, his free gift to us in the beloved. It is pure gift, unforeseen and unearned. Behind the gift stands the giver, God, who loves the human race and loves each one of us with the very same individual intensity, hard though it may be to imagine it. In Advent and Christmas, we stand before the unaccountable love of God.

The second side was Mary's gift of herself, her trusting faith, her willingness, expressed in simple and direct language: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me." In his Gospel, Luke goes on to portray Mary as the model disciple: she treasured all these things in her heart, she heard the word of God and she kept it.

All these things took place so that all of us would be blessed in Christ, with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Still, it can be hard to find ourselves in the exceptional, even unique, story of the Annunciation. This much may help. God approaches each of us with the same grace, the same love and with our individual calling. As in the Annunciation, God does not impose but awaits the response of each one of us. Will I hear his word? Will I respond to his grace? Will I have the courage of Mary: let what you have said be done to me.

As Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic said, speaking of Christmas,

We are celebrating the feast of the Eternal Birth which God the Father has borne and never ceases to bear in all eternity... But if it does not take place in me, what is the point of our celebration? Everything lies in this, that it should take place in me.