

Just as I am

By Judy Taylor



A few days ago I saw an item on the television advising that the series “The Vicar of Dibley” would be showing again shortly. I wonder how many of you remember Geraldine the Vicar and who could forget her out for a walk in the countryside jumping in puddles then jumping into what she thought was another puddle that turned out to be deep hole bringing the water up to her waist! Or the number of Christmas dinners she had to eat so as not to offend those who had invited her. There is one particular episode which was about replacing an important stained glass window in Geraldine’s church St. Barnabas which had become broken in a storm. Geraldine manages to raise enough money to pay for a new window but then sees details on television of a dreadful famine taking place which is causing huge suffering affecting children in particular. The money for the new window goes to the victims of this famine and the window is replaced by plain glass. When the time comes for the window to be unveiled, everyone agrees it couldn’t be better, the view from the window was a beautiful sunset over the surrounding countryside. An unadorned window but with a view of the natural glory of creation.

You will I’m sure by now have had the Christmas catalogues through your door or at least seen Christmas cards in the shops, many of them depicting Mary, the mother of Jesus wearing a beautiful white shawl covering her blonde hair and wearing a pale blue robe similar to how the Victorian painters portray her when Gabriel came calling. Mary was a young girl from a poor family with no expectation of a future to pursue simply because she was a female and therefore of little consequence. Imagine how she must have felt when she saw the angel Gabriel and was told she would become pregnant and bear God’s Son. The pregnancy alone would have given her great anxiety; in her culture to be unmarried and with child could mean being stoned to death. Mary, sitting in her modest home, a lone woman in a man’s world and she is not yet even a wife. She is due

no respect by virtue of her age or social position. She has no status and no title, Mary is the direct opposite of all that Gabriel proclaims.

But God sees Mary exactly as she is, a young girl, obedient to her parents who is to be married to an older man, not uncommon in Biblical times. Mary, with no great expectations really, just to be a good wife and possibly a mother eventually. God sees what to Mary seemed impossible which was the real possibility of her life changing in a way she could not have ever imagined, it just needed her to say “yes” to God. Mary would not have had beautiful robes of blue or headdresses of white lace, quite the opposite and certainly her hair would not have been blonde!

There are occasions when some people can be dazzled by the appearance of others, and with the media’s influence begin to believe they have to aspire to look, behave and try to emulate the lifestyle of a particular pop star, sports personality or celebrity. Most of what they see however is often just a dressing, just like the portrayal of Mary, nothing like the real person at all.

We all paint our own picture of ourselves to present to the world and this picture will often hide our true feelings, our fears and as we see them, our failings; it is our way of protecting ourselves. God does not see us this way, he knows the truth of our hearts, we do not need to try and adorn ourselves for him, he just loves us as we are and longs for us to say “yes” as Mary did when he calls us.

There is a special verse in that well loved hymn “Just as I am” that reflects what I have tried to say.

Just as I am though tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings within and fears without, O Lamb of God I come.

We only need to come to God just as we are, that is enough and all he asks of us, he understands our conflicts and our doubts. His joy is in loving us just for who we are. May we always find that clear unadorned vision as in the window of St. Barnabas which shows the path to the beautiful truth of God’s love for each one of us so that we may say yes with joyful thanks for that unconditional love.