

St. Joseph

This **Fourth Sunday of Advent**, as we hear about the **birth of Christ, Joseph** is introduced into the life of **Mary and Jesus**. **St. Joseph** plays a key role in protecting **Mary** and **her** preborn **Child**.

I'd like to focus on the role **Joseph** plays and the attribute of courage that he demonstrates.

St. Joseph is the **patron saint** of a myriad of causes, especially those of ***fathers, families, married couples, children, pregnant women, workers, craftsmen, doubt, the dying, a happy and holy death, and the Universal Catholic Church.***

St. Joseph, the foster father of **Jesus**, is one of the most loved saints because he is the **man** whom **God** chose among all others to be the special **Guardian** of **Jesus and Mary**, His Holy **Mother**.

Joseph was the human **guardian** of the **Holy Family** and because of this **sacred familial bond** and divinely given **mission, Joseph** is also the **foster-father** to all **Christians**, including you and me.

Joseph is truly the "**silent figure**" and **no spoken words** have been recorded in the **New Testament**.

Mary is only recorded **twice** in **Scripture**.

Once, at the **Annunciation** when **She** pronounces her **Fiat**—her submission to **God’s Plan** and then at the **Wedding Feast of Cana** when **Mary** told the waiters, *“Do whatever He tells you.”*

I. St. Joseph and his role in the Economy of Salvation.

- a) **Joseph** was **“of the House and Lineage of David”** (Lk. 2:4). Because of this ancestry, **Joseph** is the **linkage** between the **Old Covenant** made with **Abraham and Moses**, and the **New Covenant** with **Jesus the Christ**. We participate in this **Covenant** through the **Sacrifice of the Holy Mas—the Eucharistic Celebration**.
- b) **Joseph “prepares”** the **way** for **Jesus, the Messiah**, who will establish the **new Kingdom of God and the New Promised Land**.
- c) **St. Matthew** identifies **Joseph** as a **“righteous man.”** The biblical meaning of **“righteous,”** suggests that **Joseph** lived by **God’s standards**, kept **faithfully Commandments of God**, and **reflected God’s love**.
- d) **The Betrothal and Marriage of Joseph.**

It is at **Nazareth** where **Joseph betrothed** and **married Mary** who was **chosen by God** to be the **Mother of Jesus, the Messiah**.

What does it mean that Joseph was betrothed to Mary?

A **betrothal** was a “**pledge of promise to marry**” that **person** to whom one **pledged one’s love** and **fidelity**.

Today, we would call it an “**official engagement**.”

Mary was simply “**officially engaged**” to **Joseph** when **Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant**.

Then, **after one year** of this **formal engagement**, the **groom with joy and jubilation** would go to the **home of the bride** and “**carry**” her off to their **new home** where the marriage would be consummated and where they would live together as husband and create a family.

a) **Joseph Faces a Major Crisis Before Marriage**

Joseph did not know **God’s Divine Plan**

but he **did know** that **Mary’s Child** was not **his**.

As a result, the **Gospel** tells us that “**he decided to divorce her quietly**” (Mt. 1:19).

Joseph’s decision- was both a **sign of his integrity** and a **sign of profound love** for **Mary**. **Why?**

b) **The Law went against Mary.** According to the **Laws of the Torah**, in the section of **Crimes Against Marriage**, **Joseph** could have had **Mary stoned to death** for **infidelity during their betrothal** (Dt. 22.22).

Can you imagine the mental anguish that Joseph must have experienced at this shocking news?

I am sure that Joseph had to wonder how many other people knew about the pregnancy, and how many townspeople already knew about this situation and by now they were gossiping about it and spreading it!

Joseph's heart surely must have been **grief-stricken, confused**, and **filled** with **disappointment**. The **only solution** he could think of was to **depart quietly** without **endangering** the **life** of his **beloved Mary**.

- c) **Then he had a dream from heaven!**
God's angel—Gabriel appeared to **Joseph** in a **dream** and **solved** the **mystery** and revealed the **truth**:

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save the people from their sins."

This heavenly message—so called—a dream, took place to fulfill what the Lord God had said through the prophet Isaiah:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

When **Joseph awoke**, he did as the **Angel of the Lord** had commanded him and took his wife—**Mary**, into his home"

Joseph fulfilled the **Angel's** request without **question** or **hesitation!**

d) **The importance of the Dream.**

It reveals the important **role** that **Joseph** played in the life of **Jesus**.

Joseph took **Jesus** as his own **Son, named Him**, and thereby giving **Him legal recognition, legal personhood** and the **proof that Jesus is the descendent of the House of David!**

Joseph fulfilled his “**call**” by **God** by **fulfilling all the commitments and obligations as spouse, father, and provider** for the Holy Family, as a **carpenter** with great **courage** and **tenacity!**

Throughout his life, **Joseph** *faithfully and unquestioningly* **obeyed God’s laws and commandments**, for this reason **Joseph** is given a great compliment in **Scriptures** when he is refer to as an **“upright and just man!”**

Joseph was holy, obedient and a reflection of **God’s Love** and worthy of our esteem and affection and imitation.

St. Joseph, pray for us and the Church! Amen!

