

**A woman who comes to Spirituality classes here at the Center told this story the other day and I'd like to share it with you:**

**“33 years ago, she said,**

**I had just given birth to my 3<sup>rd</sup> child and the kids were sick...**

**a couple had the flue, one had pneumonia.**

**It was just a week or so before Christmas,**

**so none of my regular babysitters wanted to watch the kids,**

**for fear of getting sick themselves.**

**So I had to wait till my husband got home from work,**

**so I could go out and run a few errands.**

**One night about 10:00pm I'm in K-Mart.**

**And it's packed. PACKED!**

**I'm exhausted, I'm stressed... I'm just trying to hold it together,**

**trying to get my shopping done as quickly as possible, so I can get back home**

**and get some sleep before somebody throws up again....**

**So there I am in K-Mart, with 100 million other sleep deprived crazy shoppers,**

**I am almost done....and I mis-place my cart...**

**I can't find it! Up an down the packed aisles I look and it's no where to be seen..**

**and over the loud speakers, disrupting the shmoozy Christmas music,**

**a lady in a crass voice is announcing the 'blue light special'**

**And I break.**

**I loose it.**

**I say outloud, to no one in particular:**

**“I'm done!**

**I'm out of here!**

**I'd rather be 9 months pregnant riding a donkey in the middle of a desert**

**rather than be in K Mart with the blue light special at 10 o'clock at night**

**a week before Christmas!”**

**And I bolt out of the store  
and have never been in a K-Mart since.”**

**Of course,  
as she is telling the story  
we all start laughing...  
We can all imagine her in the K-Mart reaching her limit  
we all can recognize a little bit of ourselves in her story...**

**Can we recognize ourselves in the other story we have heard this day  
the story of Mary and Joseph journeying to Bethlehem?**

**2,000 years ago a young woman engaged to an older man finds herself pregnant.  
They’re not married yet!  
This should not be happening!**

**Joseph’s decision to stay with Mary, as told in Matthew’s gospel...  
and Mary’s decision to give birth to the Messiah  
weren’t easy decisions by any stretch of the imagination...  
They weren’t politically correct decisions.  
They weren’t religiously correct decisions...  
and they certainly weren’t socially correct decisions....  
but still Mary and Joseph, each in their own way and said yes to God’s invitation...  
they trusted their own experience of God and gave birth to a baby boy  
whose life changed the course of the world...**

**What is it, do you think, that God is asking of you?  
Can you trust yourself and your God to be led on a journey  
that will let love loose in the world?**

**All of us...Each of us is invited on this journey!**

**Each of us is invited to give Birth to Love  
in radically counter cultural ways...**

**each of us is invited to show love, offer love, give love  
in ways that may or may not  
be religious, socially or politically correct...**

**But each of us have been promised that if we say yes,  
if we are willing to journey through times  
that may seem dark and difficult  
we will not have to go it alone..  
each of us will be given the Grace, the Power,  
the Presence of the Holy One of the Cosmos  
acting in us and through us,  
before us,  
behind us...  
on our left side and our right.**

**2,000+ years ago a young woman and older man journey far from home to give birth  
to God's Presence in their world,  
which was Love made flesh in Jesus...**

**Jesus was..is...not the only 'incarnation' of God...  
God is intimately connected, intimately a part of  
everything that God has created...**

**At this time of the year  
we celebrate the birth of Jesus...**

for as Christians he is our way-maker...  
he is our model for what it means to  
to give graciously,  
to forgive unceasingly  
and love radically...

This day, whether we are in a tiny chapel in the words  
or on the streets of Chicago,  
or even in the aisles of K-Mart

we too are on a journey of faith...  
we too have been invited to give birth to Love  
in our world, in our lives, in our days.....

Some days it's easy!  
Some days we are full of enthusiasm,  
we know what needs to be done and we have the resources to do it...

but some nights are extraordinarily difficult...  
some nights are exceedingly dark and treacherous  
and we feel as if we do not know where we are going  
or what we are called to do...  
some nights we are called to walk by faith and not by sight...

However our journey leads us, where ever our journey leads us  
we have the advantage of knowing the end of the story...

We already know that darkness does not have the last word...  
we already know that violence and evil do not win...  
we already know,

**not in our heads,  
but our hearts,  
the Love never fails...  
and for this we humbly, deeply say Thank you. Amen.**