

## Mary the Creatrix

Sande Ramage: Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit

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Auditioning  
for Mary



If I was producing a nativity play, I'd pick a young black American woman called Orpah to play Mary.



Fr Richard  
Rohr & Oprah

Super Soul  
Sunday

But you probably know her as Oprah Winfrey through her television talk shows, Oprah and Oprah Soul Sundays.

Vanity Fair magazine said of her that she has, 'arguably more influence on the culture than any university president, politician or religious leader, except perhaps the Pope'.

You could argue that influence is because she's a billionaire, the richest African American of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Money talks. However, it's more likely she is influential because she shares her vulnerability and her stories of struggle.

She grew up in abject poverty wearing dresses made of flour sacks. Other kids laughed at her. She experienced abuse, became pregnant at 14 but her baby, symbolically named Canaan, died soon after birth. She had troubles like ours and that was so reassuring, particularly when her weight expanded and contracted multiple times.



'What I learned at a very early age was that I was responsible for my life. As I became more spiritually conscious, I learned that we all are responsible for ourselves, that you create your own reality by the way you think and therefore act ..... you are your possibilities.'

Oprah maintains a strong commitment to spiritual development:

"What I learned at a very early age was that I was responsible for my life. And as I became more spiritually conscious, I learned that we all are responsible for ourselves, that you create your own reality by the way you

think and therefore act. You cannot blame apartheid, your parents, your circumstances, because you are not your circumstances. You are your possibilities....."



Annunciation  
Sr Plautilla Nelli  
1524-1588

Try telling that to Mary after [Gabriel](#) popped in to deliver his bombshell. A young woman minding her own business in 1<sup>st</sup> century Nazareth and now she's meant to host a baby with dodgy parentage. Understandably, she doesn't want a bar of it and suggests that this may be a case of mistaken identity. But Gabriel pulls the angelic trump card. She caves

into a higher authority.

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The Annunciation  
Dumitrescu Liviu

Mary's apparent submissiveness irritated me for years because it seemed to limit female power. But then I began to play with the stories, mingling and mixing theology and mythologies. I talked to the characters, incorporated my creative imagination and what I was learning through Jungian dream analysis. Instead of being a passive

recipient, I took an active reader response to the text. Mary began to develop into a potent and creative force.

As we know, the Christian virgin birth story is not the first or only one. Divine child stories appear across time, cultures and religions. Perhaps this is because they carry such important instinctual wisdom. But we're human, we literalise these things and, in the process, kill the message stone dead. That's why we need angels.



Chorus Angelorum  
Valerie Vescovi

[Thomas Merton](#) says angels are an exclamation point emphasising a divine word. But we've forgotten how to trust these strangers, these valuable interruptions in our lives that ought to bring us to a shuddering halt. Thankfully angels know we're trying to ignore them, which is why they have trumpets and short, sharp messages. It's the shock of the exclamation, says Merton, that enables us to grasp the word.

Enter Gabriel who announces that the divine child can only happen in and through humanity. It's as though there is some kind of intrinsic capacity within us that can only be described as sacred. The location of the divine and our responsibility for it loom large.



Wholeness is not achieved by cutting off a portion of one's being but by integration of the contraries. *CG Jung*

Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, describes this as the self. The archetype of wholeness and the regulating centre of the psyche, or the soul, that transcends the ego. This self is constantly seeking integration and wholeness. Jung says, the self might equally be called the God within us, not only the centre but the whole circumference, everywhere and nowhere.



Embodied

Image:  
Jonathan Borba Unsplash

The difference of opinion between God and King David in the first reading from [Samuel](#) now becomes relevant. David's built a gorgeous multi-million dollar palace but forgot that God was living in a tent. Sorry, he says, I can sort that! But God's not keen on being confined. God has other ideas about being embodied within humanity.

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Even more shocking is God's idea that divinity cannot be realised without the crucial feminine aspect of humanity. For cultures that had moved from worship of the female divine to become almost exclusively patriarchal, this was extremely challenging, and continues to be so today.

So, with one short sharp angelic exclamation, Mary becomes a potent symbol. The natural nurturer of the spiritual life, the journey to the interior. But here's the irritating point. That life can only be born from the nine month gestation period. It takes time and courage. None of this is on offer at the mall. This gift won't be in your Christmas stocking.

But before we get complacent, let's recognise that our religious institutions can also gloss over the importance of personal inner spiritual work in favour of saving the world. Blatantly ignoring the wisdom hidden in plain sight in this wondrous annunciation story.

Mary's symbolic attitude is powerful. Like Oprah, she takes hold of her own virgin territory by opening herself up to the divine spark within that seeks wholeness and integration. As a result, she becomes the creatrix, she births the Christ, the ongoing symbol of an integrated life blending intellect, ego, shadow, instinctual knowing and more. What a woman.



This Christmas may you keep developing your inner temple. Taking time to engage and nurture the feminine aspects of your soul, so that you can hear the voice of authority from within, encouraging you to keep rebirthing the divine child.