

On Hope and Holiness

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What an unlikely harbinger this Mary, messenger of the holy God born of humanity. For Unitarian Universalists it is an unlikely and frankly intellectually impossible story to believe; a virgin's birth of God's son: neither logical nor rational. But as a mythical story it offers a welcome and much needed message; that in the midst of a dark night of our souls a light pierces the gloom of that desperate time and offers hope and renewal. Christian and non-Christian alike all seek that very hope, love and compassion this child's story offers. Jesus' birth helps us all to find deeper meaning and purpose in our lives.

If you were to choose a messenger of hope today would it be through the birth of a poor insignificant Jewish kid away in a manger or from a family more substantial, more prominent, able to harness great wealth and the media to have an effective slick advertising campaign to spread the word of the birth of a new born God.

On reflection, God was clever to choose a new born babe to be the symbol of hope for humankind. We all know that a child changes our lives dramatically and for all times. Each night a child is born is indeed a holy night. Jesus was no exception, except that he changed the world through the miracle of his birth and life of Civil disobedience. Christ would have been marching with the Occupy Movement. Having children is for all parents a wonderful act of madness and surely an act of faith in the future.

Mary's and Joseph's relationship was tested early on as they were unwed and she was with child, a violated and scorned woman. Joseph could have sent her off but he did the Christian thing, before there were Christians, and took care of her and the new born child. Their joy became manifest in new life. Parenting for them like all of us today is exhausting and frustrating yet the most wonderful thing that can happen to two people. The act of having a child is an act of pure faith and hope as they faced a dangerous and uncertain future. It is always miraculous.

The God of their time was one of majesty and love. He/she made no damning judgment about Mary's status. Instead, God honored her above all women by choosing her to be the vessel of life eternal.

We UUs are called to honor Mary and Jesus not to judge them for their circumstances. What we focus on is the love and compassion showed between Mary and Joseph for the helpless child of promise. We know that all of us are born blessed, that children are an integral part of the web of continuing existence and their birth adds dignity and worth to the world.

Whether Mary is Queen of Heaven, repository of all wisdom and compassion; or an earthly human mother, obedient handmaiden, fallen, shamed unwed mother with head covered and bowed, her eyes cast to the ground; she is still the bearer of a miracle child of hope in a time of political and social upheaval. As all parents, Mary and Joseph were blessed. They set a worthy example of what good parenting calls us to. This holy family, like all families, is sacred in the eyes of God. All of us Christian and non-Christian need to know that our existence matters and that our purpose in this life is to leave the world a better more loving, compassionate and kinder place. That is this holy family's legacy to us. That is the bright shining star we follow. That is the light that redeems our souls and our lives.

And for that alone, we offer thanks be to the holy God who gave us God's messengers; Mary and Joseph who modeled right relations and their blessed son Jesus, who through his sacrifice offered us eternal life and most of all, hope and love. There can be no greater gift than that unconditional Grace. Take that blessing home with you for you too are sacred and holy.

Merry Christmas!