

Sunday IV (A) of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 1,18-24): This is how Jesus Christ was born. Mary his mother had been given to Joseph in marriage but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, made plans to divorce her in all secrecy. He was an upright man, and in no way did he want to discredit her.

While he was pondering over this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, «Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit, and now she will bear a son. You shall call him “Jesus” for he will save his people from their sins».

All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: «The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel which means: ‘God-with-us’». When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do and he took his wife to his home.

«When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him»

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Today, the liturgy of the Word invites us to consider and admire St. Joseph's figure, a truly good man. About Mary, God's Mother, it has been said that she was blessed among women (cf. Lk 1:42). About Joseph it has been written he was a just man (cf. Mt 1:19).

As persons made after God's image and semblance, we all owe our individual

identity to God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, with actual and radical freedom. And as a response to that freedom we can glorify God, as He deserves, or we can also make, out of ourselves, something quite unpleasant to God's eyes.

We have no doubt that Joseph, through his job and personal commitment to his familial and social surroundings, sort of won our Creator's "Heart", by considering him a man to be trusted in the collaboration of human Redemption through his Son, made a man as we are.

Let us therefore learn from St. Joseph his allegiance —already proven from the very beginning— and his good behavior during the rest of his life —closely— correlated to Jesus and Mary.

We make him patron and mediator of all fathers, whether biological or not, that in our world must help their sons to provide a similar response to his. We make him patron of the Church, as an entity intimately linked to his Son, and we keep on hearing Mary's words when she finds that the Child Jesus was "lost" in the Temple: «Your father and I...» (Lk 2:48).

Therefore, with Mary, our Mother, we find Joseph as the father. St. Teresa of Avila wrote: «I took for my advocate and comforter the glorious Saint Joseph, and commended myself fervently to him (...). I do not remember at any time having asked him for anything which he did not grant».

Exceptional father for those of us who have heard the call of our Lord to fill up, through the priestly ministry, the place Jesus Christ has handed over to us to carry on with his Church. —O glorious St. Joseph! do protect our families, our communities, all those hearing the call to vocational priesthood... and let us hope there will be many of us.