

Unplanned Pregnancy: A Holiest Art Form

Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés | Jun. 29, 2010 | El Rio Debajo del Rio

This is an encore presentation of a previously posted column. This column first appeared June 30, 2008.

*Make art about whatever of God
you have been given to apprehend.*

*Make enormous and miniscule art,
the kinds we may have to look at
through a microscope at first,
in order to truly see... God.*

*And make the kind of art which,
even from miles away,
is of such magnitude,
we cannot take it all in.*

Call all of these anlagen, God.

*...From the first spark
of two atomic dots,
to the fully formed body
that will carry the wild flame*

...let no one tell you

God is unsuitable

to be portrayed

by your art thusly.

*Let no one convince you your art
is not worthy enough, timely enough,
pragmatic enough, prepared enough
to portray this Godly form.*

Some of us arrived on earth by being beckoned.

*But, most of us snuck across the border at night,
taking our chances, proving again that God.*

But, regardless of any peculiarities regarding our conceptions, we did not arrive accidentally nor recklessly. We arrived, as anyone can see... filled with great purpose... able to thrash and bash about sometimes, to glide, to ride things out, to bud and blossom, to dream and turn this way or that, to cling to the source of nourishment...

all of these instincts set into us for navigating our callings in life... all traits of courage and determination we have ever needed, ironically learnt in our first perilous journey through the Scylla and Charybdis of culture and circumstances, familial pressures, ego fears and frailties... and yet... we also had a mysterious soulful guidance that brought us from first blessing-flash of DNA, to fully born child.

Background To Writing Letters In Support of Children Not Yet Born

I often think that some of the loneliest people in the world are grown adults who go unparented because their own mothers and fathers are gone from this earth, or else live far away from the day to day, or are preoccupied with their own events, perhaps are ill, or sometimes estranged.

We who are 'old enough?' -- and that does not mean in years, but in decent-enough soul sense -- and we who have grown children too, are I think, prompted by soul to act with love and care 'to parent the parents?' in proximity to us,

-- so they are not alone,

-- nor without secure fallback emotionally and spiritually,

-- nor without praise for all the small and large ways each is being a fine mother and a fine father

-- with admiration given to them for their wisdom,

-- and also, little nudges perhaps, about how to be even more effective with less burden on one's circuitry.

-- Certainly to listen; observe closely,

-- to be the loving witness.

-- And, to keep one's lip zipped when necessary.

Little ones and grown children also, are the great comedians of the world, as well as the great magician-adventurers of the universe: brimming with ideas and ever-renewing life, despite their owies, and sometimes despite their very great wounds.

Children of all ages are so courageous. In particular I find little children venerable exemplars for adults in ever so many ways; imagining the future; loving without bounds, often exquisitely intuitive, jumping and running and literally dancing down the grocery store aisle, giving every clear example of how the spirit acts when it is unafraid of what others think.

Imagine that: Children, in so many way, the erudite teachers of the adults 'who have forgotten.?'

Over the decades, when requested or seeming useful, I have written letters of support and what I hope will be taken as encouragement to women and men who so want a child, and are not yet able to conceive, or have not yet found the child on earth who will be family together with them. I tell them to hold on, not to give up; that in one odd way or another, they will find the heart life they are seeking.

Also, I've written letters to couples and individuals who suddenly find themselves pregnant and frightened. Letters also go to parents of young teenagers who have been visited by the spark of life under

very difficult circumstances. These letters written, I suppose you could say, are about childbearing ... but really, I think, they are letters written to the deep interior, to, in some way, ?parent the parents.?

Older couples have also received letters with my thoughts for them; they who were a bit taken aback (or perhaps greatly taken aback) by the fact that their grown children whom they had great plans for and with, suddenly announced to them they will soon be first-time grandparents.

Too, I've been so taken over the years with how readily parents and grandparents of a person ?suddenly pregnant? will calm and think things through -- a bit, to a great deal more easily -- if we, as elders, just reach out and touch their shoulders, saying, ?I am nearby now; you have an experienced person at hand. Not a perfectly hatched one, but one honed sharper by error and inspiration.?

It seems soul-sensible that we can say to those who are flapping and stressing hard, some version of: ?One way or another, it will be alright. Humans are the most highly adaptable of all creatures; if we can think that someday we will live on Mars, we can also find all the means and ways to help this precious life to earth, and steady your cherished life on earth as well.?

I know some strongly disagree with those of us who carry the understanding that God often sends children to us in God?s timing, not ours. That though it is preferred, beforehand, to think, weigh, and plan -- not all are afforded or take that opportunity.

I think we are not in any way blind to suffering. Knowing there are extreme circumstances, most of us sorrow hard, and often angrily, for children who are neglected or harmed...even when we are able to sometimes exert or support palliative action and intervention for them.

Still, I think many are called to witness the preciousness of life that is already on its way. I try to explain to those who vehemently oppose to my sense of this, saying something like this for instance: that I try to hold out to be a guardian of new life, for I do not know which zygote-child-to-be will bring us a cure for cancer. I do not know which child will eliminate war for once and for all. I do not know which person daring to begin life as a dit of DNA and no more than that, will write music that will melt frozen hearts, or create works that will contain criminals, or set the bar higher for what a human being can be and is meant to be...

I try to convey that I am certain I cannot know which child come to earth will exemplify pure love. ... or be the light of someone?s eye, or themselves bring yet their own child to life who will create something precious for or with one or more souls. I don?t know who is coming to earth who will be, in one way or more, a comforting and sometimes discomfoting teacher to his or her own family.

Most of all, I say, I do not know the preciousness of life mentally, but I know it in my bones; I think if one allows all realities about how life comes to earth and how it develops in utero ... if we allow all that into the vast caverns of both heart and mind, we can see we are born with a strong kinship with the magisterial life spark ... that we somehow know that the life force is intelligent and that it receives directive and also is filled with direction.

So, that is how I come to trying to help people not panic about childbearing, and to think of all the ways goodness can be brought to bear on difficult, surprising and sometimes sad situations.

Here is one letter written to a dear couple who were startled to find they were about to be grandparents and that all their plans for how it was supposed to be took a huge detour all of a sudden. You can I think, as you read between the lines, imagine clearly what they wrote to me beforehand. I wrote the letter to help to ?parent the parents? and in this case, to ?parent the parents of the parents.? I offer the letter to encourage you to do likewise, if you feel called.

I have changed my correspondents' names, to protect their privacy.

My dear Y and W, as *abuelita*, grandmotherly person to you both: I will try a little to speak for your parents who were they here, would surely speak to your hearts and souls now. This is just my two cents worth.

First of all, do not panic. Nothing is leaving the planet. I promise you this. Nothing is going to go wrong because you didn't think of it yesterday. Here are some areas of importance to focus on.

1. A child has chosen and is coming to your family. How wonderful! How very, very blessed. Child of your child, blood of your blood, treasure of your treasure. You are grandparents right this instant. *Abuelita* and *Abuelito* (little grandmother, little grandfather). The necklace of your bloodlines and soul-lines is going to be lengthened by one lovely jewel.

2. All our children come into this world and to us on their own terms and God's Timing, not always according to temporal time, yes. Child of your child, blood of your blood, treasure of your treasure. What a miracle, this little time traveler has made for your family. It is not ours to question. A child coming is a knock on the door of our hearts. Open the door. Who is there? Welcome, welcome little one.

3. A question is how will your grown child and his love bless and sacralize their relationship now? At this very moment your child is now a father and a parent. At this very moment his love is a mother and a parent. They have made a child together. Their schooling is secondary to their being parents. There is to be a formal blessing of their relationship very soon. The inquiry to be made is about marriage now. When will this take place? *Muy importante* for the child in later years to know his or her parents did everything to bring calm and commitment, to prepare peace and comfort for his or her arrival on earth.

4. Your child has chosen, by fathering a child, how his life must go ... now. He has already chosen. He has to be free to be with his inamorata here or there, but to be with her. It will not do in later months or years to say he put *anything* else ahead of supporting in every way the mother of his firstborn. You know my dear ones, how a man acts with regard to a woman's first pregnancy is never forgotten by her. It will color the rest of the relationship as long as they both live. This time is the foundation of their *real* relationship. The fundament. Everything might have been all flowers and music before. But now, a child is coming. This is the pragmatic beginning of their relationship. The bedrock is being laid now by how he acts toward her and how she acts toward him.

5. I would like to tell you *mis queridos*, as a mother and grandmother myself, that when your child, your own beloved grown son goes to the bed of his lover, that he is no longer your son in the same way he was before. Though we still offer all succor and opportunity to our grown children, their loyalty and greatest commitment now has to be to the soul they love *over there*. Not to us. Their primary allegiance is no longer to us. Even if they live under our roof. Even if they live close by. Even if you help to support them financially. Even if you are paying their way. They will find the reins of responsibility as you hand them over incrementally.

6. I find for myself, and for my friends, for my patients who are parents of bright, adventurous grown kidlettes, that we are called upon in such a time as this, as parents, to, as they say, "Let Go." To let go can be quite a challenge, for the history of loving and guiding and guarding one's own child is so great, so intense, so dedicated. It is hard to stop such an enormous energy, such a long term way of loving, and refine it to something else now. It cannot be stopped on a dime. But one can slow protective energy and transmute it into an aim-filled energy that encourages adaptation to this sudden surge of new life.

7. But I tell you with all the love in me, that we tend as parents, to go on fashioning one more vessel for our children for a time... long after we are not needed

in that capacity any more. Like the potter's kick wheel, the turntable keeps turning, long after the last vessel has been beautifully made and cut from the disk. We tend to keep turning and thinking, thinking, perhaps hoping, we are necessary in the old ways. We are not.

8. Yet, in fact, we are needed in a whole new way. One that grants as gracefully as possible our child their full freedom to make their choices, their errors, their glories now, on their own. I cannot lie to you. ?Letting go? brings as much joy in seeing your child so fully formed, as it is a sadness to know that your love and allegiance and insights to/about your child continues as ever -- but much of their own love, allegiances and insights... properly goes elsewhere now. This is what people are talking about when they say a parent must ?let go.? They are talking about the parent never dividing their loyalties toward their child, but their child, for the sake of blossoming, must divide theirs.

9. Just as I am writing to you, my youngest daughter, a sweet mother of darling five year old son, wife of her hard-working husband, calls me to tell me what a terrible challenge she is facing today with a business contact. I stop everything, I listen, I commiserate, I try to sneak in some subtle advice where I can, I praise her evenhandedness, her tenacity, her kindness to those she is at odds with. I praise her ability to think this through and act well. Even though I saw this trouble with the other person coming months ago -- my child wanted no advice then.

10. I try with everything in me to hold my child in an open palm rather than by trying to tell her what to do. This matters greatly to her. This is what keeps the door between us wide open so she feels free to come most any time to me if she wishes. Today I can give her comfort and support about the parts of herself that are enduring and useful. But the old wheel so used to telling/teaching the world to her each step of the way, and in minute detail, is still no longer needed. I notice this as only a parent of grown children can, that the old wheel still has hope it will be needed in the old way. I learn the lesson over and over again.

11. In all I would just say this: it will be best to respond to your grown child with being loving rather than ?being right,? no matter what else occurs. The point now is for you as the elders, to act in ways that you will be proud of afterward, in ways that take all these matters of soul and selfhood into account first and foremost.

12. The issues about college are important, for education is ?the way,? there is no doubt. But for now, who finishes what and where is secondary to that a precious soul is coming your way, has chosen your family, will arrive very soon and that your boy has some very important watershed decisions to make.

May both of you and your son and his love be guided by Our Lady...She Who Knows everything about ?surprise babies.?

This comes with love and peace and comfort for you two.

y abrazos Fuertes

CODA

This little ?surprise child? who was on the way then ... no bigger than a thumbling in her mother's belly at the point this letter was written, made it to earth safely, and now is about five years old. I am sent photos every few months of this truly lovely spirited child.

I know that not every family can come together like this one did. Not every family can accept, override past thinking, make what we used to call in the backwoods, ?slide over baby? right angle turns. Not everyone can find a way to pry open parts of the heart as this family did. But I think it is a worthy endeavor to try as hard as

one can to put together "family" that "works," when a work of art is being made. And yet, all many people need in stressful situations with little guidance is someone to listen and help imagine ways to proceed that are integral.

In that sense, of "parenting the parents" I believe any person who witnesses a family struggle of this kind, can offer to stand as a helper of all the souls involved if people would like us to.

Sometimes blood is what makes family, it is true. But also, as I've told my children, it isn't blood exactly that makes the family bond; it's the soul that decides who is sister, brother, mother, father, child. For people in straights and panic, finding people of soul to support life, to support the most precious and holy art, is ever possible. And too, I would add this from personal experience: sometimes when/if there is not an actual person in flesh who can help, uncanny spirit will find another way to lend support, regardless. One only has to be open to seeing, feeling, hearing, sensing it from some of the most unusual and most unexpected forces and sources.

You already know what I'm going to say, don't you? Yes.

And with vigor:

So may it be for thee always

So may it be for me also

So may it be for all of us.

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