

Homily 4th Sunday of Advent ~ December 21st, 2025.

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, just days before Christmas, the Church invites us to slow down and look closely - not at the manger yet, but at a quiet man standing beside it: Saint Joseph. Today's Gospel does not give us a single word spoken by Joseph, yet his actions speak louder than words. Joseph teaches us what it truly means to prepare for Christmas.

In the Gospel, Joseph is faced with a painful and confusing situation. Mary, to whom he is betrothed, is found to be with child. According to human logic, Joseph had every reason to walk away. However, Matthew tells us Joseph was a righteous man. He listens - not to fear, not to pride, but to God's voice. When the angel speaks to him in a dream, Joseph obeys immediately. He takes Mary into his home and accepts the child as his own.

This simple but courageous obedience changes history. By accepting Jesus as his son, Joseph makes Jesus a legal descendant of David, fulfilling the prophecy we heard from Isaiah: "*The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel.*" Emmanuel means "God is with us." God chooses to come close to us not through power or force, but through trust, humility, and obedience.

Joseph's life reminds us that God does not force His plans on us. God invites. Joseph could have said no - but he said yes. And because of that yes, the Savior enters the world.

The Responsorial Psalm today says, "*Let the Lord enter; He is the King of Glory.*" That is a question Advent asks each of us: Will we let the Lord enter our hearts? God stands at the door of our lives, gently knocking. He does not break in. Like Joseph, we must choose to trust Him.

Many of us carry worries - financial struggles, family tensions, health concerns, uncertainty about the future. Joseph surely had fears too. Yet he trusted God more than his own plans. Advent invites us to do the same: to pray more deeply, to listen to God through Scripture, and to place our lives in His hands.

Christmas is not just about remembering that Jesus was born long ago. The Good News is that Jesus still wants to be born today - into our hearts. Emmanuel still desires to be "God with us," transforming our homes, our relationships, and our wounded world with His love, mercy, and compassion.

As Christmas approaches, it is natural to think about gifts. But let us ask an important question: Do we have a gift for the Birthday Boy? The gift Jesus wants most is not something wrapped in paper. He wants a heart filled with love - love for God and love for others. A heart ready to forgive, to show mercy, to care for the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten.

Finally, let us remember this: we are called to be Christmas gifts to others. Like Joseph, we can be people who believe in others, who support their good dreams, who offer encouragement instead of criticism, hope instead of despair. When we do this, Christ is born again in our world.

As we enter the final days of Advent, may we learn from Saint Joseph: to trust God, to obey with love, and to welcome Emmanuel into our lives - so that through us, God may be with others.