

St Joseph

19 March

gathering

Sit quietly settling into stillness. Let the rhythm of your breathing still you. Gaze at the image and Mary's words and let them resonate in you.

We see in St Joseph a perfect mirror of confidence in God – a wonderful, unbounded confidence in our good God.

Mary MacKillop, 1893

context

This section of Matthew's gospel tells of Joseph's dilemma when he learns that unfortunately the astrologers from the East went to Herod thinking that the 'new born heir' would be in his family. Herod, prepared to go to any lengths to keep his throne, ordered a blanket killing of boy babies in Bethlehem. Matthew

tells the reader that Joseph had advance notice through an angel. He took the family and fled from his home in Bethlehem to Egypt. In this story Matthew is describing Jesus' beginnings in Moses-like hues suggesting to the reader that Jesus will be a leader even greater than Moses. Joseph is painted as the protector, the man with his ear to the ground, the one who risks everything to save the lives of loved ones.

listening *Matthew 2:1-3; 13-15; 19-23*

After Jesus' birth – which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod – astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage." At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him." Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfil what God had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I have called my Own."



After Herod's death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead."

Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."

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breaking open

When have I shown a Joseph-like protection of those who are vulnerable?

Take time to reflect and share with each other.

responding

- † We pray that like Joseph we relieve suffering and bring hope to those around us.
- † We pray for parents, especially those bringing up children alone.
- † We pray for families made refugees by discrimination, wars and natural disasters.



**God, Protector
of Life,
hear us.**

Invitation to include other prayers



God of Joseph and Mary, guarding the weak from the dominating, hear our prayer and encourage our efforts to create a just, kind and inclusive society. We ask this through the refugee Christ and the Spirit of community.

Amen

blessing

*Living God bless us with
protection
intuition
companionship
discernment
practicality
and the ability to be ready for the
next moment.*

Amen

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