

The Nativity of the Lord Reflection By Loren Elizabeth Christie

Aggression is the way of the world, but it is not the way of Mary, the mother of the author of the world. Her way is trust and patience, and it yielded results in her life. She and Joseph, along with baby Jesus, make up the Holy Family, and they are role models for all families.

On the Nativity of Our Lord we hear the first 25 lines of the first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, including a list of Jesus' ancestors through Joseph. Here Matthew proves Jesus' legal right as an adoptive son, (according to Jewish law and customs), to the royal lineage of King David, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

The Holy Family lived in a world that was violent, dangerous and seemingly devoid of compassion. Yet Joseph followed a dream in which God's presence was strong enough to persuade him to choose faith over logic, forgoing his plan to quietly divorce Mary for carrying a child that was not his. Descended from generations of people who relied on the power of God, Joseph was perfectly chosen to be the husband of Mary, who through her Immaculate Conception, trusted God flawlessly.

Mathew's 1:1-25 stood out to me as I tried to pick a Christmas reading to reflect on from the perspective of a parent of an LGBTQ+ individual, since lately I have been knee-deep in my own ancestry story, trying to prove lineage to a Revolutionary War soldier in order to qualify as a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Glancing down at the winding family tree pasted onto poster board that I was enthusiastically explaining, my 22 year-old transgender daughter remarked, "Why does any of this matter? These people are nothing to me. Who on this board would accept me?"

The rejection of my daughter's transition by close extended relatives has been very painful for our nuclear family. We have struggled to continue to try to reach out and be patient in hope of reconciliation with them, after she came out 4 years ago. The reveal hit me like a cannon ball, the latest in a series hurled towards me by Life, turning me into a skipping vinyl record repeating, "Wait, what?"

But thanks to grandmothers who modeled devotion to the Rosary, I developed an admiration for the Blessed Mother as a child. So, in the face of mind blowing situations, I have learned to cling to her pattern: *Stop. Quiet, Listen, Watch, Wait.*

In that spirit of hope I reached out again, inviting my family over for dinner, with my daughter's encouragement, despite the current tension. Some accepted the invitation, but others did not. This was the new wound that was aching as my daughter and I made small talk about genealogy.

“The research matters because it proves that you come from people who persevere and have faith.” I pointed to my name on the tree. “You have me on this board,” I said.

As we hugged, I felt secure, like a boat tied well before a storm, that I could follow through on my decision to accompany my transgender daughter through her life, maintaining hope for acceptance within the family, and in society.

“This situation hurts,” I continued, referring to setting ourselves up for rejection by expecting that a relationship could change, “but look at our ancestors! We are tough as nails!”

My daughter smirked.

As parents of LGBTQ+ individuals, is it possible to trust God like Mary and Joseph, accompanying our children in a perpetual state of hope? Through the grace gifted to us in Baptism, the answer is: Yes, we qualify.

About the Author: Married for 26 years, Loren lives on Long Island in New York with her husband, John. They have three college-age children. Loren has worked as a high school English teacher, a local journalist, and is currently a director of Catholic faith formation within the Diocese of Rockville Centre. She also volunteers as a docent for a local history foundation.