



Fourth Sunday of Advent 2016

"YOU ARE TO NAME HIM JESUS"

(Mt 1:18-25)

The light of this Fourth Sunday of Advent is kindled by Joseph, of the house of David. Joseph, whose name in Hebrew is very meaningful (*God adds, God increases, God brings about growth*), does not simply play a walk-on role in this biblical event.

In the first two chapters of his Gospel, Luke turns the spotlight on the father of Jesus, even though it is widely believed that Joseph was only his *foster-father*. In the Jewish culture and mentality, the word "father" signifies above all a person who helps his children to grow in love, and who educates them in the virtues of justice, truth, kindness, prayer, work, attention to the Torah and to the blessings of God. Consequently, being a father is much more than a purely biological fact. Joseph is the father of Jesus because Jesus grew up according to the image of the person who served as his model, to the point that he was recognized as "the son of Joseph."

Joseph scrutinized the actions of God in the history of his people. The love he manifested toward others went beyond a rigid application of the Law. He preserved the Scriptures in his heart. He supported his family "through the sweat of his brow." But above all he spoke just one word—a single word denoting relationship and salvation: Jesus. "You are to name him Jesus" (Mt. 1:25).

On our journey to Bethlehem, the father of Jesus thus becomes for everyone a shining witness in a world immersed in darkness, precisely because he steadfastly points toward Another, reminding us that if our words do not lead to the salvation of our brothers and sisters, then they do not have "citizen's rights" in the vocabulary of our lives.

The most beautiful best wishes we can offer our loved ones and friends this year is precisely: "Jesus!" the only word worthy of Christmas!

www.paoline.org

PRAYER
of Blessed James Alberione

*St. Joseph,
we join you in blessing the Lord
for your intimate communications
with Jesus during your life
in Bethlehem, in Egypt
and in Nazareth.
You loved him and
he loved you in return.
May we imitate your faith,
which made you adore in him
the Son of God. Amen.*

Francesca Pratillo, fsp

