



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 18 December 2022

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, the liturgy presents the figure of Saint Joseph to us (cf. *Mt* 1:18-24). He is a just man who is about to get married. We can imagine what his dreams for the future are — a beautiful family, with an affectionate wife and many wonderful children, and a dignified job — simple and good dreams, the dreams of simple and good people. Suddenly however, these dreams shatter against a disconcerting discovery. Mary, his betrothed, is expecting a child, and the child is not his! What would Joseph have felt? Shock, pain, confusion, perhaps even irritation and disappointment.... He experienced his world was falling apart all around him! And what could he do?

The Law gives him two options. The first is to *accuse* Mary and make her pay the price for her alleged infidelity. The second is to secretly annul their engagement without exposing Mary to scandal and to harsh consequences, taking upon himself, however, the burden of shame. So, Joseph chooses this second option, *the way of mercy*. And behold, at the height of his crisis, right when he is thinking and evaluating all this, God lights a new light in his heart — he declares to him in a dream that Mary's motherhood did not come about because of a betrayal, but was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that the baby to be born will be the Saviour (cf. vv. 20-21). Mary will be the Mother of the Messiah, and he will be His guardian. On waking up, Joseph understands that the greatest dream of every devout Israelite — to be the father of the Messiah — is being fulfilled for him in a completely *unexpected way*.

Indeed, in order to fulfil this, it would not be enough to belong to David's lineage and be a faithful observer of the law, but he will have to entrust himself above and beyond all else to God, welcome Mary and her son in a completely different way than he had expected, different from the way things had always been done. In other words, Joseph will have to renounce all reassuring certainties, his perfect plans, his legitimate expectations, and open himself to a future that was completely to be discovered. And before God, who disrupts his plans and asks that he trust Him, Joseph says "yes". Joseph's courage is heroic and is exercised in silence — his courage is to trust, he welcomes, he is willing, he asks for no further guarantees.

Brothers and sisters, what does Joseph say to us today? We too have our dreams, and perhaps we think of them more, we talk about them together at Christmas. Perhaps we long for some dreams that were shattered and we see that our best expectations have to face with the unexpected, disconcerting situations. And when this happens, Joseph shows us the way. We should not give in to negative feelings, like anger or isolation — this is the wrong way! Instead, we have to attentively welcome surprises, life's surprises, even the crises. When we find ourselves in crisis, we should not make decisions quickly and instinctively, but rather sift through them like Joseph did, who "considered everything" (cf. v. 20), and base ourselves on the underlying criterium: God's mercy. When one experiences a crisis without giving in to isolation, anger, and fear, but keeping the door open to God, He can intervene. He is an expert in transforming crises into dreams — yes, *God opens crises into new horizons* we never would have imagined before, perhaps not as we would expect, but in the way he knows how. And these, brothers and sisters, are God's horizons — surprising — but infinitely broader and more beautiful than ours! May the Virgin Mary help us live open to God's surprises.

After the Marian prayer, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I am concerned about the situation that has arisen in the Lachin Corridor in the Southern Caucasus. I am particularly concerned about the precarious humanitarian conditions of the population which risk further deterioration during the course of the winter season. I ask everyone involved to commit themselves to finding peaceful solutions for the good of the people.

Let us also pray for peace in Peru, that the violence in the country may cease and that the path of dialogue may be taken, to overcome the political and social crisis that is afflicting the people.

I greet you all affectionately, those of you who have come from Rome, from Italy and from many parts of the world. I especially greet the faithful from California, and those from Madrid, as well as the groups from Praia A Mare, Catania, Caraglio, and from the parish of Santi Protomartiri in Rome.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary, whom the liturgy invites us to contemplate on this Fourth Sunday of Advent, to touch the hearts of those who can stop the war in Ukraine. Let us not forget the suffering of those people, especially of the children, the elderly, the people who are sick. Let us pray. Let us pray.

I wish you all a happy Sunday and that your journey during this last stage of Advent may go well. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci*.