



The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

74 Grange Road, Glen Huntly VIC 3163

☎ Telephone: 9401 6336

✉ glenhuntly@cam.org.au

💻 cam.org.au/glenhuntly

ABN: 70548 570 366

Homily at Mass 4th Sunday of Advent Year A – 22 December 2019

Gazing at the Christmas Crib, we recognize all the familiar figures – the angel, the shepherds and, at the heart of it all, Mary and Joseph, and the manger awaiting the infant Jesus. The Word of God today helps us to think about what we see, to ponder, to wonder, to pray and to think. Let's spend a few moments now doing just that, with the help of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, the Gospel writer St Matthew, and the apostle Paul.

This is how Isaiah speaks of Mary:

“The maiden is with child and all soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emanuel a name which means God with us”.

The maiden is the Virgin Mary. How do we speak of her? All holy – all pure – all beautiful – all lovely. This is exactly how God created her – to be the golden tabernacle in which the Son of God would be conceived and born. One of our Church windows depicts the Annunciation – when the Angel Gabriel sent by God, asked Mary to be the Mother of God. How? Why? Why me? Mary wondered. But in the end she gave a willing and generous yes to the Angel. “I am the handmaid of the Lord”. This ‘yes’ of Mary took her to Bethlehem. One day it would lead her to Calvary and her Son's Cross.

St Luke focusses all of his account of Our Lord's conception and birth on the person of Our Lady. St Matthew, on the other hand, focuses on St Joseph. We learn in the Gospels that St Joseph was a carpenter – the Greek word is tekton: like our word technology. He was a skilled craftsman, he worked with his hands with wood, metal, leather. But as we look at the crib scene we don't think so much of Joseph the worker but Joseph Mary's husband, Joseph called to be a father to Jesus.

A husband's first duty is to honour his wife. Married people remember their marriage promise: “I will love you and honour you all the days of my life”. How long ago did you make that promise? For a man this promise calls for all his heart, his mind, his strength. A lot of things can tempt us away from keeping this promise – statistics show that 1/3 perhaps even ½ of all marriages in Australia end in divorce. No family is untouched by divorce or broken or failed marriages.

Some marriages fall over because of immaturity, that a man or woman weren't ready to enter marriage or leave out it's commandment. Some marriages fall over because one or other party is unfaithful. In our day marriage is under stress because we live in a society that seems unfriendly to family life; a society like ours has grown used to selfishness: it's all about ‘me’. Priests and marriage counsellors often notice that marriages hit the rocks and break up when communication between husband and wife falls to silence – external priorities like work and being absent interstate or overseas from one another leave perhaps the wife struggling by herself with the children, or each one feeling lonely, even abandoned.

We look at St Joseph and what do we see? We see first of all a man of silence. The Gospel today gives us not one word from his lips, but it's not difficult for us to imagine his thoughts, the battle in his mind and heart, his confusion, his wrestling, his prayer, his dreams. His only dream was a beautiful life with the most beautiful girl in the whole world: Mary of Nazareth. Faithful to the law of Israel, Joseph had made his betrothal, and prepared a home to welcome his young wife. But there's a stone in his shoe – Mary is pregnant. Has she been unfaithful? It is now that God intervenes in his life – an Angel – was it Gabriel – tells him in a dream: “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived ... by the Holy Spirit”. Did this lessen Joseph's confusion? Did this answer his questions? Did this help his good name and reputation in Nazareth? Probably not. But what impresses us about Joseph is his yes to God – every bit as generous and whole hearted as Mary's. And we see him now, kneeling alongside Mary, still a puzzled look on his face, yet at the same time strong, protective, manly, fatherly, faithful to God and to Mary.

The window of St Joseph in our church is placed above a depiction of King David. St Paul speaks today of Joseph a “descendent of David” – a descent Jesus inherits from his relationship with Joseph. Jewish tradition gives the father the honour to name his children. You and I know that Jesus is not Joseph's natural son – we say in the Creed Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. She is the Mother of God. Joseph is not the father of God, but no one can take away from his role as Mary's husband and father in the Holy Family. On 1 January we honour Mary Mother of God. Today us men can perhaps spend just a few moments thinking about our role, our vocation, our patron St Joseph.