

# Read

Isaiah 7:10-14

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

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-24

## LIVING THE WORD

### Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2019



#### REFLECTION

When we hear of Joseph's intention to quietly divorce Mary after hearing that she was pregnant, we can be quick to assume that Joseph was embarrassed by the situation. Neighbors and friends were probably talking, and Joseph did not have easy answers to offer. A righteous man and upstanding witness of the Jewish faith, these circumstances could easily destroy Joseph's reputation and livelihood. By quietly divorcing Mary, Joseph could retain some semblance of normalcy and pride.

Perhaps, though, Joseph's plan to divorce Mary was not rooted in embarrassment. Rather, it is not unrealistic to imagine that Joseph had some reservations about being the guardian of the Son of God. Maybe Joseph doubted his abilities as a prospective husband and father and was afraid of the responsibilities, or maybe Joseph thought someone else could do a better job. Assured by the angel, however, Joseph moved past his fears and embraced Mary, Jesus, and the will of God.



#### ACTION

Like Joseph, our own parental figures love us the best they can. Sometimes our parents and family members make mistakes along the way, and the things they do and say do not always meet our hopes and expectations. While there are even times when their words and actions hurt us, we can hope to see more than faults and failures.

Take some time today to write a letter to a parental figure or family member in your life. Thank them for the gift they are to you and express your gratitude for them. You can also share some significant memories of the past or your hopes for the future.

*"To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything."*



—Thomas Merton

#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ When has God helped you overcome fear?
- ❖ What does Emmanuel, "God is with us," mean to you?



December 22, 2019

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### LECTIONARY #10A

Isaiah 7:10-14

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c, 10b)

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-24

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph were obedient to God's will, and desired to make him the center of their lives. Like them, we are called to make our lives radically open to God, and prepare a place for him in our own hearts. We are called to live out that which Jesus taught in the Gospels—our lives are meant to be filled by the fruits of a Christ-centered life.

**Q FOCUS:** *Called and chosen, we frame our lives in Christ.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

In days we will reach the end of the Advent season—Christmas will be here! The secular world celebrates Christmas before the actual holiday; in the Church, Christmas begins with the actual holyday, and continues over the following weeks until the Baptism of the Lord on January 12, 2020.

### Church Teaching Connection

"This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. . . . By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son . . ." (*Lumen gentium*, 62).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Matthew 1:18-24

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared 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." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said

through the prophet: / *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, / and they shall name him Emmanuel, /* which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Emmanuel means, “God-is-with-us.” For so long, God’s people waited for the promised Messiah, the one God promised centuries before Mary and Joseph’s time. For so long, God’s people had been separated from him by sin—the world was aching for the Messiah.

► **In what ways do you ache for Jesus?**

Like all Jewish people, Mary and Joseph were waiting for the Messiah. They knew that God had promised the Messiah and they knew well the Scriptures that told of his coming to the people Israel. The Virgin Mary, a young woman likely in her teenage years, learned that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Lord, and she gave her assent to God’s angelic messenger. Joseph, her intended, learned of her pregnancy and wished to keep quiet about ending the relationship. He did not wish to see Mary stoned—cruelly executed—for her extramarital pregnancy. By quietly divorcing Mary, he would spare her such a terrible end. Before that occurred, Joseph, who loved and obeyed God, listened to God in his dream, and did take Mary to be his wife. Joseph’s obedience to God is something we deeply admire and try to emulate in our own lives.

► **How do you emulate Joseph in your own life?**

Like Joseph and Mary, we are called to be the brave, open, trusting in God, and kind. Like them, we are called to be open to make a place for Jesus in our world. Mary and Joseph very concretely made a place for Jesus in their world—the Virgin Mary gave her body and her life for her son—our Lord. Likewise, we too are called to make room for Jesus in our lives and in this world. His presence in our lives will change the way we treat others and treat ourselves. His presence transforms us.

► **How do you make room for Jesus in your life?**

Part of making a place for Jesus in our hearts means following God’s will. Most people will not be like Joseph and Mary in having such direct revelation of God’s will. Humans, with notable exceptions, do not often have messages from God through Archangels. Even Joseph and Mary didn’t have constant divine intervention giving instructions through angels—the instructions and requests from God occurred at very particular points in each of their lives. The average Christian will need to use his or her own judgment and discernment, paying attention to call, when it comes to particular decisions in life.

► **What does that response to God's will look like?**

It means that we will be open to God’s will and look toward spiritual discernment in big decisions. It means that we allow our consciences to be formed by the Gospel so that our everyday choices will reflect that which Jesus has taught us. Like Joseph we can be open to changing trajectory in order to be obedient to God. Like Mary, we can say yes to God’s desires for our lives, and trust that he will care for us. As this last week of Advent comes to a close, we are finishing our time of waiting for the Christ child.

► **What Advent preparations do you need to complete?**

► **What preparations will you continue to make through prayer, openness to God, and discernment?**

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 92.

**How can you be like Mary and Joseph, making your life for Jesus?**

**How do you make a home for Jesus in your soul? In what ways do you already make this space?**

**How can you discern important decisions with reflection in the Gospel?**

**How do you form your conscience so that your everyday choices are made with God in mind?**

**How do you infuse the Gospel in your everyday life?**

## Act on the Word

### Discernment

While most teenagers are not at a point of making permanent decisions about their life's vocation, they are beginning to make important decisions that affect their lives. If you haven't yet learned about discernment, it is a good time to investigate different methods of it. The LifeTeen website has excellent advice for high school aged teenagers. Using a three-step "Stop, Drop, and Roll" process, they advise teenagers to stop and prayerfully consider the decision; drop to one's knees pray, self-examine, and understand the pros and cons of the choice; and roll with the decision once it is made. Check it out: <http://lifeteen.com/blog/discernment-in-3-easy-steps/>. This week, consider an important decision that must be made soon, or perhaps consider a future important decision—think about how you will make the choice. Employing what you learn about prayerful discernment, outline your discernment steps, and reflect on your decision. Talk to a trusted adult such as a parent, youth pastor, pastor, or a sister from your parish. Ask how they learned to utilize prayerful discernment, and ask for their guidance.

## Closing Prayer

Lord God,  
give us Mary's faith, that we may believe in  
your promises.  
Give us Mary's hope, that we may look to the  
future without fear.  
Give us Mary's love, that we too may bring  
forth Christ by the love and kindness we  
show to others.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## For the Holyday of Obligation

To help teens prepare for the Christmas Masses, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.