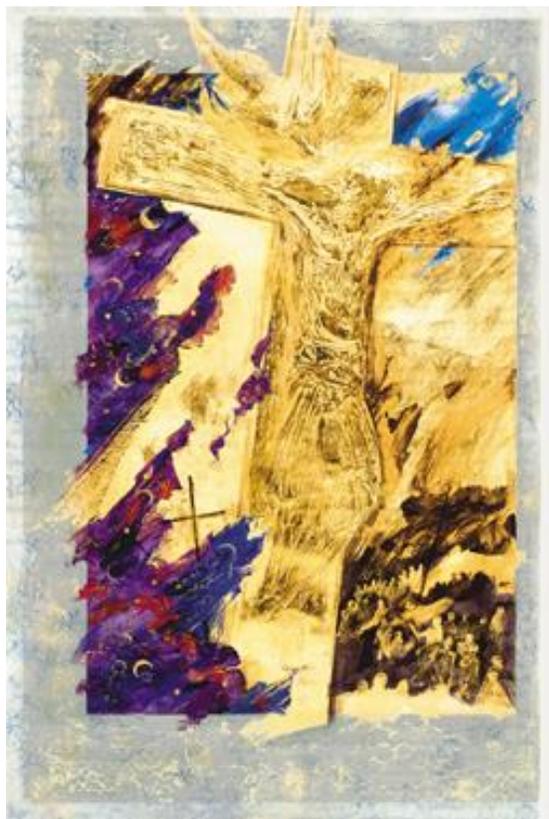


# Lenten Reflections

March 19, 2019



It was my privilege to be chosen to write a Lenten reflection for today, the (non-Lenten) Solemnity of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church.

Either of two gospel readings may be proclaimed at Mass today, both stories include Joseph, foster-father of Jesus. The first is the account of the finding of Jesus in the Temple and the second Joseph's dream- where the angel instructs Joseph to take Mary into his home and marry her although she has been found to be with child. Both stories portray Joseph as a *righteous man* in a quandary.

Joseph the Dreamer is a favorite image of mine. Joseph discerns God's will and his path in life by paying attention to a dream. Though at some level we understand the value of dreams (think Martin Luther King), we still often dismiss dreams as we perceive them as from the realm of fantasy- and thus impractical, irrational, irrelevant. I think that in this case, Joseph's dream called him to a far more profound understanding of the situation than what would have been plainly evident, which was Mary's pregnancy and the perfectly rational decision to "divorce her quietly".

Joseph is moved from his realm of (earthly) *righteousness* to a higher plane. Joseph's decision to "take Mary his wife into his home" moves beyond the *righteousness* found in the Law of Moses. Through the angel, God tells Joseph to break from the plain-sense, readily understandable requirements of Mosaic Law. The decision to do so is courageous, prophetic, merciful, kind, and borne of the love of God.

A new era is ushered in by Mary's fiat at the Annunciation and Joseph's determined "yes"... both of which facilitate the turning point in history- the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

What dreams will you and I have? Will we dismiss them, or discern from them? Where is God asking us to decide with courage, prophetic insight, mercy, kindness, and God's love so that we may continue to usher in the Incarnation? How will we cooperate with and foster the restorative effects of the Incarnation in our own lives, our world, the whole created order?

I know my reflection has gone a bit over, but I must share that I consider St. Joseph as my patron. Is it mere coincidence that I was assigned St. Joseph's Day to reflect upon? Today and the Annunciation (3/25) are solemnities that are so important that they are actually mini-breaks from Lent; you likely know they do not "count" in the 40 days of Lent (if you did not know this- go ahead and count the purple days of Lent on your Catholic calendar). At Catholic liturgy white is worn, the Gloria is sung, no dispensation is needed for meat if the feast is on Friday. In many places, special feast day masses conclude with an elaborate altar or "St. Joseph's Table" full of lilies/flowers, pastries, and non-Lenten treats.

Follow God's merciful example, and that of Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. Especially if you have been observing Lent rigorously, celebrate God's mercy, and have mercy on yourself today.

*William JOSEPH Mascitello, Ph.D.,*

*Director Master of Arts in Religious Education (MARE) Program*



*A panel from a Coptic Church depicting the Annunciation and the Dream of St. Joseph (Left) and a St. Joseph's Table*

## **Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**Lectionary: 543**

**Reading 1** [2 SM 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16](#)

The LORD spoke to Nathan and said:

"Go, tell my servant David,

'When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors,

I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins,

and I will make his kingdom firm.  
It is he who shall build a house for my name.  
And I will make his royal throne firm forever.  
I will be a father to him,  
and he shall be a son to me.  
Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me;  
your throne shall stand firm forever."

**Responsorial Psalm**     [PS 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 AND 29](#)

**R. (37) The son of David will live for ever.**

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness,  
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever";  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

**R. The son of David will live for ever.**

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
Forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations."

**R. The son of David will live for ever.**

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father,  
my God, the Rock, my savior.'  
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,  
and my covenant with him stands firm."

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**Reading 2**     [ROM 4:13, 16-18, 22](#)

Brothers and sisters:  
It was not through the law  
that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants  
that he would inherit the world,  
but through the righteousness that comes from faith.  
For this reason, it depends on faith,  
so that it may be a gift,  
and the promise may be guaranteed to all his descendants,  
not to those who only adhere to the law  
but to those who follow the faith of Abraham,  
who is the father of all of us, as it is written,  
*I have made you father of many nations.*  
He is our father in the sight of God,  
in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead

and calls into being what does not exist.  
He believed, hoping against hope,  
that he would become *the father of many nations*,  
according to what was said, *Thus shall your descendants be*.  
That is why *it was credited to him as righteousness*.

**Verse Before The Gospel**      [PS 84:5](#)

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord;  
they never cease to praise you.

**Gospel**              [MT 1:16, 18-21, 24A](#)

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.  
Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Now 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.”  
When Joseph awoke,  
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him  
and took his wife into his home.

**Or**[LK 2:41-51A](#)

Each year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,  
and when he was twelve years old,  
they went up according to festival custom.  
After they had completed its days, as they were returning,  
the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem,

but his parents did not know it.  
Thinking that he was in the caravan,  
they journeyed for a day  
and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances,  
but not finding him,  
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.  
After three days they found him in the temple,  
sitting in the midst of the teachers,  
listening to them and asking them questions,  
and all who heard him were astounded  
at his understanding and his answers.  
When his parents saw him,  
they were astonished,  
and his mother said to him,  
“Son, why have you done this to us?  
Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.”  
And he said to them,  
“Why were you looking for me?  
Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”  
But they did not understand what he said to them.  
He went down with them and came to Nazareth,  
and was obedient to them.

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