

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



In Matthew 1:20, St. Joseph is told to “not be afraid” to take Mary as his wife. The archangel Gabriel indicates to Joseph the opportunity given him by God to participate in the salvation of the world by becoming the foster father of the Messiah. This invitation must have been difficult for St. Joseph. Likewise, it must have been difficult for Joseph to know that the woman he deeply loves is pregnant by another. The plan for Joseph’s life was different than he had hoped it would be. The child growing inside his wife will be the One to deliver all of humanity from sinfulness and shame. This holy child will form a new people in God’s love. God invites Joseph to participate in the work of salvation by becoming the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. Because of Joseph’s obedience and willingness to participate in God’s plan, he becomes a model for discernment. St. Joseph teaches us that discernment has an ending point.

There needs to be a point of completion for discernment. In vocation discernment, lots of time is spent praying, discussing ideas, and gathering information about the life under consideration. Vocation directors and spiritual directors are incredibly helpful in discernment. Likewise, family members and trusted friends are important guides as well. In the process of discernment, though, a decision needs

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to be embraced that will move our life forward in whatever way we do know that God is calling. Whatever the choice, faith reminds the discerner that God will not be upset with our decision. God desires our happiness. One does not need to profess religious vows or be ordained a priest to please God. What pleases God is that one uses their gifts and talents in a manner that positively builds up the human family and makes one feel fulfilled.

The discernment process is not easy. It often brings about in us feelings that are scary. One thinks “what will happen to me in the future?”, “who will take care of me?”, “who will tell my story when I die?”, “who will take care of my health care,” or “who will care for me my old age?” These are important life questions. Yet, in our discernment relationship with God, we need to trust that God will take care of us, at all stages of life. Jesus reminds us that





every single part of our life is managed by God's love. Christ tells us that even the hairs on our heads are counted. God knows everything about us. This important aspect of God's activity in our lives needs to be remembered throughout discernment. In discernment, all questions that arise are valid and necessary to help us thoroughly investigate what God is asking. Every question, every feeling, every thought needs to be pondered and investigated. These need to be placed before the Lord so that He can assist us in

Joseph trusted the power and faithfulness of God. He entrusted the very words that God spoke to his heart where discerns the call of God.

Like St. Joseph, any discernor can easily be overwhelmed by the fears, doubts, and concerns that arise in discernment. But the discernor needs to trust that God accompanies one on this journey. As God spoke the words "do not be afraid" to St. Joseph, he tells all people as well. Discernment needs to lead one to a place

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. Pray Matthew 1:18-24. How is the Lord calling me to serve Him? What are my hopes, dreams, fears, concerns and questions in discerning the Lord's call? What can St. Joseph's example teach me about answering the Lord's call.

making sense of them. God walks with us the road of discernment. In discernment, we have to trust that if God asks, God will provide. St. Joseph, most probably had questions, concerns and fears. God asked a lot from him. Yet, Joseph had the faith to trust God in all things. If God wanted his pregnant wife to give birth to the Messiah, God would provide all that was needed for Joseph to fulfill God's invitation.

When God asked St. Joseph to care for Mary, Joseph might have had great plans for he and Mary. Maybe these plans included where their house would be located in Nazareth, what their children might do when adults, or how many grandchildren he and Mary might have. The invitation of God radically changed all of Joseph's plans. Yet, Joseph could have told God no.

It must have difficult for Joseph to hear Mary tell him that she was pregnant with God's child. It might have been terrifying to know that Mary's child was the Christ. Joseph could have been filled with doubts about his ability to care for such a holy child. Maybe he feared that God's invitation was too much for a mere mortal to undertake. Yet, Joseph prayerfully slept upon it and let God take over. He could have said to the angel "absolutely not! I want no part of this! I'm done!" Instead,

of hope, where the answer to the question lies.

Discernment is labor intensive and requires prayer, spiritual direction, and investigation of lifestyle. Ultimately, discernment leads to a decision. Faith gives courage to follow through on the decision, knowing that the discernment process has honored all that fills the heart, and it's now time to act on the decision. St. Joseph did the same. He listened and received the invitation, prayed through his questions, doubts and concerns to move to a place of hope-filled faith to say "Yes" to the Lord's call. In our discernment, St. Joseph's process can be ours.

As you continue to discern the Lord's call for your life, maybe reflect on St. Joseph's experience, and pray for his help. Saying yes to God is a process, but a process that leads to deeper faith in the Lord's faithfulness. It is faith that makes one's response to God's call authentic, peaceful and honest. This is what the seeks from us.

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