

# Advent 10th Dec: Change and comfort



*The annunciation, James Tissot*

Change is all around us and can be an enemy or a friend. Mary's courage is an example and a challenge to us all. But we do not walk through changing circumstances alone.

## Opening Prayer

Thanks to thee, O God, that I have risen to-day,  
To the rising of this life itself;  
May it be to Thine own glory, O God of every gift,  
And to the glory of my soul likewise.  
O great God, aid Thou my soul  
With the aiding of Thine own mercy ;  
Even as I clothe my body with wool,  
Cover Thou my soul with the shadow of Thy wing.  
Help me to avoid every sin,  
And the source of every sin to forsake ;  
And as the mist scatters on the crest of the hills,  
May each ill haze clear from my soul, O God. (From the Carmina Gadelica)

## The story continues...

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' 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.' (Luke 1: 34 - 35)

## Reflection

The word "overshadow" can have negative connotations; the sun blocked out, cold air and darkness, perhaps a sense of being overwhelmed, and the "valley of the shadow of death". Yet the psalmist also refers to being in "the shadow of your wing" frequently, and in a very different sense, representing comfort and protection. What might the word have meant for Mary as she contemplated the angel's message? There must have been apprehension, but perhaps comfort also as she realised that God would be with her in the time to come which she would realise was going to be difficult and onerous. God's call on her life, however, includes a commitment to comfort and strengthen her as she walks with him and he covers her with the shadow of his wing.

## Exercise

Think of a situation you are in which is proving difficult or burdensome. Picture the wings of God spread over you in shelter and comfort, like loving arms. What would you like to say to God, and what does he say to you? Can you walk forward under the protection of God?