

DECEMBER 18, 2016



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ISAIAH 7:10-14

PSALM 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

ROMANS 1:1-7

MATTHEW 1:18-24

REFLECTION

We have one week to go until we have the opportunity to welcome Christ into our lives once again at Christmas Time. One week left to prepare our homes, our families, and our lives. On this last Sunday of the waiting-in-hope-filled season of Advent, we hear from Matthew's account of the Gospel about a scandal. Mary is betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of King David, and she is found to be pregnant. How could this be? She must have had relations out of wedlock with another man, either willingly or unwillingly. Either way, it was a scandal. Being an upright man, Joseph decides to let her go away quietly instead of publicly shaming her. But then he receives a message from God in a dream. The angel of the Lord comes to Joseph and explains that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The prophecy of the Messiah (the savior) was coming to fruition, and Joseph had an important part to play as the foster father of Jesus. Obedient to the angel's instruction to take Mary into his home as his wife, Joseph is a model of one who genuinely lived by faith. He directly helps to pave the way for a new plan to take shape—God taking on human flesh in the person of the Son, Jesus the Christ.

ACTION

This year, St. Joseph's feast day is celebrated on Monday, March 20. Even though this is a few months from now, honor St. Joseph by making a "loaf of St. Joseph's Bread" (*Pane di San Giuseppe*) and share it with family and friends or donate to a homeless shelter in anticipation of Christ's birth into our hearts and homes at Christmas Time. You can find several recipes online. As protector of Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph is known as the protector of families. Spend some good quality time this week literally breaking bread with your own family and those who are closest to you in your life.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- Reflect upon a time in your life when you've had a profound decision to make. What was the situation? How did you respond? Would you have done anything differently?