

March 19, 2025

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

JOSEPH AND THE SILENT FAITHFUL

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

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

ROMANS 4:13, 16

... 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.

Reflection

Joseph is one of a number of patriarchal figures in the biblical history of God's people, who is called from a place of relative obscurity into a major role in the divine intentions of God for the people of Israel and beyond. By legend, Moses is born in a period of Egyptian history in which Pharaoh has ordered all male Hebrew babies to be killed. His mother hides him in a basket in the Nile, where he is discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the royal household. After he kills an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew, he escapes to Midian in Judah, where he is called by God to return to Egypt to free the enslaved community. He leads the people through the Exodus to the Promised Land. This is the first great story of the prophetic destiny of God's people, called by unknown figures who become mythic messengers of freedom by virtue of their unshakable faith.

The next such leader is Abraham, a prosperous, but relatively unknown shepherd who becomes an archetype of God's intentions for the Chosen Ones. He is called by God to leave behind his familial possessions in Ur, to venture to a land that would be the birthplace of the future nation of Israel. His unconquerable faith in God's vision for the people leads Abraham to move into a faith-life that surpasses the power of the Law. As a result, as Paul proclaims with fervor, Abraham becomes the father of God's people in their Land of Promise. Historically, this father in faith becomes the patriarch of Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.

In the Gospel history of Jesus, Joseph traces his family line through Abraham and the Davidic kingship. His is the least prominent biography, but he is called to an embrace of faith that is in line with all the rest. As a carpenter and craftsman in Nazareth, he certainly would have anticipated a quietly domestic life with Mary and their family. Instead, he is led through dreams and visions to become the father of Jesus, and a center of quiet wisdom for his Son and the Church to come. Faith becomes the beacon illuminating every aspect of his life and fatherhood for Jesus and the Church.

Joseph stands as part of a great heritage in Judeo-Christian history—the founding figures in the Jewish and Christian communities do not rely on familial lineage or political status to initiate a great odyssey of faith that establishes traditions of enormous impact and profundity. Any temptation to relegate his significance to little more than a virtuous helpmate to Mary fails to take into account the foundational power and depth of his faith in God. That faith enfleshes the power of salvation history and prefigures the transfiguring fullness of the Incarnation. We, in our individual and often obscure locales, are

not asked to emulate the grandeur of prophetic and religious figures in their particular gifts of healing, teaching, or prophecy. Instead, we are admonished in every moment to radiate the simple grace of their living faith—a faith that enshrines the loving miracle of God alive in all that we are and do. Joseph is our model of being and doing as God’s vital ministers of love, who do not need public attention or historical fame to stand as daily beacons on our journeys of faith.





St. Joseph the Carpenter
Photo by David Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

- Do you find encouragement and inspiration from the ‘invisible’ saints of God’s people?
 - What values or virtues do you find most powerful in the lives of those who neither hold nor seek places of prominence?
 - What values of ‘invisible grace’ help you on your daily walk of faith?
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