



Advent Reflection for Tuesday, November 29th

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Matthew 1: 18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Reflection by Audrey Whitworth:

My first thoughts upon reading this passage were not necessarily for Joseph. Seeing this through the lens of the present day my first thought was anger for Mary - that Joseph's and society's assumption is that her pregnancy is "her fault" or a "stain" on her reputation and she should be abandoned to her fate.

But as I read on Joseph's humanity became more apparent and looking through the lens of the past I could see his compassion for her and how he doesn't want to shame her but he still has the right to walk away. I believe Joseph struggled with this decision and even considered input from others before arriving at this place so now I am able to feel compassion for him. But as soon as he is resolved in his decision an angel comes to him in a dream! And I am amazed at Joseph's reaction - that he accepts the dream as having actually come from God and he doesn't question it! I would have so many questions! The level of faith that this must have required! But not

just faith - he did as the angel "commanded" him and took Mary as his wife. So to me this reading is also about unquestioning obedience to God's will.

The first time I contemplated this passage I was having a particularly bad few days. I was doubly struck then by Joseph's faith in God and his commitment to doing his part to fulfill God's prophecy. And let's face it - this was a big ask. So compared to what God asked of Joseph, that day my issues didn't appear to amount to too much. I don't mean my dark cloud miraculously lifted but I was at least able to see some sunshine peeking through.

I'm able to access my faith fairly easily but I haven't always connected the faith part of my spiritual practice to obedience to God. I imagine obedience is the fulfillment of the practice so it looks like I have a way to go.

Audrey Whitworth is a long-time parishioner at Holy Apostles, currently on the Bishop's Committee and formerly Co-warden. She splits her time between Windsor Terrace and Ulster Park, NY with her partner George. She enjoys spending time with her son and daughter-in-law, Chris and Meredith and grandchildren Liam and Jane.

