



A young mother was out walking with her two boys when one of them said to her: "Mom, it's great to be a mammal!"¹⁾ Somewhat startled, she started to ask him why, when the other young son, scoffed and said, "No, it's better to be a reptile!"

In only the way young children can be, the two boys started an argument with voices growing louder and louder as each tried to make their point and win.

Finally, the young mother was able to calm them down and ask her son, "Why do you think it is good to be a mammal?"

"Well" he said, "most mothers who aren't mammals leave their offspring after the eggs crack. You're on your own. As a mammal, I have you to look after me until I grow up and can take care of myself."

Laurie Uttich is that mother and wrote an essay for "This I Believe" about her interaction with her sons over whether it is great to be a mammal and why.

I doubt that Mary, who hastened on her way to the hills to visit her cousin Elizabeth, would have put why it is good to be a mammal in quite this way. But I do feel certain that Mary felt joy and excitement over the things that were happening to her. Wonder, certainly, at this new life the angel foretold. Uncertainty over what was to come. But love for the life that was coming to be, absolutely. Excitement over being a mother, as hard as that can be. A wide mix of emotions.

And her cousin Elizabeth was pretty startled, I suspect, when her baby leaped for joy when Mary and the unborn Jesus showed up. Two women with unexpected pregnancies seeking each other's comfort. Seeking company to help understand what was happening and how they might go forward, together, into the unknown.

¹⁾ Adapted from "This I Believe", December 21, 2012 (thisibelieve.org/essay/92240).

Micah 5:2-5; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Laurie Uttich goes on in her essay to speak about packs- that what she believes in includes being part of a pack. We gather together at times like Christmas or Easter or funerals or weddings to share our lives with others. We gain strength from each other. Our joy is multiplied because we are together. Our pastoral ministries- the Lay Eucharistic Visitors and others- connect those who are not able to be physically present with us. Those who cannot be physically present are not forgotten but rather remembered with each telephone call, each visit, each card remembering a birthday or an anniversary or a "get well, we miss you".

Ms. Uttich says, "I believe those acts- those people in our packs who help us pick up the pieces- are the answered prayer, the miracle. And because of that, I believe my son, Zack is right: It's cool to be a mammal."

And this I believe: It's cool to be a child of God, loved as only God can love us.