

Who is allowed to be Mary?

A Christmas reflection

At school, they simply called her “Muli,” even though her real name was Margot. She quite liked it. It sounded a little affectionate, almost like a pet name. She didn't particularly stand out in class. She fit in just as she was, with her black eyes, dark skin, and thick black hair. Muli had beautiful white teeth, and when she laughed, everyone laughed with her - and she liked to laugh. She could be funny, even cheeky. She enjoyed being different from the others and standing out wherever she went. She had long since gotten used to many pairs of eyes turning to her when she went somewhere for the first time.



She didn't mind not knowing her father. Only sometimes, when it was dark, did she wonder what it would be like if he were there to protect her, like other fathers protect their children. Once, she had cut out a picture of a man with African roots from a magazine and hung it on the wall, just above her bed. “You are my father,” she said to the man in the picture, “my black father.” Her mother didn't talk about it much. She only said one sentence: “We loved each other.” And then she took Muli in her arms and kissed her, as if to say, “How wonderful that you came out of this love.” Muli loved her mother and thought that everything was fine and that there was nothing wrong with love.

Christmas time was approaching. Muli was one of the students who was particularly good at reciting. One day, it was announced: “We're putting on a nativity play. Who wants to join in?” A whole crowd signed up, including Muli. Now it was time to assign roles: shepherds, kings, angels, innkeepers, and everyone else who appears in a nativity play. But who would play Mary? There was a lot to learn for this role. This was no ordinary Mary, who cradled her child in a blue robe and graciously accepted gifts; rather, her entire journey was depicted in the play. She had to leave Nazareth, hike over a high mountain with many obstacles in her way, and finally she was attacked and robbed, arriving in Bethlehem as a beggar. She goes from inn to inn, searching and begging for a place to stay for herself and her child, until she is allowed to give birth to her child at midnight in a stable with an ox and a donkey.

Muli was so moved by this story that she stood up and said loudly, “I want to play Mary.” The class became embarrassed. They hesitated. “Why you?” asked one. There was another girl who had blonde hair, blue eyes, and a small, sweet face. Her name was Mary. Suddenly, everyone wanted Mary to play Mary. “Why can't I play Mary?” asked Muli. “Just this once, please, let me have the role.” Silence – one girl laughed behind her hand, then another finally blurted out: “You're a mixed-race child. Your father is from Africa. You can't play Mary. Mary was white and beautiful. God loved her.”

Muli ran out of the classroom. She wanted to scream, so great was the pain she felt somewhere deep inside her body. She ran and ran, thinking only of getting away, away. Behind her, a friend called out, “Muli, wait up.” But she only ran faster and realized that ‘Muli’ was not a term of endearment, but a nickname. “Mulus,” she thought, “means mule. Yes, that's me.”

Nevertheless, Muli secretly learned the role of Mary at home and decided to act out the story of this woman and her difficult journey for her mother on Christmas Eve. She rehearsed her role over and over again, proud as a queen and humble as a maid, full of love for her child. And the

miserable stable where she gave birth as a beggar woman was illuminated by the radiance of this love.

The day of the performance arrived. It was a festive day. Teachers, students, and parents had gathered and were eagerly awaiting the play. Muli stood with her class. In all the excitement, no one had noticed that Maria was not there until the phone call came. Maria had fallen off her bike on the way there and broken her leg. She was in the hospital.

“I can play the role, I learned it for my mother,” says Muli. That was as far as she got. There was no question that in this case, Maria was allowed to have dark skin, so to speak, as a substitute. One of them remembered once seeing a crucifix with a dark-skinned man hanging on it. Christ could also have been dark-skinned – and God, who says he has light skin? Everyone talked at once – and God became more and more human.

But Muli played a Mary the small town had never seen before. Strong and passionate, driven by the one desire to give birth to the child, she follows her path, endures all defeats, and, when the child is born, dances a dance of joy in the stable. Muli played the role of Mary, who loved God, and at the same time the role of her mother, who loved a man from Ghana and had the courage to give birth to his child.

For an hour, while the game lasted, everyone watching believed that the two were inseparable. Colors, including skin colors, paint a colorful picture of God's creation, as long as we humans do not begin to judge and categorize them.

