

HOPING ~ Our hearts are made for you, O God, and we shall not rest until we find our home in you. (St Augustine)

Awakened by the Word we turn now towards the Lord.

1. . What do you want to say to the Lord who reaches out to us in so many ways?
2. What might you say about the things that happen deep within us? What gifts might you ask to embrace change with its newness and strangeness?
3. What word about life—be it a word of thanksgiving, sorrow, joy, peace, petition do you now bring to the Lord?

We gather our prayer together as we say:

Father, let the gift of your life

continue to grow in us,

drawing us from fear to faith,

from darkness to love, from death to life.

Keep us alive in Christ, and watchful

in prayer till your kingdom is revealed in us, which is why we pray,

Our Father



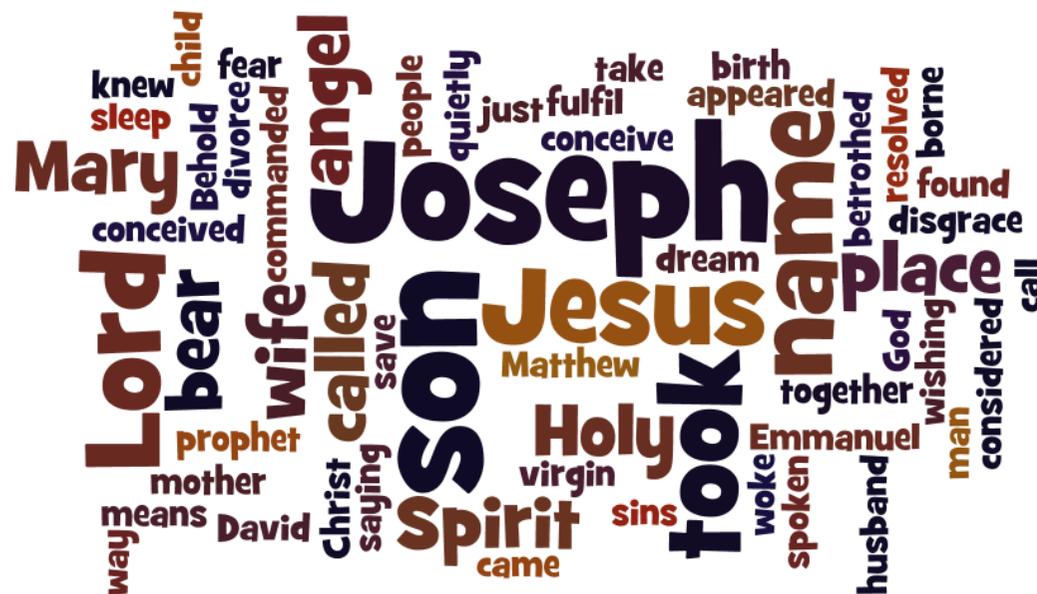
“If you want God and long for Him, yet sometimes wonder what that means or whether it can mean anything at all, you are already walking with the God who comes.” *Maria Boulding*

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Hearing Happening Hoping

Journey with God’s Word Fourth Sunday of Advent

Matthew 1: 18-25



The Word of God comes to us to awaken our hearts.

That is why we begin by praying:

Lord, you dwell deeply within us all, your Spirit welling up in us, drawing us home to you. Open our hearts this day to *hear* your word, to *meet* your Son, to *long* for YOU. In the presence of the Lord we read:

Matthew 1:18-25

The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and not wishing to disgrace her, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: '*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel*—which means, God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

HEARING ~ *Speak Lord, your servants are listening!*

You have the words of eternal life!

We read the passage 2-3 times. Reflect and share on some of the following:

1. According to Matthew, what is the meaning of the name Jesus? And what is the meaning of Emmanuel? What then is the role of Jesus for Matthew?
2. What makes Joseph change his course of action?
3. What expectation does God have of Joseph? Does God have confidence in Joseph?
4. In this story who, in Matthew's eyes, is the hero?



HAPPENING ~ Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!

(Psalm 4)

Read the text again and reflect and share on some of the following:

1. Joseph changes because of his dream. What changes do we see in ourselves or within others because of what has happened deep within us?
2. "An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream..." The Lord speaks to Joseph through his dream. In what gentle ways does God speak to us? How do we realise it is the Lord who was speaking to us?
3. "Joseph, ... do not fear!" What causes us to be afraid when God is at work in our lives?
4. "When Joseph woke..." Something happened in his dream that enabled Joseph to change his plans for Mary and himself. Maybe he was able to get in touch again with why he chose Mary in the first place? What dream has given us the freedom and courage to re-discover and live out our heart's desire?

