

## ADVENT FAMILY MASS 2025

### Thursday December 4, 2025

Tonight, as we gather as a parish family and with our families for Advent, today's Gospel draws our attention to one of the quiet giants of our faith – St. Joseph.

We do not read in Scripture a single recorded word from St. Joseph, and yet his life proclaims a message that reverberates and echoes through the centuries: a message of personal dignity, of courage and heroic virtue – of absolute trust in the face of life's most challenging and confusing moments.

Matthew tells us that Joseph was a “righteous man.” In other words *a good man*. A man whose first instinct was not to react or lash out, not to demand answers—but to act with empathy, compassion, humility, and integrity.

His whole world appears to fall apart when he discovers Mary is pregnant.

Imagine that for even a second – the anger, the confusion, hurt, disappointment, the betrayal you would feel. Most of us, in such a moment, would act out of our emotion.

But Joseph doesn't react - he responds. There's a difference.

To react is to be driven by the chaos of the moment, and most of us do it.

To respond is to rise above our impulses

To trust rather than to give into fear and Joseph chose to respond. And his choice, Joseph's choice—quiet, thoughtful, gentle—opened the door for God's plan to unfold.

In the ancient world, reputation was everything. Joseph's dilemma could have been a public scandal. He could have insisted on his rights, protected his image, or publicly distanced himself from Mary. Instead, Matthew tells us that he “resolved to divorce her quietly,” out of respect for her and out of fidelity to God.

Joseph teaches us something profound:

Real dignity isn't about what others think  
it is about what God thinks.

Joseph lived in the dignity of a man who knew his worth came from God. He did what he did for God first, and then for Mary and the child she carried. His decisions weren't guided by public opinion but by what He believed God wanted, informed by trying to live a life of faith.

When the angel appears to him in the dream, Joseph's whole life suddenly makes sense: God had a plan. A plan far bigger than Joseph could have imagined.

And in that moment, **Joseph does what good men do**: he trusts. Not because he understands everything, but because he trusts the One who understands everything.

In Advent we celebrate Mary's "yes" at the Annunciation, and it is rightly celebrated. But Joseph also had his own annunciation—a divine invitation that demanded tremendous courage, trust and faith – and called upon him to say 'yes' to God. To be a foster father, a stepfather to be a dad to a child that was not his own by blood. A yes to a future he could not control and a mystery he could not fully understand. He would say yes to a journey through life that would uproot and change his own hopes and dreams and ideas.

He had to protect Mary and Jesus from real danger: from misunderstanding, from judgment, from King Herod, from poverty, from exile. He had to love Jesus as his own, even knowing that the child ultimately belonged to God took heroic trust.

In all of this, Joseph took second place. Often even third place. He is remembered simply as the "foster father." But friends, this does not diminish him. In fact it magnifies him, it makes him great. Sometimes – oftentimes – true holiness is found not in being recognized as such, but in being faithful.

Not in being seen, but in serving.

Not in being first, but in loving the very best we can.

Joseph is the quiet strength of the Holy Family—a man whose courage held heaven and earth together.

The beautiful thing about Joseph's story is that he did not know the end before the beginning. He walked by trust, and yet, by taking one faithful step at a time, he discovered that God really was guiding every moment.

This is the **same truth for our lives**.

We all face moments of doubt, confusion, of disappointment, moments when we need to be adaptable to what we experience, moments when we fear the unknown in our lives. Like Joseph, we don't always see where God is leading.

But Advent reminds us: **God always has a plan—even when we can't yet see it.**

Joseph teaches us to pause, to listen, and to trust.

When we refrain from reacting and instead turn to God, He speaks directly into our lives.

When we look more deeply at the Gospels of Advent and Christmas, we may see what Joseph and Mary *gave up*: a regular life, security, reputation, their plans, and even simple comfort.

But hopefully we see what they were *given*: a share in salvation history, a home filled with love, a purpose greater than themselves, and a family shaped by God Himself. We can and should reflect upon our own homes and families in that way – we can have the same: but it takes us all – kids and parents working at it day by day. More than two thousand years later, we celebrate what their choices teach us about the meaning of family. In God’s eyes, family is the sacred place where love becomes real, faith grows, where sacrifice is learned, and where God’s plan unfolds one day at a time.

When I was a kid, I am ashamed now to admit that I wanted a different family. My parents were too strict, too different – I saw the flaws in my family rather than the blessings. For many years – I wanted a different family. I wasn’t so happy with my own.

It’s easy to idealize the Holy Family and when we think about Joseph and Mary. It is natural to idealize their love, their sacrifice, and their fidelity to what we hope for from our own parents — but we might also want to consider our own parents in light of the virtue of the Holy Parents:

- Most parents I know put their children first before themselves
- Most parents I know make heroic sacrifices for their kids without asking much in return
  - Is it really a huge ask for some chores around the house when they pay for our sports or dance or whatever and drive us around?
- Most parents I know protect their families with courage
- Most parents I know love without counting the cost

Joseph and Mary reveal the very heart of parenthood, and our parents and our grandparents, and families today reflect that same desire. Parents and grandparents want to pass on faith, love, and stability. They want to give their children a home where God is known, and love is lived. And when we see parents who courageously raise their children with faith, integrity, and sacrifice, we are witnessing the same spirit that animated the Holy Family.

Advent is a time of renewal – it is a time when we “reboot”

Dear friends, look to your left and right, look all around at your parish family, your school family and I ask us all to renew our commitment this Advent season –

**to grow together as a family in the way we know the Lord wants us to.**