

4th Sunday Advent-2025: Joseph-“the silent, righteous Man”

After focusing our reflection on Prophets like Elijah and John the Baptist in the past weeks, on this last Sunday of advent, we hear the story of Joseph, husband of Mary. So, we shift our focus to Joseph and Mary, especially the role of Joseph in the mystery of Incarnation.

Jan Dobracynski, the polish novelist, in his novel “The Shadow of the Father”, tells the story of St. Joseph in the form of a novel, where he uses the image of shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the shadow of the heavenly Father, watching over him and protecting him. Fathers are not born but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for the child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way, he becomes a father to that person.

Mary had to face enormous challenge to her faith and trust in God and to the faith of her family and Joseph, the man she chose to marry. She was asked to assume a burden of tremendous responsibility. It had never been heard of before that a child could be born without a natural father. Mary was asked to accept this miraculous exception to the laws of nature. That required unparalleled faith and trust in God and in his promises.

Second, Mary was not yet married. Pregnancy outside of wedlock was not tolerated in those days. Public humiliation and stoning to death was the punishment. Mary was only engaged to Joseph, and such an engagement had to last for a whole year. She was asked to take a great risk. She could have been rejected by Joseph, by her family, by all her own people. Mary knew that Joseph and her family

would not understand without a special intervention from God. In spite of all risks involved, Mary believed and trusted in God's promises.

Joseph, a just and God-fearing man, did not wish to embarrass or punish his betrothed wife Mary, when he discovered that she was pregnant. To all appearances she had broken their solemn pledge to be faithful and chaste to one another. *Joseph, no doubt took this troubling matter to God in prayer.* He was not hasty to judge or to react with hurt and anger. God rewarded him not only with guidance and consolation, but with the divine assurance that he had indeed called Joseph to be the husband of Mary and to assume a mission that would require the utmost trust in Almighty God, and Joseph believed in the divine message.

Joseph, who is silent throughout the Bible, is a remarkable man, not only he took on the hardship of his trip to Bethlehem, and then the flight to Egypt, but spent his entire life, caring for the Holy family, the family of son of God, without any promise of reward or glory. *His only motivation was his love for God and his love for Mary.* That is why, God entrusted to *Joseph, his own eternal Son, Mary and her virginal maternity, and the entire Holy Family.*

Like Mary, Joseph is a model of faith for us. He is a faithful witness, and servant of God's unfolding plan of redemption. Even when faced with perplexing circumstances and what seems like insurmountable problems, are you ready to believe in the promises of God, like Joseph? Let us celebrate Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation, with joyful hearts and let us renew our faith and hope in God and in his redeeming work

