

Father O'Connor's Homily for 21 December 2025  
Fourth Sunday of Advent-A

Isaiah 7: 10-14  
Romans 1: 1-7  
Matthew 1: 18-24

I would like to focus today on a man who often escapes our notice as we prepare for the Feast of Christmas, although he is one of the principal characters. His name is Saint Joseph.

We pay lots of attention at Christmas to Jesus and to Mary, and rightly so. But we almost seem to pass by Joseph. Now from heaven, I don't think this bothers Joseph one bit. But it seems to me that, here on earth, we ought to give a little more attention to Joseph and his role in the Christmas events.

So I would like to offer a little Advent meditation on Saint Joseph from three angles: [1] Joseph teaches us about the treasure of silence. [2] Joseph teaches us that our actions so often speak more loudly than our words do. [3] Joseph shows us the power of God's grace when we are under pressure.

The first: the treasure of silence. How many words of Saint Joseph are recorded in the Gospels? Not a single one. And so we assume that Joseph must have been a very quiet man.

Many people are not used to a lot of quiet time. This is a hectic world with a lot of noise and distraction. We are forever trying to stay connected.

Someone asked Saint Padre Pio, "What language does God speak?" And he answered, "God speaks the language of silence."

Sometimes people complain, "God isn't answering me!" And I ask, "Have you been quiet long enough to hear what God is trying to say to you?"

A priest wrote that every time he visited a nursing home, he noticed a man seated next to his bed-ridden wife. He had learned that, because of illness, she had not spoken a word in eight years. But her husband still went there every day to be with her. And then one day she died.

The priest went to the funeral home, and that tearful gentleman said to him, "I am going to miss her. I am really going to miss her." Her presence had still been powerful to him, even when her words had failed.

There is power in silence.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the stillness of the night. His first thirty years we call His hidden life. Almost ninety per cent of His life here on earth was spent in veiled silence. During the three years of His public life, He would often go away by Himself to pray to His Heavenly Father. I like to think that maybe Jesus learned this love of silence from the example of his foster father on earth, Saint Joseph.

Saint Joseph teaches us about the treasure of silence.

The second: Saint Joseph also teaches us that our actions often speak more loudly than our words do. In today's Gospel, Joseph had learned that Mary, to whom he was betrothed, but before they came to live together, was expecting. And Joseph was not the father. He didn't know what to do.

An angel came to him in a dream and said: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary, your wife, into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

What did Joseph do? He didn't argue. He didn't dawdle. He got up and he did what the angel told him that God wanted him to do. Our actions often speak more loudly than our words do.

Later on Jesus would give us the teaching that, "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" [Matthew 7: 21]. Perhaps when Jesus spoke those words He was thinking of Saint Joseph.

On 13 May 1981, Pope Saint John Paul II was shot in Saint Peter's Square by a would-be assassin [Mehmet Ali Agca]. Four bullets entered the Pope's body. What did Pope John Paul II do after he recovered? He went to the prison in Rome where his would-be assassin was [on 27 December 1983]. He sat with that man and forgave him. The man kissed the Pope's hand and, before he left, the Pope put his left arm around the prisoner's shoulders and shook his right hand.

The photographers of the world were there to capture those moments, and perhaps Pope John Paul II did more to proclaim the mercy of God by that visit than he did from all the wonderful words that he spoke and wrote.

Saint Joseph teaches us about the treasure of silence, and he teaches us that our actions so often speak more loudly than our words do.

And the third: Saint Joseph shows us the power of God's grace when we are under pressure.

Saint Joseph had a lot of pressures in his life. We know about some of them. In today's Gospel, Mary, to whom he is engaged, is pregnant. What is he supposed to do? There is a census and he has to go to Bethlehem to register. Mary is near-due delivery. They get to Bethlehem and there is no room for them in the inn. So they end up in a stable with a manger for a bed for the newborn baby Jesus.

Jesus is born and then the jealous King Herod decides to kill all the boys two-years-old and younger in the area because he is afraid there is a rival king. So Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus leave their homeland and go to Egypt, where they don't even know the language and Joseph doesn't have a job, and they stay there until they are told to come back.

And then, when Jesus is twelve years old, He stays behind in the temple in Jerusalem – and for three days Mary and Joseph search for Him “in anguish.”

What did Joseph do in each of these trials? He relied upon God's grace, which comes to us one day at a time, one event at a time.

We have those times when we can feel that our life is a procession from one crisis to the next, times when we can wonder, “How am I going to make it through this?” Look to Joseph. Pray to Saint Joseph. Ask him to intercede, that you receive the grace you need for today, for what is before you right now. And, like Saint Joseph, trust that God will help you.

And so, on this Fourth Sunday of Advent, what lessons does Saint Joseph teach us? [1] Cultivate the treasure of silence in your life so that you are ready to listen to God. [2] Remember that our actions so often speak more loudly than our words do. [3] And rely upon the power of God's grace every day, but especially when you are under pressure.

And we pray: Saint Joseph our patron, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus, pray for us.