

Reflection – O Adonai, 18th December 2020



For the "Just Man" Joseph, the Angel gives the message that he should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife. We know why Joseph might have cause to fear. He would be possibly involved in a scandal. Mary the unmarried, betrothed woman, is with child, and not by him. Notice that Saint Joseph is not angry or full of a desire of vengeance upon the man who had despoiled his intended. He is a just man, and seeks to end the whole affair quietly, not to put his fiancée in any more peril than is possible. It would be a very reasonable thing to do. Perhaps it was not such an uncommon occurrence in the fringe territory of Nazareth. Of course, the penalty for Mary was stoning, but Joseph is a loving man. He loves Mary and does not desire her death. So he comes up with a way of letting her go so that, presumably, she can be with the man that has gotten her pregnant.



We know, that God the Lord, Adonai, had a different plan and that Mary was not impregnated by any man, but by the Holy Spirit, and God now lets Joseph in on the secret and the plan, and Joseph, discerning the Angel and the message, agrees to the plan. This is his consent. We make much of Mary's consent - "Let it be to me according to thy word" - but sometimes we overlook Joseph's consent, and his consent is also necessary. It is the consent of giving Jesus his lineage, his family name, despite not being the natural father. Notice, Joseph is addressed as Son of David, and this is the crux of the matter. It is through Joseph's consent that the prophecies concerning the Messiah from the House of David are fulfilled. Joseph, as the foster father is given the privilege of giving the child the name Jesus - God saves. It is through Joseph's consent that the "Key of David" is adopted into the Royal House of David, and is given all the rights, privileges, the inheritance, the name and the position of heir. Joseph did not disobey God in all this, but rather, consented to God's stunning plan. Without Joseph, without Mary, without their cooperation, the plan of God would not have been fulfilled.



Like St Joseph, we mustn't be afraid the plans of God for us. Sometimes, maybe nearly all the time, they seem very difficult. The way forward seems fraught with difficulties and impossible on any human level. They disturb and alarm us and make us ask why? They are full of risk. They are the way of the Cross, the denial of self, the rejection of self-satisfaction. They aren't comfortable, bourgeois, beige Catholicism and definitely not capitulation to the world, to the dictates of politicians and ideologues. God's plans for us are rarely easy, mostly dangerous and frequently involve martyrdom.



This is why it is good to have the witness and help of the Saints, especially of Our Lady and Saint Joseph in their brave consent to God's plans. This Gospel today merely tells the beginning of the story of Joseph's trials as he carried out the plan of God. He had to face exile, ignominy, political persecution and possible death. He had to care for the Son of God, over whom he exercised the authority and example of a parent. Not an easy ask! So let us turn to great Saint Joseph, Son of David, foster father of our Lord, and seek his intercession, especially through the seemingly impossible roads we must travel and the obstacles we must surmount on our journey from our own Bethlehems to our Calvaries to that blessed Garden of the Resurrection. Saint Joseph, pray for us!