



The Infancy Narratives of St. Matthew's Gospel

Fr. Nicholas King SJ – Week Two



This liturgical year has been designated as a 'Year of the Word' by the Bishops of England and Wales. Between the First Sunday of Advent 2019 and the Feast of Christ the King 2020, there will be many opportunities to deepen our appreciation of Scripture as the Word of God. The Year has the title: 'The God who speaks' which is taken from a document called *Verbum Domini* (the Word of the Lord) which was published 10 years ago (part of the reason for the special Year). It reminds us that God has spoken to human beings for thousands of years. Humans have not always been attentive to what God is saying – or understood it when they have heard it – but God speaks and this Year gives us a chance to learn better how to listen.

As we enter this 'Year of the Word' we begin with the infancy narratives of Matthew's Gospel. Three short reflections offer us a chance to engage with the complexities of a story which we know so well. Fr. Nicholas King SJ captures the essence of St. Matthew's telling of the story and offers us some intriguing insights.

You might like to begin your reflection with a short time of prayer as offered here and then, having listened to Fr. Nicholas, take time to consider what he has told us. Feel free to use or ignore the points for discussion.

Gathering

All-loving God - we gather in your presence.
Almighty Father - we long for more of you.
Jesus - we place you at the centre
Holy Spirit - come and fill our time together.
Help us to be fully present here,
to your word, to one another,
and to the world you love.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was faithful to the law. But he did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly. But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, ²³ "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (*Isaiah 7:14*) The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. But he did not sleep with her until she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

Reflection – Fr. Nicholas King SJ

Watch the video here -

Following the video, take some time to ponder on what you have heard. These questions may help you personal or collective reflections

Points to ponder

1. What struck you about what Fr. Nicholas had to say?
2. What kind of thoughts and emotions do you think Joseph went through when he heard the news of Mary's pregnancy?
3. Who might be the 'Josephs' of today?
4. We hear from Fr. Nicholas that dreams in the Bible are a sign of God at work in the lives of the people of God. Where do we see God at work in our own life and can we see God at work in the lives of others or the situations of our world? What stops us from seeing God's activity?

Conclude your time of reflection with the following:

Reader
All The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary:
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
“Be it done unto me according to your word”.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All And the Word was made flesh:
And dwelt amongst us.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All Let us pray,
Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord,
Your Grace into our hearts;
that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son,
was made known by the message of an angel,
may be brought by his passion and cross
to the glory of His Resurrection.
Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION

