

Mary and Joseph

Matthew 1:18 – 25



The Birth of Jesus Christ

18Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). 24When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The second day of Christmas is kind of like a stepchild. Falling between Christmas and the big secular holiday of New Year's, it's often treated like a stepchild. But those who venture into church today will have the opportunity to meet a special person who, unfortunately, is also often neglected. It's Jesus' stepfather, Joseph. Joseph finds about as much a place in the story of Jesus as the second day of Christmas. In fact, we never hear Joseph speak once in the entire Bible. And yet, Joseph quietly plays a crucial role in the life of Jesus. He became a protector to the Savior of the World Himself Jesus. To understand this role of Joseph a little better, we need to take a closer look. Most people know Joseph from the Christmas story. There, we meet him as Mary's distrustful betrothed. But even in this arrangement, Joseph truly acts with good intentions. In those days, most betrothed couples might have reacted very differently. Joseph could have publicly denounced Mary's unplanned pregnancy, for example. According to Jewish law at the time, Mary would have been stoned. But Joseph didn't want that! Therefore, he stood by her and stayed with her. After a certain time, he thought, he would give her a certificate of divorce without having slept with her. In this way, could save her life and preserve the family's honor! A certificate of divorce would not have led to Mary's death. Imagine what anguish this time must have been for him. He certainly loved Mary and had plans to start a happy family with her. These plans were not only thwarted, but he also had to silently cope with the fact that Mary loved another! But God did not abandon Joseph. While he was still thinking this, an angel appeared to him and explained everything. Without a word, Joseph accepted this solemn declaration from God. When the angel appeared to Mary, she said, "Let it be done to me according to your word." Joseph said nothing, but wordlessly attuned himself to the very same plan of God that Mary had accepted. What a good team the two of them are! Mary is able to bring Jesus the Savior into the world, and Joseph is able to protect the two of them during the child's first years of life! Just like Mary, he bravely accepts this challenge God has given him. He not only protects Mary but also accompanies her and her child with active support from then on! In Bethlehem, he probably even had to fulfill the role of midwife. Then he helps mother and child on their flight to Egypt. Later, he leads them back to Nazareth. Joseph does all this without a word. Joseph and Mary are a good example of the Body of Christ, the Church! The Church needs more Marys and Josephs! We as a Church, just like Mary, should do nothing other than carry Jesus within us! Nothing more and nothing less! According to the New Testament, the Church itself is the Body of Christ. We are guided by this. That is precisely why we are the Church, because Jesus is in us! But Joseph's role is also part of us: doing what is necessary with active love. For us as a Church today, this means fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. According to Matthew 25, it means being there for the hungry, the prisoners, the widows, and the orphans—simply put, being a practical help to all people in need, especially for those who have not yet heard of Jesus. Mary and Joseph were a good team. We can be that too. Sometimes we are just like Mary, and we simply allow ourselves to be strengthened by Jesus. We do this by listening to His Word. We do this by being united to Him in the eating and drinking of His body and blood at

Holy Communion. Sometimes, however, we are like Joseph, doing what is necessary quietly, without bitterness or the secret desire to become great ourselves.

In Joseph's story, I find it remarkable how naturally Joseph recognizes his dream as God's will for him. Could he understand the profound words: "that Jesus would be the Savior of the whole world?" Probably not... Joseph seems quite content to protect this little child and its mother, even if he wouldn't get anything in return. God's plan completely thwarted his own plans, and yet Joseph is willing to follow God's will. Like Mary, he understands that God chooses the lowly and considers them precious. Do you see God's plan in your life? You and I aren't Mary and Joseph. But we too are part of the body of Jesus Christ. And that's why I'm absolutely certain that God has a plan for you and me as well. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here today. In my own life, I can give many examples where I had a plan, but God directed things very differently in the end. I also know many examples of people who were suddenly faced with a task and bravely accepted it, even though it changed their entire lives. For example, in the midst of the refugee crisis, a very dear family I know decided to take a refugee boy into their home and adopt him as their own child. The boy has now been with them for several years and has grown up. He certainly turned the family's life completely upside down, and yet they did it. Still today they say that the experience has been enriching for them. Could Joseph also say after a few years that life with the baby Jesus and Mary had been enriching? Certainly not always. He must have had his doubts. But even though Joseph didn't say much, he remembered God's voice from his dream and took everything upon himself simply because God willed it so. And he certainly didn't always remain silent, otherwise we would never have learned about this dream. I imagine him telling Mary about his dream. Perhaps he told others too, and maybe only much later. And how he then realized with amazement: God's plan for us was good after all! In his life's journey, Joseph is a very special example for us, who have gathered here between Christmas and New Year's. On Christmas Day, a window to heaven was opened for us. We were able to see God's wonderful plan of salvation for the whole world through Jesus. And now we stand before the many new challenges of our own little lives. How will we carry Jesus into the world this year? What is my plan for 2026? And what is God's plan for me? Could it be that God has a completely different plan for you than you think? Joseph and Mary were used by God in a very special way to bring Jesus to us. Of course, God could have completed His plan of salvation entirely without them. But He willed that they be included in His plan. God could just as easily spread His message of salvation throughout the world without us. But He wanted us to be His voice. God wants to use us! I am absolutely certain of that. Otherwise, he wouldn't have given us this place and this time. We don't always have to accomplish a huge task. Perhaps the task God gives us is simply to care for one person. Perhaps it's to save someone from despair. Could it be that here, in this place between Christmas and New Year's, we are thinking especially about how God wants to use us in the future? God doesn't always speak in dreams. Sometimes He does it by simply placing a task at our feet. At that moment, we don't really understand what has happened to us. Perhaps only much later do we understand. It may also be that we receive a very difficult task from God. Perhaps at first we don't even recognize this task as one from God. Perhaps we are like Joseph and initially think that something very bad has happened to us. But little by little, God's plan becomes clearer, and we can see that God has meant well for us.

Joseph must have known this much later as well. Otherwise, he wouldn't have told anyone about his dreams. In South America, Joseph is a very important figure who, above all, honors the dignity of the quiet workers. Through Joseph, people want to recognize those who quietly tackle the challenges entrusted to them and complete them to the very end. Will God place such tasks before us today? We, too, want to remember these people who quietly serve, some through financial contributions, others through practical help. Thank God for all these Josephs! Amen.