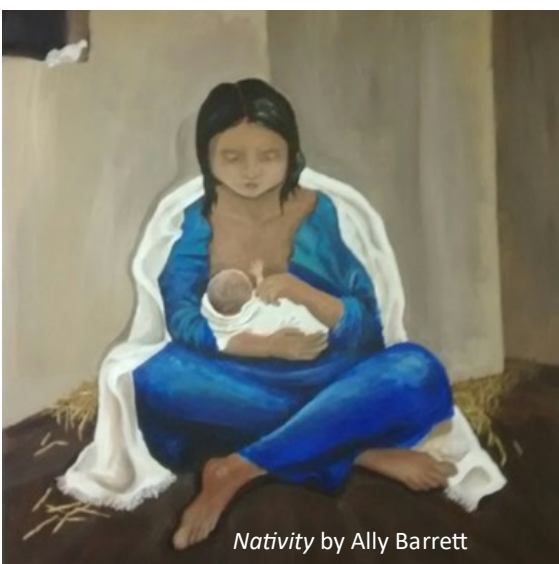


Love...



Annunciation by Ally Barrett



Nativity by Ally Barrett

In this image of the annunciation, Mary holds her hands out to the dove, about to draw it to herself and cradle it. She welcomes the Holy Spirit with generosity and open arms. But her hair streams behind her, revealing the raw power of the divine, and perhaps she might even fall if it were not for the fact that she, too, is held, cradled and supported by the God who made her and loves her and calls her, and will give her whatever she needs to bear this greatest of joyful burdens.

Mary loves because she has been loved. She opens her body to the incarnation because she is already held in God's powerful, loving arms. God overshadows her, but she stands strong because God has always been there, wrapping her in an embrace that allows her to believe that nothing is impossible with God.

The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ..For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Luke 1

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

Isaiah 42 / Luke 4

Mary can then embrace the Christ-child, because she is still embraced, still held, by God. God's love for the world finds its focus in the love between Mary and her child, and from there, it fills the world.

For reflection or discussion

- How have you experienced the love of God in the past few months?
- How have you been given strength to embrace some of the challenges of the past few months?
- How have you been moved to show the love of God to others? How are you witnessing the love of God in the world at the moment?