

**ST AIDAN'S UNITING CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST
SATURDAY 25 DECEMBER 2010
Rev. Anneke Oppewal**



A Christmas Reflection - "Mary's Treasure"

Once again I'd like to invite you to look at the Icon we have been using. This time we will focus on Mary. She is right at the centre of the Icon. She is also larger than any of the other figures. This indicates she deserves special attention for her role in the story, she comes bearing an important message for our life of faith. She is dressed in the brownish red of earth and the blue of heaven. Behind her is the Christ child. A person in whom heaven and earth combine. In whom mankind is made whole again, as it should be, the image of God. In Mary heaven and earth are still separated. Around her heaven and earth are still separated. Two kinds of messengers testify to her and to the world. From heaven the angels come, bursting with the news (literally), from earth the shepherds come too, a bit later. They each, in their own way, speak of what happens in and through Mary: Heaven comes down, taking on human form, coming to birth in the vulnerability of human flesh.

All of the figures speak to us of important aspects of the Christmas message, but Mary has a message to deliver that is perhaps the most important: She gives birth to the child, she protects the child (notice how she guards the mouth of the cave?), she treasures the word. She welcomes angels and shepherds into her life, and listens to what each has to say. Bearing fruit - hence the wheat sheaf she is resting on - for God.

The fruit of her womb, Christ, is the bread of life, the true vine that will nurture the vision of God's Kingdom becoming reality.

She looks out into the world with the Messiah at her back. Looks at Joseph in the corner who is struggling with his own reality, needing his support when later they will have to flee the vicious Herod. Giving birth is hard work and it is she who puts it in. There is sadness in her face, it is as if she already knows what lies ahead of her. This baby will bring her sadness and grief, the gift of light he brings will make darkness surface. Or perhaps, it is just that once you've seen the light the darkness stands out in starker contrast.

Mary reminds us there are blood and tears involved for new life to come and be born among us. That light and love cost. That we can only care and protect and treasure what is of Christ if we are together in this. Giving birth, protecting the life it brings, being the body of Christ, living the Word in the world in his footsteps, being the dawn of a new creation in our sharing and nurturing of each other and the world.