Advent is my favourite liturgical season.

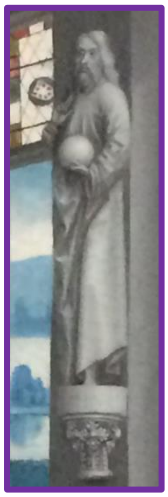
For the last six- or seven-years during Advent I have visited the National Gallery to meditate on the art based around the Incarnation.

This 15th Century painting, by an artist simply known as the Master of Liesborn, is one panel from the Altarpiece of Liesborn which depicted many scenes of the life of Christ. Here Gabriel visits Mary to announce that she will be the bearer of the Messiah, the one who was hoped for. Mary's response in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) shows that she was familiar with the voices of the past, the voices of the Prophets and the Psalms.

The Annunciation: Master of Liesborn .

Before Mary, on either side of the arch, are those of the past, possibly representing the patriarchs and prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. (Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6,7)

And as we look further into the room, on the right-hand side, the figure of Christ holds an orb in his hand. Christ the Saviour of the World. (Colossians 1:15-20)



Salvator Mundi.

My interpretation of this picture is one which makes it a reflection of the themes of Advent in which we can see the hopes of the past, present and future.

- The hopes of the Prophets, looking for the coming of the Messiah.
- God stepping into Mary's present, as he does our present, in the person of Jesus, made incarnate of the Virgin Mary, who through his sacrifice on the cross, gives us the hope of salvation.
- Christ will come again to judge the world and reconcile creation to himself, a time for which we wait longingly, with hope.

Pamela Ive