

LONG ISLAND / RELIGION

By Jim Merritt

Asking the Clergy: How does your faith support women's development?



From left, Sister Maria Pascuzzi of Sisters of St. Joseph, Rabbi Tracy Kaplowitz of Huntington, JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, and Anu Jain of Jain Center of America. Credit: University of San Diego; Lifetouch; Anu Jain

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March is Women’s History Month, when women’s accomplishments throughout American history are recognized and celebrated, according to womenshistorymonth.gov. This week’s clergy discuss how their faiths inspire, empower and offer resources for women to excel now and in the future.

Rabbi Tracy Kaplowitz of Huntington

Director of Operations, JWB Jewish Chaplains Council

The Jewish tradition that I value and teach is a Judaism that sees all of humankind as equal in the eyes of God. Knowing that women are equal empowers us to mine Jewish tradition for inspiration and guidance to feel one with our spiritual selves in several ways.

First, we should embrace our full selves — body and mind. The Bible provides examples of women identified as gifted in particular ways. We can hold them up as models for us to recognize and cherish these strengths in ourselves. To celebrate the power of our brains, we can look to Deborah — gifted in wisdom, leadership and as a poet. Yael was a warrior with a strong body and a resourceful and creative mind. Esther was stunning in her beauty and single-minded in her devotion to her people.

Second, we should locate the centered-self. Judaism encourages practices that, for a limited time, remove us from the stresses of the world. By taking time for ourselves through daily prayer and mindful meditation, we are gifted with the power to re-center and return to our true selves.

Last, we should experience joy. Tradition teaches that there are 10 names for joy. We must actively pursue each aspect of joy every day of our lives.