

## **Fourth Sunday of Advent: Prepare Christmas Through St. Joseph**

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-2,3-4,5-6; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24

Dear friends and family of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Parish,

We now enter the fourth Sunday of Advent! This last week of Christmas preparation, let us journey through St. Joseph's disposition.

While the gospels are silent and do not record his words, his role in the great mystery of the birth of our Savior is crucial. Aside from being a perfect model of fatherhood, he is an excellent icon of greatness in anonymity.

In the gospel, we learn how he prepares for the mystery of the birth of our Savior. He did not know yet that Mary conceived the son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit after the annunciation by the angel Gabriel. Yet certainly, he could not believe that Mary could have done something wrong. We can assume that he must have struggled to understand the mysterious pregnancy of Mary. His response to this unexpected and mysterious event is worthy of our reflection. Being upright, he thought only about what was best for Mary. He decided to divorce her secretly, and the scandal would be on him for abandoning Mary during the betrothal period (cf. Mat 1:19). While it may be the most reasonable and loving thing to do, he changed his plan because of a dream. He could have dismissed it; instead, he listened to the voice of God through an angel revealed to him in a dream. His response is symbolic of his attention to the things of the Spirit and discerning the will of God.

Often, it is the gift of faith in God that leads the person to wake up and do the right thing. St. Joseph showed us the way. He woke up and did as the angel of the Lord directed him.

As we enter the final phase of our preparations for Christmas, let us look up to St. Joseph. Let us ask for his intercession for the grace to sleep peacefully and wake up. To wake up means to be attentive to follow the divine direction either by listening to our conscience or through the advice of others. To wake up that there are many attractive opportunities instead of dwelling on failures and that there are other roads when we find ourselves at a dead end - seek, and you will find it! To wake up that there are good people that can help lift the burdens that may have caused to weigh you down - be humble to ask for help! To wake up and not allow darkness to rob your dreams nor failures to snatch your future - have faith! To wake up and not let the criticisms of others spoil your joy of giving and put off the opportunity to serve - focus on Jesus! Isn't this what Christmas is all about? Jesus is our hope, joy, and salvation!

On the other hand, ordinarily, we would like to wonder: "What will we receive this Christmas, and who will give us the best Christmas present? Where are we going to celebrate? What are we going to eat? How about asking and reflecting on these questions: "What is it that I need to wake up from? What is it that I need direction?"

Further, on this last week of preparation for Christmas, while we are busy with so much to do to make this great feast suitable for our families -- preparing gifts, food to have, house decorations, and sending greeting cards -- I hope we don't neglect the spiritual aspects of our preparations. Our Lord Jesus came into our world to save us from sin and open the way to new life. We are already living that new life! But we live in a world with all kinds of sins; some may have already managed to enter our lives. For this reason, an essential part of our preparations for the feast of Christmas should be the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Christ came into our world to bring healing and salvation, and we concretely experience both in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Let us turn to St. Joseph and ask for his intercession to prepare our hearts in faith to be worthy to receive Jesus. Let us make this Christmas a holy feast and experience the gifts of healing and salvation that Christ alone can give to make it a grace-filled moment of peace, reconciliation, and love.

St. Joseph, pray for us!

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor