

Fourth Sunday of Advent

21st December 2025



The water that I will give him will become a spring of water within him welling up to eternal life.
JOHN 4:14

About 2000 years ago, a man found himself in a very difficult situation—a situation about which we hear in this Sunday's Gospel reading. He was promised to a woman in marriage, already legally bound but now she was pregnant. If he divorced her, as he was entitled to do, then she would be shamed and he didn't want to do this. If he did not divorce her, then he would be shamed. This was, of course, the dilemma facing Joseph. However, an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to take Mary as his wife and it says that 'when he awoke he did exactly as he had been commanded to do.'

What God asks of us can be difficult but we can trust that it will always be the most worthwhile path. We may be asked to give up all kinds of attractive opportunities in order to do the right thing. Standing up for what we believe in can be difficult but sometimes God asks this of us. All of us have a role to play as fathers or mothers, members of diverse communities, friends and citizens. We might be tempted to say, 'God does not speak to us like He did to Joseph.' Yet, the truth is that God is speaking to us all the time, through the Scriptures, through each other and God is still asking us to live by His commandments.

We may be surrounded by news which makes us wonder what is happening with the world. We may wonder why something is as it is? Could it be because many people have abandoned the way of life that God calls us to live and, if so, what can we do about it? What we can do about it is to make sure that we respond to God's call ourselves. We may be cynical and say that it won't make any difference but deep down we know that it will. In fact, the response of each individual is precisely what makes the difference in any society.

Jesus said 'You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth; the yeast that makes the flour rise.' Making our society and our world a better place begins with us, where we live, with the people with whom we deal. That is what God calls us to. Remember Joseph, Mary and so many others. Their individual responses to God changed the course of history. Their responses at the time probably seemed quite insignificant but in the long run, it made all the difference in the world. It is always the few people in society who try to live as God asks that make the difference. That is also what God calls us to do: to live by His commandments, to try and do what is right and not to be afraid or ashamed of what we believe in. As we enter into this most special of seasons, are we a Joseph? How do we answer God's call?

Jesus is born of Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, son of David.

Matthew 1



O God,

As light comes from this candle, may the blessing of Jesus Christ come to us, warming our hearts and brightening our way.

May Christ, our Saviour bring life into the darkness of this world, and to us, as we wait for his coming.

Amen.

In addition, this week let us pray for:

- ◆ all those connected to our community who are unwell, upset or mourning;
- ◆ all those affected by the ongoing wars;
- ◆ a safe and restful holiday for our whole community;
- ◆ our preparations for the coming of Christ.



Wishing a happy and peaceful Christmas to all of you.