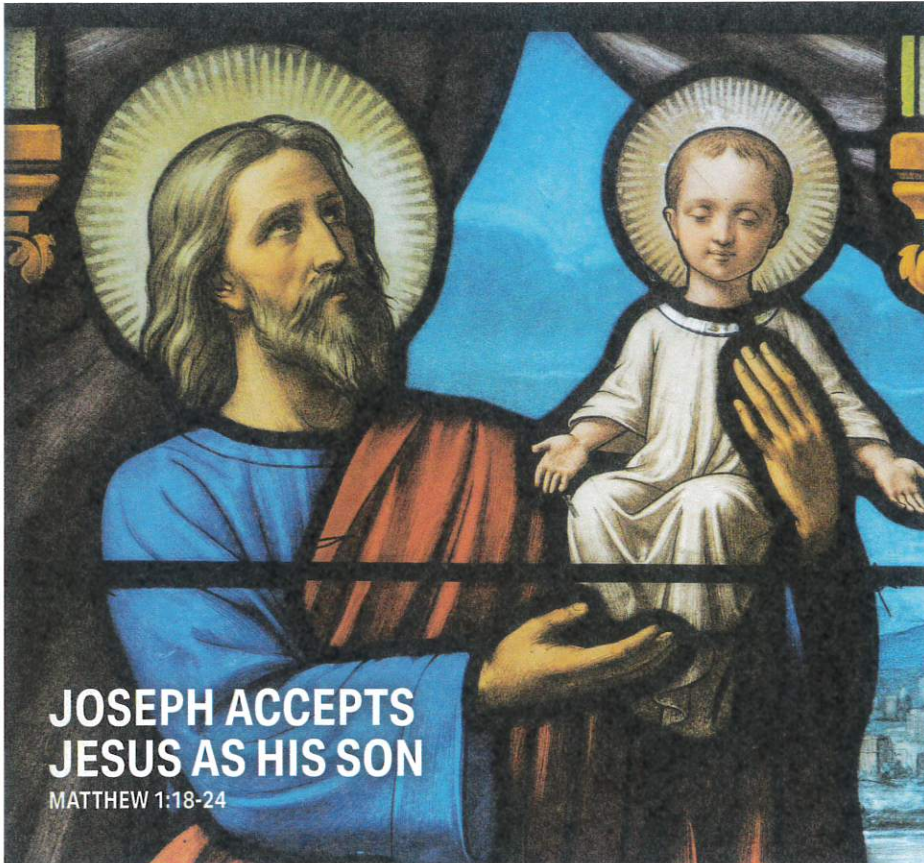


# Sunday Message

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year A • 21 December 2025 • Psalter Week 4



## JOSEPH ACCEPTS JESUS AS HIS SON

MATTHEW 1:18-24

This passage presents the quiet yet profound role of Joseph in the unfolding of salvation history. Unlike Luke's Gospel, which focuses on Mary's "yes," Matthew offers Joseph's perspective – a man caught in a dilemma between righteousness and mercy. Betrothed to Mary and discovering she is pregnant, Joseph initially plans to divorce her quietly, choosing not to expose her to shame.

But God intervenes through a dream. The angel reassures Joseph: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Joseph's response is immediate and obedient. Without protest or delay, he does what the angel commands. In doing so, he becomes the earthly guardian of Jesus and the protector of Mary.

Matthew's Gospel highlights that this moment fulfils the prophecy from Isaiah: "*The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel*" – which means "God is with us." That name is central to Christian faith. In Jesus, God is no longer distant or hidden – He is present in our humanity, born into our world.

This passage teaches that God often works through ordinary people, quiet decisions, and faithful obedience. Joseph reminds us that trust in God sometimes means letting go of our own plans and stepping into mystery with faith. ■

### LEARN

Pope St John Paul II emphasised in *Redemptoris Custos* ("Guardian of the Redeemer") that Joseph's faithful obedience shows us the dignity of human cooperation with God's plan. Joseph's "yes" reminds us that holiness often grows quietly through daily faithfulness and trusting surrender to God's will.

### SAY

Lord, give me the strength to trust  
your plan,  
The courage to follow your will,  
And a heart willing to serve each  
day. Amen.

### REFLECT

The story of Joseph in today's Gospel is a quiet, powerful example of faith and obedience. Imagine the confusion and worry Joseph must have felt when he discovered Mary was pregnant. In his time, this would have been a scandal. But Joseph is described as a "righteous man" – someone who seeks to do what is right, even when it's difficult.

When God sends an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream, the message is clear: don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. This reassurance helps Joseph to trust in a plan he cannot fully understand. Instead of reacting with anger or rejection, he chooses to believe and to act in faith.

Joseph's decision shows us that faith often requires courage. It means trusting God's promises, even when the path ahead is unclear or challenging. His obedience makes him a guardian not only of Mary but of Jesus Himself.

As we prepare for Christmas, Joseph's example invites us to trust God's plan in our own lives. Sometimes God calls us to step into uncertainty, to let go of control, and to follow Him with open hearts. May we, like Joseph, listen for God's voice and respond with courage and love. The God who comes to us is Emmanuel – God with us, always. ■

### DO

Spend a few moments each day in quiet prayer, asking God to help you trust His plan – even when it feels uncertain. Like Joseph, try to be open to God's guidance in your life, and take one small step of obedience or kindness in response.





## ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Drop down dew from above, you heavens,  
and let the clouds rain down the Just One;  
let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.*

## COLLECT

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,  
your grace into our hearts,  
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son  
was made known by the message of an Angel,  
may by his Passion and Cross  
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

## FIRST READING Isaiah 7:10-14

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

In those days: The LORD spoke to Ahaz:  
'Ask a sign of the LORD your God;  
let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.'  
But Ahaz said,  
'I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.'  
And Isaiah said,  
'Hear then, O house of David!  
Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?  
Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.  
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and shall call his name Emmanuel.'

The word of the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24(23):1-2.3-4b.5-6.R.cf. 7c.10b

*R: Let the LORD enter; he is the king of glory.*

1. The LORD's is the earth and its fullness,  
the world, and those who dwell in it.  
It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the rivers he made it firm. **R.**
2. Who shall climb the mountain of the LORD?  
Who shall stand in his holy place?  
The clean of hands and pure of heart,  
whose soul is not set on vain things. **R.**
3. Blessings from the LORD shall he receive,  
and right reward from the God who saves him.  
Such are the people who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R.**

## SECOND READING Romans 1:1-7

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle, set apart  
for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through  
his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was  
descended from David according to the flesh and was declared  
to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness  
by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, through

whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the  
obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,  
including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be  
saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord  
Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

## ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Matthew 1:23

*R: Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Emmanuel –  
which means, God with us.

*R: Alleluia.*

## GOSPEL Matthew 1:18-24

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Now 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 from the Holy Spirit. And  
her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to  
shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered  
these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a  
dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as  
your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from 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, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall  
call his name 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the Holy Spirit, O Lord,  
sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar,  
just as he filled with his power  
the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
Through Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son;  
and his name will be called Emmanuel.*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption,  
we pray, almighty God,  
that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer,  
so we may press forward all the more eagerly  
to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

*Amen.*