

# Annunciation Parish

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February 21, 2021

The First Sunday of Lent

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We hear in today's Gospel that Our Lord was ministered to by the angels during his forty day fast in the wilderness. The very name **angel** speaks of their function: they are messengers; messengers from God. This messenger function speaks of connections and communications, of someone sending forth a message, of another listening. We are not in this alone. Are we in the wilderness? We are not alone. Are we faced with difficult challenges and decisions? We are not alone. Are we questioned and challenged by those who would have us doubt our own goodness? Our Child of God status? We are not alone.

The reality of angels speaks to our active listening for God; our reception of God's truth about ourselves. Jesus, the Father's Son, needed the ministry of angels during his forty day fast in the wilderness. He was not alone.

Do you know who else was ministered to by the angels (specifically The Archangel Gabriel)? St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin, Foster Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Patron and Protector of the Church. Recall that although we don't have a single word of Joseph's, we have numerous words about him in St. Matthew's Gospel. It is through the ministry of an angel that St. Joseph:

- Is told to have no fear, for the Child to be born of Mary is the Lord (Matthew 1:20)
- Is told to rise up, after the visit of the Magi and to flee to Egypt, for Herod intends to kill the newborn King (Matthew 2:13)
- Is told to return to Israel, the Land of Promise, after Herod's death (Matthew 2:19)

Again, we haven't a single word of St. Joseph's. This is a good indication to me that he was very good at listening and receiving the truths that God knew he needed to negotiate the challenging and dangerous realities before him. He believed in the ministry of angels. He was not alone.

What's more, every time the Angel came to St. Joseph, it was in a dream. Dreams in the Bible are significant. They are not day-dreams, although there's nothing wrong with that. They are not our retreat into our imaginations of unreal things. They are not self-deception. Dreams reinforce that we, although called to cooperation and co-creation with God, are first to be listeners, second to be recipients, third to trust and so live. God has a plan for us. We aren't self-contained, self-originating, self-made. No matter what the cultural myths might insist. We are not alone.

Angels and Dreams. Each reality, part of God's Creation, of things seen and unseen, visible and invisible, declare that God is actively with us until the end of the age. We are not alone.

Pope Francis, installed as Pope in 2013 on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, and reflecting deeply on Joseph's role, and his own as Pope, as *custos*, caretaker and protector of Christ, has dedicated this current year as the Year of St. Joseph.

Pope Francis, delighting in St. Joseph's openness to angelic ministry through dreams, has written *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*. It is the Pope's reflection on the challenges facing the entire world during this time of pandemic, as well as coming out of the current crises, as better persons and as a better society. And he calls it *Let us Dream*. Like St. Joseph. Like those open to the messages of angels. Like those receptive to the truth God speaks to us about ourselves and our life together.

Interestingly, just as we heard in today's other readings about Noah and the Flood and its meaning for our Baptismal Identity, early in *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis writes:

*The Noah story in Genesis is not just about how God offered a path out of destruction, but about all that followed. The regeneration of human society meant a return to its respecting limits, curbing the reckless pursuit of wealth and power, looking out for the poor and those living on the edges. The introduction of the Sabbath and the Jubilee – moments of recovery and reparation, forgiving debts and restoring relationships – were key to that restoration, giving time for the earth to bounce back, for the poor to find fresh hope, for people to find their souls once again.*

Essentially, the Noah story proclaims that God has a dream for us. To be renewed. To be humble. To be compassionate and just. To be good stewards of creation. To be, with St. Joseph as our Patron, committed to the interior life. Exactly what Lenten renewal is all about.

I would invite you to consider, and join in participating in, as our common Parish Lenten Renewal, two things:

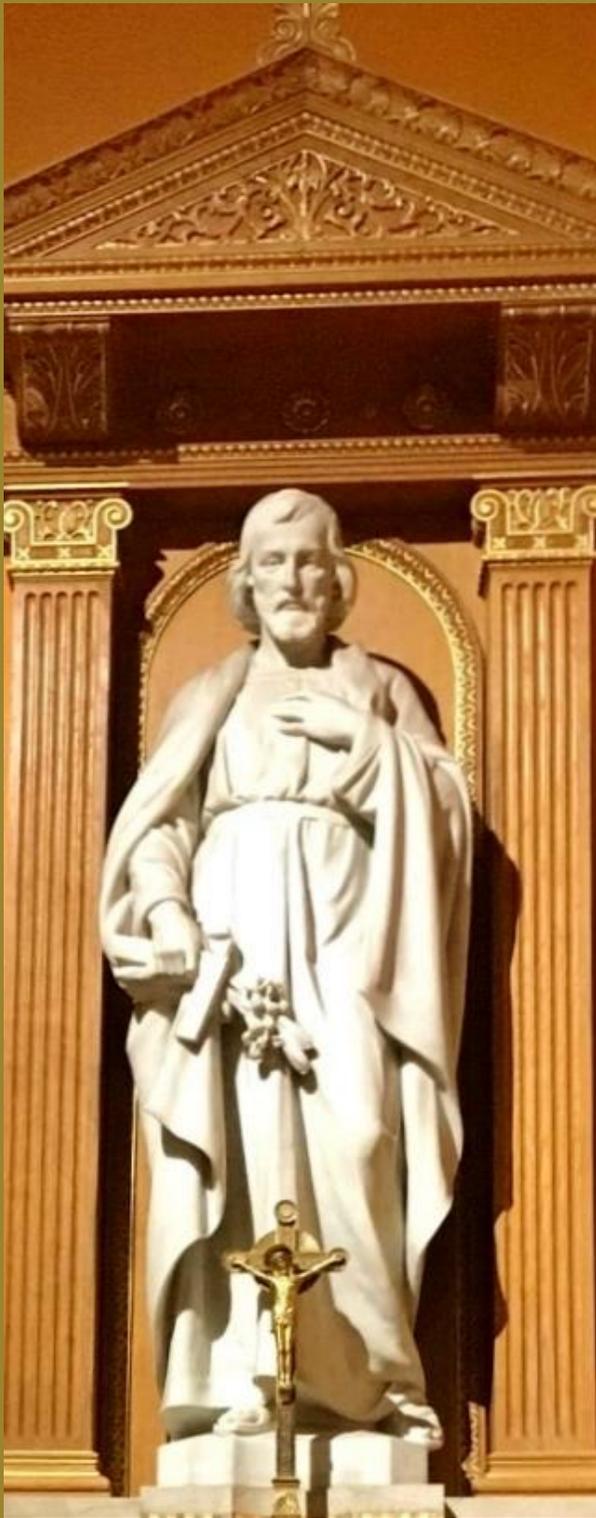
- Obtain a copy of *Let Us Dream*, either print or as an e-book. During the Forty Days of Lent, attempt to read at least four pages a day. Prayerfully, reflectively. Not with a quick reply, or rebuttal, at hand. But to listen inwardly; to receive trustingly; to examine your own life in the insights gained. From time to time, it is my hope to offer brief reflections on these readings, through homilies, pastoral letters, videos, etc.
- Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (attached). Yes, daily. Perhaps as a centering prayer before your reading from *Let Us Dream*; or perhaps as a Prayer of Trust after a reading.

We are faced with many challenges in the months and years ahead: as a parish, as a parish part of pastoral region, as a pastoral region working with other nearby pastoral regions. So much is unknown to us at this time. We would do well to follow St. Joseph's just and righteous example of openness to the ministry of angels; and join with Pope Francis in relearning the biblical approach to dreaming. Please take to heart my invitation; please strive to adopt the suggested practices of reading and prayer. To do this together is to know that we are not alone.

God wants to lead us to a better future. Not alone. But together.

May God Bless You,

Rev. Todd O. Grogan  
Pastor



## Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Jesus, hear us.

**Jesus, graciously hear us.**

God, the Father of Heaven, **Have mercy on us.**

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, **Have mercy on us.**

God, the Holy Spirit, **Have mercy on us.**

Holy Trinity, One God, **Have mercy on us**

Holy Mary, **pray for us.**

St. Joseph,

Renowned offspring of David,

Light of Patriarchs,

Spouse of the Mother of God,

Chaste guardian of the Virgin,

Foster father of the Son of God,

Diligent protector of Christ,

Head of the Holy Family,

Joseph most just,

Joseph most chaste,

Joseph most prudent,

Joseph most strong,

Joseph most obedient,

Joseph most faithful,

Mirror of patience,

Lover of poverty,

Model of artisans,

Glory of home life,

Guardian of virgins,

Pillar of families,

Solace of the wretched,

Hope of the sick,

Patron of the dying,

Terror of demons,

Protector of Holy Church,

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

**spare us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

**graciously hear us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

**have mercy on us.**

He made him the lord of his household.

**And prince over all his possessions.**

Let us pray, --- O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Church of the Annunciation of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary

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