

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 22, 2013

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 10

Gospel [Mt 1:18-24](#)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "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 his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive 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 into his home.

Spiritual Reflection:

In today's Gospel - Matthew's version of Jesus' birth - the whole grand event depends on Joseph, whose life has been turned upside by the angel's news. Joseph accepts the son as his own, not as a matter of biology, but as a matter of love and compassion, of trust and faith. God's birth in our midst depends on human partners - a Mary, a Joseph, you, me - willing to claim the unwanted, love the helpless and neediest, put aside our fears and dare to hope that God is with us. In this season and in every season, may we imitate the compassion and faith of Joseph: to seek understanding and acceptance within our families even at the cost of our own expectations and hopes, to be sources of affirmation and support for our spouses and children.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How accepting of your family are you?
2. Can you give up your plans to do God's will?
3. Can you do it joyfully?
4. How are you claiming the unwanted and needed?
5. How can you be a source of affirmation for people?