

J-A-Y-C-double-E: The Messiah Formerly Known As Jesus

by LouAnne Johnson

Yesterday, as I dumped the post-holiday pile of junk mail and catalogs onto the passenger seat of my car, a square white envelope fell to the floor. Not an ordinary white envelope. This one was exceptionally white, too bright to look at for very long, like early morning sunlight sparkling on a snowy field. The envelope seemed to shimmer with a golden aura. Good advertising gimmick, I thought, but I didn't bother to pick it up. I distinctly remember leaving that envelope on the gritty floormat, but when I got home home and dropped my mail onto the kitchen table, there it sat on the top of the pile, still shimmering, still pristine. The flap had come unglued and gaped invitingly. I pulled the contents out just far enough to recognize the format of the dreaded boring holiday newsletter. Disgusted and disappointed, I swept the letter off the table and onto the floor. I reached for the next letter in the pile and found myself holding the discarded newsletter.

Hey, Sweetpea!

Haven't heard from you for a while. I know you're busy, but if I were you, I'd rethink my priorities. Just a suggestion.

Too much happening around here to give you all the gory details, but I thought you should know that Dad is finally going to retire and it's about time if you ask me. He won't answer anybody's prayers and his memory is shot. One minute he'll stand up, fire a lightning bolt and announce that he's going to smite Sarah and Glenn, and the next minute he's whining and wiping his nose on his wing, accusing me of swiping his baloney sandwich.

Since I'll be taking over soon, I thought it might be a good idea to upgrade the name. I want to appeal to the younger demographic. So, I'm thinking J-A-Y-C-double E. I'm going to release my first CD of holy rap songs right after new year's. The title cut is "Yo! That's a sin!" I'm also working on my own designer label jeans – they're made completely of white feathers and they are totally wacked. I might even send you a pair if you ask me nice and start saying your prayers again at night.

I paused and picked up the envelope to check the return address. Nothing. The stamp was imprinted directly on the envelope -- a hologram of a star -- but the cancellation was unreadable. All I could make out was "Galaxy 7." I kept reading.

Uncle Al is going to retire, too. He says he's sick and tired of all those suicide bombers claiming they're killing people in his name. 'Those sick suckers probably can't even spell Allah,' he says. 'I wrote them a perfectly good little book, short and sweet, just three pages telling them to mind their P's and Q's and give seven goats to anybody who gets married. But they had to go and add their own two dinars and expand it into a book the size of a dictionary. I should have copyrighted the danged thing.

"That's nothing," Dad always says when Uncle Al starts complaining. "I didn't even write a book in the first place. Just one stone tablet with 10 rules on it. Even an idiot could memorize ten simple rules. Right? And I told Moses that was it. Finito. It was supposed to be a handy dandy little guide that you could carry around in your pocket for easy reference. But even after Moses parted the Red Sea, people always thought they were smarter than him just because he talked with a lisp. Called himself Motheth. I almost laughed my halo off every time I heard him talk. Anyway, next thing you know, every Peter, Paul and John had to go adding his chapters and revelations and revisions of holy history. Darned book got so thick they had to print it on tissue paper and it still weighs a ton. And they kept selling the translation rights so now they've got the King David version and the Queen Elizabeth version and the Richard Simmons version and the Al Gore version. Personally, I like Gore's, but who pays attention to an old man these days?"

Dad wanted to buy a condo in Florida but Uncle Al says it's too darned muggy down there and he prefers a desert climate so they're heading to Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. Dad really digs that name. He says he wishes now that he had invented some snappier names, instead of Sodom and Gomorra which sound like venereal diseases.

Right now, you're doubting that I actually wrote this letter. I don't blame you. It's not exactly the textbook method of communicating with mortals. Facebook doesn't recognize intergalactic email, and I can't seem to find a celestial Internet server that doesn't crash every time I try to create an email distribution list that includes everybody on Earth. So, for the present, I'm stuck using the standard miracle method.

I need to spread the word that I'm taking over the family business and things are going to change around your planet. I have already revised the commandments. At midnight on Christmas Eve the New, Improved Ten Commandments will miraculously appear on indestructible posters in every public building because separating church and government wasn't such a hot idea. Politicians think they aren't responsible for anything they do or say while church folks think they are responsible for everything, including plenty of stuff that is none of their business. So the new holy policy is to make my commandments part of the U.S. Constitution and smite everybody who breaks them. Here they are...Ta-DA!

The New Improved Ten Commandments

1. Thou shalt not earn more than \$60,000 per year as a preacher, priest, pastor or pope. Religion ain't show business, folks. Preach for love, not money. Amen.
2. Thou shalt not worry about who your neighbor marries -- male, female or in between. Dad created them all to teach you tolerance. Don't be dense. It takes more than a penis to make a man.
3. Thou shalt not prescribe drugs to make children sit down and shut up. Children are not supposed to be quiet. Listen to them. You might learn something.
4. Thou shalt not spend more than \$35,000 on a vehicle unless thou also purchaseth a single-wide trailer house for a homeless family in your town. Spread the wealth.
5. Look in the mirror every day and say, "I love you," to yourself. Eventually you'll believe it. When you love yourself, you can love everybody else. Everybody. Even your in-laws.
6. Thou shalt not watch more than two hours of television per day, even PBS. Go play outside. Get some fresh air. Your grandma was right.
7. Do the right thing because it's the right thing to do - not because you're afraid of Me.
8. Thou shalt not kill anybody -- unless they molest your children. Period. No exceptions.
9. Don't eat anything you can't pronounce. What you can't pronounce, your body can't process. Dad designed it that way. Wise up. Eat real food.
10. Thou shalt not translate, interpret, tweak, or revise these Commandments (or the Bible) to suit yourself. They say what they say. Don't read between the lines.

Okay. That's it! Google me after the new year to see whether my web site is up yet. I want your input on my new hairdo. I'm thinking of going for a new skin color, too, just to mix things up a little. I plan to tally the votes by phone, like they do on American Idol, and let the people choose the next Holy Look. Then I'll change the look every year so people don't get bored and start taking me for granted.

Love Always,

Jaycee (the Messiah Formerly Known as Jesus)

P. S. Just had another great idea. No more separate religions. No Christianity, Islam or Judaism. No Buddhists, Wiccans or Werewolves. The multi-denominational experiment didn't work. From now on there's one religion for your solar system: Humanistic Intellectual Philosophers - HIP. If you're a human being who likes to think about important stuff, then you're in. No baptism, no catechism, no initiation, no Sunday service, no collection plate. You just say, "I'm Hip" and you're a member. You treat everybody with dignity and respect, use your noodles, and talk to each other when you have disagreements instead of blowing each other up. Pretty good idea for a church, eh? I'm telling you, I learned a lot from Dad's mistakes.

P. S.² Say those prayers! I know you're really out of practice, so if you can't think of anything to say, try this one:

Now I lay me down to sleep. I hope my cell phone doesn't beep.
If I die before the dawn, one more nutcase will be gone.

Oh, lighten up. I know that prayer won't solve the mystery of life but it might make you chuckle and that's my job – spreading joy. Pass it on. Happy Birthday to Me!

But enough about me. Let's talk about you. You're still doubting that this letter is from me. Oh, ye of little faith! Remember what you did in the bathroom last night? Don't act so surprised. You're the one who used to sing that cute little song about Jesus watching over you. You were right. I am watching. 24-7.

All right. Now that I have your attention, I'd like to ask a favor. I know I could demand a favor but it's the season of peace and goodwill and all that heavenly stuff. This is my birthday wish, so you'd have to be a real weenie to say no.

Okay. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to make ten copies of this letter and send it to ten friends or relatives within 48 hours. And warn them that if they break the chain they'll go straight to Hell and burn forever. The funny part is -- they really will! Ho-ho-ho.

Happy New Year!

J-A-Y-C-EE