

4th Sunday

They shall name him Emmanuel

Mt. 1:18-25



The 4 stars of Advent

The star of preparation

1st Sunday

Be prepared because
the son of man is coming.

(Mt 24,37-44)

The star of choice

2nd Sunday

The kingdom of heaven
is at hand.

(Mt 3,1-12)

The star of perplexity

3rd Sunday

Are you the one
who is to come?

(Mt 11,2-11)

The star of mystery

4th Sunday

They shall name him
Emmanuel.

(Mt 1,18-25)

With Christmas just around the corner, the Fourth Sunday of Advent draws us into the mystery that surrounds Joseph, the husband of Mary. A descendant of David, Joseph is called to be a father to a Child not his own. How is this possible? And what does the birth of this mysterious Child mean to him, an upright man of Israel? Will Joseph's rectitude lead to the stoning of a wife judged to have been unfaithful? (cf. Dt. 22:22-26)

Joseph is an upright person but his rectitude goes well beyond that of "scrupulously observing the law." He is upright because, contemplating God at work in the events of history, he has the courage to step aside so that Mary is free to say yes to God. He is obedient to the consequence of the Spirit's work in Mary and allows God to continue to be the Father who is capable of calling into existence what does not yet exist (cf. Rm. 4:17), just as he did at the beginning of the world: "In the beginning, God created..." (Gn. 1:1).

And God creates through the womb of a woman and the heart of a man whose duty is to give the Child a name: "She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus" (Mt. 1:21). Joseph is ordered to give the Child the name chosen for him by God.

This act makes Joseph a father. A father is a person who loves God so much that he becomes his voice and instrument for all those entrusted to his care. Joseph, a descendant of David, was born to tell the world that God is named Jesus, which means "love that saves." This name is Joseph's gift to us. "Jesus" is the sole word implicitly spoken by him in the Gospel. The rest is absolute silence. The truth of Joseph is enclosed in "the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9), announced by the prophets (cf. Is. 7:14), bequeathed by the apostles: "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!" (Acts 3:6). In Jesus, God becomes Emmanuel: "God with us"—a God who is present and who saves us in every place and time.

Prayer

*Holy Father, God-with-us,
you asked humble Joseph,
a descendant of David,
to open to the world
the door of your Mystery.
Bestow on every human being
the light of the Child named Jesus.
Amen.*

