

DECEMBER 22, 2019
Sunday of the 4th Week of Advent
Matthew 1: 18-24

ST. JOSEPH DID AS THE ANGEL COMMANDED HIM

Irish raiders captured a group of young men in Britain and sailed with them to Ireland. They were sold there as slaves. One of them was a 16 years old St. Patrick who worked for six years as an enslaved sheep and cattle herder. During that time, Patrick regularly prayed to God that led him to peace despite his challenging situations. One day, “Patrick was praying outside (when an angel whom he called himself) Victor appeared, manifesting suddenly out of the air in human form to stand on an overhead rock. Victor told Patrick: ‘It is good that you've been fasting and praying. You will soon go to your own country; your ship is ready.’¹ But after several comfortable years in his homeland Britain, the angel Victor communicated with Patrick through a dream holding out an open letter which it’s title ‘The Voice of the Irish.’ By this dream, he decided to return to Ireland to share the gospel message to the Irish people. So, he boarded a ship and sailed to Ireland. And the rest was history. He became the messenger of God to the Irish people and Ireland converted to Christianity.

About 2000 years ago another man had a dream in answer to all his doubt and hesitation. He was to marry a woman but found her pregnant. This man was St. Joseph. He did not wish to leave, punish or embarrass his espoused wife, Mary by divorcing her, which he was entitled to do. But if he did not separate from her, it would look like he had physical relations with her even before their marriage, which would have been quite a scandal at that time. Then an angel 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

¹ www.learnreligions.com (article by Whitney Hopler)

people from their sins.”² After that dream, St. Joseph woke up and did exactly what the angel said to him.

My brothers and sisters, these men, St Joseph and St. Patrick responded to a dream, that changed the course of history and salvation. Because of St. Patrick’s response to his dream, Christianity was brought to Ireland. Because of St. Joseph’s response to his dream, Jesus was born to a loving parent that God intended for Him. Both responded positively because they were open to God, listen and obey His Word.

We learn from these two men. Sometimes or most of the time, husband and wife need to give up all kinds of attractive and tempted opportunities in order to be faithful to the wife or husband and families. We need to sacrifice something for the family even one’s happiness and caprices. We may be asked to play an important role as fathers, mothers, grandparents, single or married. We were asked to stand up for what we profess even though it may mean going against the tide or being the minority. Most of the time, we are being cynical and say that what we do won’t make any change or difference. But remember our own response is precisely what makes the difference in any society. According to a priest in his sermon: “One of the things that has started to happen because of the decline of the economy is that people are coming together voluntarily and making all kinds of projects happen, many of them for charity. And because they are not getting paid for it, it is creating great good will. People are giving of their time and energy freely, and I think this is a wonderful thing, not so much because of what they achieve, but because of the goodness it draws out of people. There is good in everyone, and sometimes it takes situations of difficulty to bring it to the surface.”³

² Matthew 1:20-21 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

³ frmurchadh.blogspot.com

My brothers and sisters may be fewer are doing good things to others but how we live and give is so essential because it influences the world around us. Any change that can influence the world always begins with me, where I live, with the people around me. This reminds me of the song 'Let There Be Peace On Earth, And Let It Begin With Me' which says:

Let peace begin with me, Let this be the moment now,
With every step I take, Let this be my solemn vow,
To take each moment and live each moment, In peace, eternally.
Let there be peace on Earth, And let it begin with me.

Always remember Mary, the Mother of Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Patrick, and so many others, their responses changed the course of salvation and history of the Church. Maybe their responses during their time quite insignificant, but it made all the difference in the world afterwards. That will also be our calling, our mission, what God calls us to: to live His commandment, profess and share His goodness even if others are not good, to do what is right and not to be afraid or ashamed of what we believe in. As St. Joseph awoke from sleep and did exactly as the angel had told him to do, we may also do what God wants us to do.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, your birth brought us salvation. You came to show how you love us and save us from sin. May I make a difference and influence other through my simple work of charity, patience to my children, wife and husband, love those people around me or just a simple smile to my co-workers and strangers whom I meet along the way. May the change begin with me. Amen."