

Year A

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 23(24):1-6; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24.

---

**Reflection:**

The maiden is carrying a child, prophesies Isaiah. This prophecy had a proximate fulfilment during the reign of King Ahaz, as a sign that God was with his people even if the king had abandoned God. It was moreover fulfilled in Mary, the virgin with child, the Son of God. Jesus is the Emmanuel; God-is-with-us!

Like us, Joseph could not understand God's ways. His beautiful young bride seems to have cheated on him and is now with child from another man. How could a righteous man live with this truth? If we listen carefully, God speaks to us and enlightens us even when we find it difficult to understand. Joseph De Piro reflects on his namesake in a short sermon delivered on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1907, to celebrate the elevation of St Joseph's feast-day, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, to the level of a solemnity and a holy day of obligation.

----

**Further Readings:**

... The Church, presents us the saints as role models, to show us the most effective way to obey God's law. She expects us to venerate them, and to express our devotion towards them, primarily by imitating them.

Joseph was chosen by God to take care of Jesus, his only begotten Son, source of every perfection and holiness. He was chosen as the husband of the Queen of Virgins, the Queen of Angels and the Queen of Heaven. You can therefore imagine with what level of purity he was adorned. This is therefore the first virtue we should adorn ourselves with, to be able to call ourselves devotees of this great saint.

In the gospel, the Holy Spirit gives us the most complete description of St Joseph, accurately calling him 'righteous.' Joseph 'being a righteous man' (Mt 1:19). St James tells us that the life of the righteous man is based in faith 'the righteous will live by faith' (Cf Jam 2:23; Gal 3:11; Rm 1:17), and we can see this in Joseph's life, even if we do not know much about him. The light of faith directed each of Joseph's actions; in the light of faith he always subjected himself in everything to God's will, revealed to him through angelic visions, through human law, or through his duties towards his country. Enlightened by faith he did not concern himself with the discontinued line of David that he inherited, but only considered the kingdom of heaven promised to him. This is another of St Joseph's precious virtues that should inspire all our actions. Our faith promises us a future life; let us prepare for the true life that awaits us, putting aside the empty things that belong to this short life in exile. How can we value the commodities of the rich or the afflictions of the poor in this life, against to the great wealth awaiting us in the life to come?

Joseph was raised to the dignity of husband of the Mother of God and honoured with the role of head of the Holy Family. He was intimately entrusted by God in the mystery of the Incarnation and made to hold of the Eternal Father's authority over Jesus Christ. We see him practice this authority with the deepest humility in prayer, in work, in obedience, and in submission to God's will. How easy it is to compare ourselves to our

neighbours and to deem ourselves superior to them! How hastily do we foster this ugly passion of pride which has been the destruction of thousands of heavenly angels! Let us imitate St Joseph! Let us be humble and consider ourselves undeserving of any divine gifts. Let us be united! Let us love our neighbour! Let us be careful that our thoughts, our words and our actions do not offend others; rather, let us be ready to help others in all their needs. The true devotee of St Joseph must love what he loved, detest what he hated, and practice the virtues which were so dear to him.

I hear you ask: who can ever be able to achieve the sanctity and the perfection of Joseph? Who can ever imitate his excellent virtues? Who among us is as lucky as him? For around thirty years he lived, talked and shared his daily life with the Divine Word become man, applying to him the rights and duties of a most loving father. Throughout this part of his life, his purity, love, humility and all the other virtues were in direct contact with the virtues of the author of every perfection, and was thus able to reach an outstanding level of perfection....

*(Guzeppi De Piro, Predikatur Imheggeg tal-Kelma t'Alla, vol II, ([Malta]: Postulazzjoni Kawza ta' Mons G De Piro, 1987); homily number 82, p. 220, tr. Fr Maurice Caruana mssp)*