



a Kendall Hunt Company

Joseph, Spouse of Mary, Intermediate - RCLB Lectionary



Intermediate Session

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

Opening Prayer

Let us Pray.

Lord God, You have a plan for us, but we don't always look for your direction. Help us be patient, open and quiet enough to hear you. Guide us to respond to your will with a "yes" just like Mary and Joseph did. Help us look to them for strength to do what you want us to do, even if your way doesn't match our plan. We make our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

Choose a movie or story in which the main character makes choices that follow God's will. Read the story or watch the movie to a point where the story would change if the character had acted according to his or her own will. An example might be George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Stopping at the point where he buys a suitcase consider what choices George could have made throughout his life that followed his own plan? What changes would have happened in the story, for example, if George had traveled the world as a young man? Would circumstances ever cause George to be open to God's plan? How would the story end?

- Where can you see God's hand in the direction your life has taken?
- Have you ever made a decision that was contrary to God's will? How did it work out?
- What are some ways that you have of knowing God's plan for you?

Take time to share ideas about the movie/story and each person's reflections on the questions above.

Listening to the Word of God

Listen as God promises to send a person from David's heritage who will establish God's Kingdom.

Read 2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Why do you think God brought up all God had done for David?
- What does God ask of David?
- What does God promise to David?

Joseph is ready to quietly divorce Mary when he learns that she is pregnant. Listen to how an



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angel changes his mind.

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

Allow for silence.

- Initially for Joseph, what kinds of complications did Mary's pregnancy cause?
- What can we know about Joseph's love for Mary?
- What did the angel say to Joseph to change his mind about divorcing Mary?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

Speaking through the prophet Nathan, God promises David that the person who will establish God's kingdom will come from David's house. Just before we read about this promise in 2 Samuel, we learn that God has asked David to build a house for God. God reminds David that he (David) is indebted to God so much as to say that David owes this house to God. God points out that he has been with the Israelites throughout their travels and has defeated every one of David's enemies. Now it is time for David to build a house for God. God's charity continues to favor David as God further promises that the house and kingdom that God will build through David will never be destroyed. The leadership necessary for God's kingdom will always exist and the roots of that leadership will come from the house of David.

As we saw in 2 Samuel, Matthew restates that Jesus, through his father Joseph, was born into this world from the lineage of David. At the time when Joseph and Mary were promised to each other in marriage, the law was very strict about the promise. More than an engagement as we know it today, the time before the marriage was almost as binding as the marriage itself. So strict was the law, that a person could be put to death for being unfaithful to the person they plan to marry. Mary's pregnancy, then, was a serious offense against Jewish law. Joseph loved Mary and did not want to see her punished, so he decided to quietly break away from the promise of their marriage. Before following through with this plan, however, an angel came to Joseph in a dream and explained the circumstances of Mary's pregnancy. Joseph understood from the angel that this was all part of God's plan and accepted his role as Mary's husband and Jesus' earthly father.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What do you imagine was going through Mary's mind as she approached Joseph to tell him she was going to have a baby?
- What do you think Joseph was thinking before he fell asleep and began to dream?
- What can we know about Mary and Joseph's faith and trust in God and each other at the conclusion of this reading?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

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Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Joseph is Mary's husband

As Mary's husband, Joseph is also the father of Jesus and together they shared the responsibilities of parenting. The gospel of Matthew calls Jesus the carpenter's son (13:55) and in Luke 2:48, Mary refers to Joseph as Jesus' father. God had already chosen Joseph to be Mary's husband. We know God wanted the marriage to proceed since God sent the angel to tell Joseph not to worry about Mary's pregnancy. Like Mary, Joseph says "yes" to the angel. In Matthew 1:20 we know that Joseph understood from the angel that Mary was to bear a baby "from the Holy Spirit." The Church understands Joseph's "yes" to the angel as his understanding that Mary would forever remain a virgin. Because Joseph loved God and Mary he gave himself to Mary in love and refrained from the sexual expression of marriage in order to preserve her virginity. This action does not hurt our idea of marriage but rather is a way of preserving the specialness of Jesus' birth. Joseph is the patron saint of men and women who choose to live a celibate life for the sake of Jesus.

- Why is it important that God have a role in all marriages?
- What signs of God's presence do you see in the marriages of people you know?
- What might God be saying to young people today about marriage?

Sacrament Connection

It is tempting to think of marriage as a human institution, but we must remember that God is the author of marriage. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a baptized man and woman become partners with one another and with God as they unite for the good of one another and create new life in their children. A husband and wife promise, before God, to love one another, to accept and care for children that result from their union. From the grace of the sacrament, couples are given the strength to love one another as much as Christ loved his Church.

The Gospel in Life

Is there someone you know who is awaiting the birth of a child? Do something for the parents to show them that God is with them. Help them see God through you.