
Christmas is Trusting the Holiness in Another Person

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

From Dean Sam Candler's December 18, 2016, sermon for Advent and Christmas. [Click here](#) to read the full sermon.

It might be that the gospel writer Matthew understood full well his inability to know what goes on inside women. And so, he doesn't even try to tell us! Get this: Of all the stories we have about the angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary, all our Christmas Pageant stories, the stories we have about Mary's fear and trust and faith, stories which are quite beautiful — none of those stories comes from the Gospel of Matthew! All the stories about Mary's role in the nativity of Jesus come only from the Gospel of Luke. Matthew never even supposes how Mary felt.

Instead, Matthew's story of the birth of Jesus centers around the man, centers around Joseph. Today's gospel passage is the story of the angel's appearance not to Mary, but to Joseph! It gives the details not of how Mary felt, but of how Joseph felt.

...

The message of the angel, according to Matthew, was directed not to Mary, but to Joseph. The comforting words, "do not fear," were directed to Joseph. The command to call his name Jesus, the promise that he would save the people from their sins, came to Joseph.

We associate many miracles with the Christmas story: conception by the Holy Spirit, angels appearing to people, a wondrous star in the East, Mary's belief and willingness to conceive, and, of course, the deep miracle of God becoming human at all. But another sort of miracle happened two thousand years ago, one that we often miss. Matthew did not miss it. It is this: In a society that fully expected a wife to be always obedient to her husband, a husband instead was obedient to his wife.

A man had compassion on a woman. A man did not know what was going on inside a woman, and yet he trusted her. A man endured shame and societal ridicule because of what was going on in a woman. In fact, we might say that a man *had faith* in what was going on in a woman. ...

In fact, just like Mary, Joseph was actually preparing for the Holy One to enter his own life. But unlike Mary, Joseph had to prepare for the Holy One to pass through the body of someone else. Joseph had to accept the Holy from someone else. ...

Our human reality is that it's hard to know what is going on inside anybody other than ourselves, male or female. But to *trust* whatever is going on is even harder. And to be *obedient* to what goes on inside another person is a miracle!

Yet, that is exactly what true love is, Christmas love! True love is trusting what is going on inside another person. Relationships which endure in life are not those based on fleeting moments or misdirected dreams, as if a mere dream could make you love someone. Dreams don't make you love someone, because dreams don't teach you to trust. True lovers know that their love is not a dream; their love is a mutual trust in the holiness of the other person. ...

Do not fear, said the angel, to take Mary as your wife. Do not fear, says the angel, to trust and be obedient to the other person; for that which is conceived in them is of the Holy Spirit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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