

DECEMBER 21 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent.

Throughout the past few weeks different characters have emerged: John the Baptist heralding the arrival of the Messiah, Our Lady, the queen of all the saints, the Mother of God And today we're also presented with the remarkable figure of the just Joseph.

When we look at the gospel there are many interesting things here, and many different saints have had interpretations that are not always very similar.

When we look at what happened we hear, again, that Mary, again, she's betrothed to Joseph, so they were married. We know in the ancient times that there were two parts of marriage. There was the first part, so there was the ceremony, and then the second part which took place at a later date is when the husband and wife will come together and live together as one family. So the first part had been accomplished but never the second.

So, when we hear all of this going on we have Joseph, all right, he hears, right, he's told about the fact that Mary has conceived through the Holy Spirit. Now, why did Joseph become overwhelmed? The angel says that he is not to be afraid. Why is this? He says, "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."

So, if you look and you read, like, in the past different traditions, one of the common explanations for this is that Joseph doubted Mary's fidelity. So he was confused, he was overwhelmed. So, therefore, he wanted to divorce her. But because he's just and he also is merciful he did not want

Mary to suffer the punishment of the adultery which would've been stoning. So she would've died through stoning. So Joseph, even though his heart was broken and confused and everything, he chose to go another way and to do so quietly.

But see, there's another interpretation as well. And this one, perhaps, is not known to everyone but it's something worth reflecting upon. Especially because, again, Joseph is a just man. Joseph is a saint. And Joseph also is a good Jew. So, just like we heard in the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, Joseph went to the synagogue, he went to the temple. So when he's in the synagogue, growing up there as a good Jew, he would've heard when they unroll the scrolls of Isaiah that they would be reading this prophecy, "Hear then, O house of David," and says, "therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and she'll name him Emmanuel."

So, is it that hard to believe that when Joseph, when Mary came to tell him, that he was overwhelmed, confused, but not because he didn't trust her but because he was so overwhelmed by his mission. Think about it. We all have these experiences, we spend time in (Unclear), we reflect on the Scriptures, and then we try to apply them to our own lives. But how many people, how many people can say, "I am one of the people that's directly in Scripture, I'm part of salvation history"?

So Joseph, when he hears this information, is given this information from the Virgin Mary, he's overwhelmed. How could he not be? He's thinking about these prophecies. It's like, "Wait a minute. So, the woman that I'm married to is the Mother, she's going to carry Emmanuel? That I am somehow tied and am going to be responsible for this family? That God, Emmanuel, in the flesh, you know, God coming in our midst is

now going to be my son? That I'm going to be caring for him as an adopted father?" So think about how overwhelming that must've been for him.

For me, that makes perfect sense that he was so overwhelmed by this calling, which is remarkable and singular, that he wanted to step back. But the angel appears to him and he tells him, he says, "Do not be afraid, take Mary as your wife into your home. It's through the Holy Spirit that she will conceive." Right? And then he quotes, again, from the first reading we heard from the prophet Isaiah.

So, Joseph is a remarkable man for many reasons, and the saints attest to this. In my own life I've had many experiences of his Intercession which have been very powerful and very beautiful.

So, why is Joseph, what can we learn from him? Well, he listens. That's the first thing that St. Joseph does, he listens to God. He listens and then he does what the Lord commands him to do. It's hard enough to listen to God. But then it's even harder to do what God is asking us to do. Especially when it's difficult. When it's very easy, of course we can do it. But when it's something very challenging, right, and it requires a huge leap of trust, that's when it becomes more difficult. And Joseph was able to do that, of course, with the grace of God.

So we can learn this from him, that we learn to listen to what God has to say to us in the silence of our hearts. Again, Advent is a time of silent waiting. Right? And then, also doing what the Lord commands us to do. He wants us to love Him above all things, our neighbour as ourselves, and to live in this world in preparation for His second coming. That's how we can live.

And even accompanying many young people when people are discovering their vocation oftentimes you can see that they have an

experience that kind of mirrors the experience of Joseph. How so? Well, when they discover that God may be calling them to a vocation of priesthood or religious life it can be very frightening. They say, "What? You're calling me to this sort of a life? You've chosen me to live a life in deeper conformity with You?" It's so overwhelming. So, it's always the same thing. Listen, trust, and do what the Lord says. This is what Joseph has done, and this is why the Church sees him as a father and as a spiritual protector and a patron of the universal Church.

May he intercede for us in these final days of Advent so our experience of Christmas can be one of profound joy.