

It is our Patronal Festival, the Day when we celebrate The Virgin Mary after which we are named.

I wonder what she would think of that:

### **Mary' Church**

So, they have named a church after me.

Now there's a joke.

Paul, he's a go-getter,

Bulldozing people into believing.

Peter racked by guilt will work for ever.

Barnabas, John, any of the others,

They go and preach and teach and heal.

But me?

I tag along.

I like to talk about Him,

I like to hear their certainty that he is still alive.

But I cannot help but wonder what it was all for,

The pain, the betrayal, the awful shameful death.

If only he had stuck to carpentry.

So, they have named a church after me.

Is it like me, full of questions,

A church for those that love Him even though they don't understand,

A church for those prepared to sit and wait?

I still wait.

And sometimes He comes to me,

Touches me, tell me not to worry,

That I played my part well.

If my church is faithful,

Prepared to be there

Absorbing the pain and confusion of all who come

Will it too play its part well?

Now there's a question? Will we play our part well?

What are we here to do?

We are here to make the world a better place, to make people's lives better, and by so doing, to demonstrate our love for God our creator, the one who showed us the way of love through Christ.

And that is difficult because there is so much that gets in the way. There is sin and all our inadequacies, but there is church stuff too. We have this beautiful building, on which we have just spent a fortune restoring the spire. It looks fantastic, but now the church needs rewiring before something terrible happens, and the lighting is awful and needs replacing with a system that does not cost £2000 every time a bulb needs changing. These things need doing because the building is a focus, it attracts people, enables them to come and hear the gospel message, but the fact remains, we are not here to serve a building.

We have halls that we let and the income helps us buy candles and music and all the things we need for worship, the halls provide links too with the wider community, for mothers and toddlers, for pilates and ballet, for meetings of resident committees and for parties, but we are not here to be a commercial business.

We are here to serve; to serve God and the community. The building and the halls helps us in this, but they are not an end in themselves. We cannot serve unless we make space for Christ, unless we say Yes to God as Mary did. And as she found that brought joy and pain, and tested her obedience to the limit.

Every week at the Eucharist we receive the body and blood of Christ. Every week we exchange the peace of Christ. We are called to share this peace, this love that is God's gift, with all people, everywhere. To be servants of the Lord. Can we say 'yes' to that?

Let me end with another flight of fancy on the Annunciation.

### **Annunciation**

If only I had said 'no'  
thought Mary as she sat by the stove,  
The unborn child fluttering inside her.  
If only I had said no, my mother would not be frowning.  
Or thumping the bread dough onto the table in that determined manner.  
If only I had said 'no', Joseph would not be looking at me  
questioningly, wondering if he had made a mistake,  
always checking my mobile phone for texts from an unknown number.  
If only I had said 'no', I wouldn't be about to be sent off to my aged aunt  
Deep in the countryside. What punishment that will be.  
If only I had said 'no' I could have called my first child Samuel  
Or Rebecca, much better names than Jesus.  
If only...

But I couldn't say 'no'.  
Not after seeing that dazzling figure  
Or hearing that voice that sounded like the sea  
and feeling the warmth of God's love  
Which clung to him like mist.  
I can still sense that love

and feel the peace, a calm,  
A knowledge that whatever storms there may be  
It will not matter.  
Is that the peace of this child,  
This tiny Saviour,  
The Son of God?  
If so, when my mother and Joseph meet this child,  
They and anyone and everyone that meets him  
will be glad that I said 'yes'.