

Soul Space

SERIES: AWAITING SOME REAL GOOD NEWS

Season colour: **PURPLE**

In this series, **Gerard Moloney CSsR** takes a deeper look at the great Season of Advent.

In 431 AD the Church gave Mary the wonderful title of *Theotókos*. It is a Greek word which means “God-bearer”. It is a beautiful and profound title. Mary is God-bearer. She carried Jesus in her womb. She bore him, gave birth to him, brought him into the world, and so we honour her with the title *Theotókos*.

Mary became *Theotókos* because of her ‘yes’ to God. She said ‘yes’ to what God asked of her at the Annunciation. Troubled though she was by what the angel told her, she said, “Be it done unto me according to your word.” Let God do with me what God wants. I am at God’s service.

Mary said ‘yes’ even though she wasn’t sure where it would lead or what its consequences would be. She said ‘yes’, and that ‘yes’ changed history. It brought Jesus into our world and made our salvation possible. Everything changed forever because Mary said ‘yes’, a yes she said not once but repeated every single day of her life.

That is our challenge as Christians. Like Mary, we are called to be *Theotókos*, God-bearer, in our time and place. In other words, by the kind of people we are, the values we hold, the love we show, the compassion we display, the forgiveness we offer - we give birth to Christ, make God visible, to all whose lives touch ours this Christmas and in 2018 and beyond.

A BIG CHALLENGE

Trying to be a God-bearer is not easy. We live in an increasingly secular society. We live in a time when to publicly acknowledge you are a Catholic can be to invite ridicule, to be dismissed as a Holy Joe or Holy Josephine, as someone easily led. We live in a society in which religion is regarded more and

more either as irrelevant or as something that one should keep strictly private. But as Christians, each of us is called to be *Theotókos*, God-bearer.

When I think of people who give witness to Jesus, I think of someone like Donal Walsh, the 16-year-old from Kerry who died in 2013. There was a wonderful documentary about him on TV the following Christmas. It showed him full of life, determined, with a message of hope for others, and a deep faith he was not afraid to show. He made a profound impression on people. You could see the impact he made on Brendan O’Connor when he interviewed him for his TV show. “He was in the state of grace,” Brendan said of Donal. An extraordinary statement to make about a 16-year-old whose one great ambition was to play rugby for Munster. An extraordinary statement to make about anyone. That was the power of Donal Walsh’s witness. He was *Theotókos*.

Of course, saying ‘yes’ to God, being a God-bearer, doesn’t magically transform everything. It won’t remove the financial worries and burdens so many of us carry. It won’t take away the tears and the sorrow we feel when loved ones die or relationships sunder. It won’t take away the problems facing the church.

But that’s how it was for Mary too. Being God-bearer didn’t make life any easier for her either. She struggled to make sense of God’s plan for her. She worried about her son, she witnessed his passion and execution, but she knew that through every struggle, every difficulty, God was with her. Through every sorrow, every joy, every setback, God never abandoned her. She knew she was never alone. And neither are we. That is the wonderful, consoling, reassuring message of this season. God is always one with us as we bear witness to him. ■

series ends



Today’s readings

2 Samuel 7:1-5.
8-12, 14,16
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

families had formally agreed to the betrothal and were beginning to draw up the marriage agreement. The Gospel highlights Mary’s agreement to the unexpected direction her life will now take. Her child will be heir to David’s throne, the one promised in the prophecy that forms our first reading today.

GOD’S WORD TODAY

The Annunciation scene has been depicted by many of the greatest painters in history. They usually depict the angel as breaking in unexpectedly and unannounced to deliver a message to a beautiful young lady. Mary is usually reading or spinning as though this was an interruption to her ordinary everyday life as the daughter of a peasant family in Galilee. She is betrothed to a man named Joseph – probably like herself a young person, looking forward to beginning married life and whose courtship had come to the point that their



BEING GOD-BEARERS

Like Mary, we are called to be God-bearers in our time and place.

