



REFLECTIONS

December 19, 2021

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 1:24

Joseph's Courage

Joseph tossed restlessly in search of sleep, but the news so consumed him that rest came sparingly. The pit of his stomach churned; his emotions bounced from burning anger to bewilderment to inconsolable grief. Stunned as if struck by a mighty blow, he felt no sense of direction and his options seemed few. The life he planned had radically changed. Then the angel came in a dream with the answer.

That day the scene enlightened my imagination as I placed Joseph in his proper place in the Nativity. I saw a man affectionately looking at his newborn son as any proud father would. Yet the baby is not his own. He looks at the child with reverence as if he knows how extraordinary this child is. He *does* know. He knows the whole astonishing story! His bride carries a child by the Holy Spirit, and God called him to serve as the earthly father.

Joseph must be counted among the most remarkable men in the Bible. His faith and obedience should be placed alongside that of Noah and Abraham. God asked Joseph to stand by his bride to be, to love, honor, and cherish her; and he did so even when it became difficult to explain.

Just as it was for Mary, the nine-month wait was long for Joseph too. The girl he loved moved away for a while leaving him alone to prepare their future home. Her return raised difficult questions to deal with; and then the rugged journey to Bethlehem lay ahead.

Travel would have been easier without Mary; but one must wonder if Joseph understood the importance of his role in the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, / though you are small among the clans of Judah, / out of you will come for me / one who will be ruler over Israel, / whose origins are from of old, / from ancient times." (Micah 5:2)

God had chosen Joseph for a very special role in preparing for Christmas. His role was to be there for his bride, to stand by her, to attend to her every need, and to protect her from both danger and disgrace. And he was there to love and serve the Christ Child. Through all his doubt and hardship, Joseph had the courage to obey God even if it became difficult to explain.

God has chosen you and me for a very special role in preparing for Christmas too. Our roles are all different, but we are all called to love and serve the Christ Child.

We too have all been called to be obedient to God even if it becomes difficult to explain.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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