

Homily. 4th Sunday of Advent. Year.A. 21/22 December 2019.

Advent brings Mary into our thoughts and our prayer, and why not? She was uniquely graced by God to listen and respond generously to God's plan for our salvation. Despite her very normal fears and doubts about what was being asked of her Mary, as the gospel of St. Luke tells us, found it within herself to give her 'yes' to becoming the mother of Jesus.

Every few years, as is the case for us this weekend, St. Matthew's gospel tells us this story from the angle of Joseph. Like Mary, Joseph was greatly confused by what was happening in his life and the upset to his plans. The young woman to whom he was solemnly betrothed was with child and Joseph knew that this wasn't of his doing. In the normal course of events Joseph could have made a public denunciation of Mary ending their commitment in such a way as all would know the circumstances. He chose not to do this, opting instead for a quiet and private divorce so as to spare Mary public shame. This tells us of the great love and respect Joseph had for Mary, and of his own kindly and generous spirit.

Joseph was a listener to God as well. His listening came through dreams. In his dream the Angel came to speak and guide him, just as the Angel Gabriel had appeared to Mary asking for her co-operation. Likewise, Joseph accepted this Divine communication and generously chose to accept God's will and plan, mysterious and strange as it was. He took Mary as his wife, making a home for her and the son she would give to the world.

Both of the parents of Jesus displayed a deep prayerful attentiveness to God and a spirit of willing partnership with God in bringing about what God wanted for them and for us. In their own unique manner they accepted the strange and seemingly unacceptable, finding a kind and gently way to reconcile themselves to what seemed to be irreconcilable. Someone once described courage as 'grace when under pressure' and both Mary and Joseph had this sort of graceful courage in spades. From what we know of Jesus they managed to instil in Him these same gifts of prayerful listening to God, of gentleness, kindness and of grace and courage.

In 3/2 days we'll all gather back here to honour the nativity of their Son, Jesus the Christ, our God-with-us. There's no doubt that God is with us because we can easily see and experience Him in the prayerful attention we have to what God is saying, willing and doing. We can readily find our Lord in the gentleness, kindness, grace and courage offered to us, and to those most in need of our understanding, healing and help.

As the Lord was born once, so He is being born again in us and in all of those who have minds that are open and hearts that are ready for His coming. The great Christmas feast tells us at the least this much about Jesus, and about ourselves. To all of us, then, who are God's beloved in Corinda Graceville Parish, called to be saints, may God our loving Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace at this sacred time.