

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph, the guardian of the Redeemer, the patron saint of fathers, carpenters and workers.

Our Gospel from Matthew (1: 16, 18-21) tells us that Joseph was quite troubled at the pregnancy of Mary. Mary was found with child through the Holy Spirit. One must believe that Mary was very open and honest with Joseph and shared with him her incredible trust in God.

“How can this be?” are words that come from the lips of Mary when she was told she would be the mother of God. She believed because the Archangel Gabriel helped her to understand and she trusted and accepted that this was from God.

“How can this be?” are words that must have also formed on the lips of Joseph. Given that he had made up his mind to divorce Mary quietly, we can take an educated guess that he struggled greatly and found Mary’s story quite troubling. He may have even jumped to the conclusion that she had been unfaithful and lied to him. His hopes and dreams for a happy married life disappeared with every

suspicion. But still there was a basic decency that he did not want to hurt Mary. And although his faith in her was shaken, he took his worries and concerns to God in prayer. Joseph's prayers were answered when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and offered a clear path for him to follow.

Has the angel of the Lord ever come to you in your dreams? God can speak to us anywhere. Sometimes it is while we are sitting quietly in church. Other times, God may speak to us in a dream. The voice is often so quiet and gentle and subtle that we may not even recognize whom the voice is coming from. Do you entrust your worries and struggles to God allowing him to guide you to the right decision? When you find it impossible to trust in another person's story, are you open enough to allow God to show you how the impossible can be possible? Would you believe a dream or question in disbelief, "How can this be?"

In the early 1990's I met a man who had grown up in Nome Alaska. As a young boy he prayed in Saint Joseph Church and dreamed dreams of what the future might hold. Ultimately, he allowed God's

plans to shape his own dreams. He became a Maryknoll Missionary priest and God called him to serve in Tanzania for better than 30 years. There he listened to God in prayer and shared the fruit of his prayer with the flock entrusted to his care. Although the days of his youth were long past, there was something that drew him back to Nome whenever he could make the journey. Returning to his boyhood home where his dreams first took shape somehow renewed him and gave him strength to face the future.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the angel of the Lord continues to come to Joseph and guide him. He understands the threat of Herod and takes the holy family to Egypt. When the coast is clear, the Angel of the Lord guides him again to safely return to Nazareth and to begin life anew. God wishes to shape our future each day. God wishes to protect us and to help us bring Jesus to others.

How is God speaking to you? Is it through dreams? Are you bringing your struggles and worries to God so that he can guide you, help you to protect your family, and shape your future?