

## Solemnity of St. Joseph

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The Gospel suggests that today is the Feast of the Annunciation to St. Joseph. This feast takes a deep dive into our human existence and simultaneously leaves us in awe of supernatural mystery. In our familiarity with these Scriptures, some of the *power* of both the natural and the supernatural may be less appreciated than they deserve.

The human drama here and the range of emotions are profound. They reveal a depth in this simple, quiet carpenter named Joseph. Remember that at this point, the discovery of Mary's pregnancy comes *before* any divine reassurance. It presents Joseph with a terrible dilemma. Imagine the shock and agony of this news. Mary is his chosen one, they are soon to join their lives together. And now ...?! What can come of this??

Notice *what* some bits of information are revealing. Joseph is *pondering* this impasse. He is called a just or righteous man. This means he has been *faithful* to God in *living* the Law his whole life. Contemplation seems familiar to him. He ponders deeply in his mind and heart ... and finds a place of *mercy* within that law. With this heartbreaking decision, he hopes to stay *faithful*.

Note, it's 500 years after the promise to King David we just heard – that his heir will rule from Jerusalem – yet Joseph is being asked to accept the *fulfillment* of the promise, in a child, conceived by Mary, without his intervention. God intervenes, however, advising him to “have no fear about taking Mary as your wife ... When Joseph awoke, he did as the Lord commanded him...”

The Scriptures show how God cuts across our human existence at key moments. The **unexpected**, of a *spiritual* and of a *physical* nature happen.

And Joseph is ... silent. Not just a man of few words, in the Infancy narratives, he is a man of no words. His specialty is in *listening*. Four times, Joseph listens to the angel of the Lord give him necessary instructions in a dream. Each time Joseph listens and acts.

First, the angel tells Joseph to take Mary his betrothed wife into his home. Second, the angel tells Joseph to flee to Egypt from Herod's plans. Third, the angel tells Joseph they can *now* go back to the land of Israel. Finally, Joseph is warned not to go to Judea but to Nazareth in Galilee. Joseph asks no questions and makes no complaints. He simply *does* what he is told to do, always grateful that someone is looking after him so he can look after his precious wife and child.

Reflecting on this feast Carroll Stuhlmueller\* writes: “This combination of *normal*, earthly existence with *exceptional* supernatural expectations is to be found in every human life ... Each one of us, in our particular circumstances of daily lives, is going to experience the thrust of divine *expectations*. The divine presence will take us by surprise. Although it happens to everyone, none of us can fully prepare ourselves for it.

It happens where each of us *is uniquely (ourselves)* different from every other person. Not even Mary could explain it to Joseph, only the angel from heaven.”

Like the people in today’s readings and their experiences of God’s interventions, when was a time *in your life* that you were called to *respond* as they did?

When did you respond:

- + like Abraham and Sarah, with faith and hope that is hoping against all hope ...
- + like Joseph, with tender concern, responsibility and ultimate obedience ...
- + like Mary, with loving surrender ...
- + and, like all these saints, + with profound and continued prayer.”\*

Let us pray to be like Joseph, such a listener, so attentive, so *trusting*, that even when surprised, we too may respond *faithfully*.

\*Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. *Biblical Meditation for Ordinary Time- Weeks 1-9* p.3-4-308