



DECEMBER 18, 2016 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 recent years, I learned that there was a law in the Roman Empire that stated that on the 8th day of a child's life he or she would be presented to his or her father and if the father accepted the child the child would be allowed to live but if the father turned his literally turned his back on the child the child would be thrown out into the back alleys to die of exposure. Joseph's role therefore in the birth of Christ is an important one. Both Mary and Joseph did not plan to have a child at the time that they were told that they were going to have one but they both chose to accept the child as a gift. Children in the Gospel, even if they come at an inopportune time are considered nothing but a blessing. We need to make this attitude the attitude of our culture.

Spiritual Questions

1. How fixated are you on your plans for the future?
2. What if God or life demanded you to change those plans? Would you be able to cooperate with God's plan despite the fact that it may be different from your plans for yourself?
3. What do you think Joseph first felt like when he learned that Mary was pregnant?
4. How do you think Joseph felt after learning that it was God's child that Mary was carrying?
5. It is interesting that Joseph never says a word in the Gospels. He simply does what God asks Him to do. Do you spend too much time trying to reason with God or convince God that He should consider doing things another way or do you simply do God's will?