

## PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 4

*Third week of Lent – [Readings are from Monday, March 20, the Solemnity of St. Joseph](#)*

### Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **Edouard Rocher**, former state coordinator and longtime member of Pax Christi Massachusetts; **Elizabeth Jordan**, longtime member of Pax Christi Northern California; and **Fr. Ray Tetrault**, long-time leader with Pax Christi Rhode Island*



### Opening song

**Opening Prayer: St. Joseph's Litany** (from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis province)

Saint Joseph – pray for us.  
Joseph most just – pray for us.  
Joseph most faithful – pray for us.  
Joseph most chaste – pray for us.  
Spouse of Mary – pray for us.  
Foster father of Jesus – pray for us.  
Model of workers – pray for us.  
Mirror of patience – pray for us.  
Patron of the dying – pray for us.  
Comforter of the sick – pray for us.  
Consolation of the poor – pray for us.  
Protector of the church – pray for us.  
Guardian of families – pray for us.  
Lover of peace – pray for us.

May Joseph's courage and wisdom be with us tonight and always.

**ALL: Amen.**

**First reading:** From the second book of Samuel...

God spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make their reign firm. It is that one who shall build a house for my name. And I will make their royal throne firm forever. I will be a father to him, and that one shall be my child. Your house and your reign shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.'"

The word of God. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

**Second reading:** From Paul's letter to the Romans...

Brothers and sisters: It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants that they would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith. For this reason, it depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, and the promise may be guaranteed to all their descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham and Sarah, who are parents to all of us, as it is written, *I have made you ancestors of many nations*. They are our parents in the sight of God, in whom they believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist. They believed, hoping against hope, that they would become *parents of many nations*, according to what was said, *Thus shall your descendants be*. That is why *it was credited to them as righteousness*.”

The word of God. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel reading:** From the gospel of Matthew...

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Now 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 God 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.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

The gospel of our God. **ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

**A reflection from this year’s Lenten reflection booklet – Pax Christi USA National Council chair Charlene Howard:** Charlene will read her husband Michael’s reflection and offer a few additional words to expand it to include the context we’re living in today.

*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.  
For it is through the Holy Spirit... (Mt 1:20)*

Does the above scripture’s caption send chills through you? After reading the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel, are you stumped by how the author breaks the rhythm of the lineage with this one word, husband? Read the 42 generations slowly. Watch Matthew’s subtle move between fathers and brothers. Then notice how Matthew incorporated the term husband to introduce Joseph. Yes, this passage is worth highlighting in your Bible because this shift is significant, as the angel spoke to Joseph, who the Bible called a righteous man.

Maybe you don’t see it, but Matthew’s audience got it. Matthew highlights the importance of the bloodline in the Jewish tradition by painstakingly listing these generations proving that Jesus came from a Jewish tradition. What this means is that Joseph, because of his Jewish roots, when finding out that Mary was with child, had every right “to expose [Mary] to shame” (Mt 1:19). Here, Joseph was at a crossroads, wrestling within, thinking perhaps of his character being considered a righteous man. What would his neighbors say about him and Mary, especially since he was not the baby’s daddy?

What is important to grasp here are the powerful words of the angel, Joseph's internal spiritual director. The angel told Joseph to lay down his cultural traditions for a moment. Joseph knows the significance of the bloodline and his Jewish tradition, but following the Holy Spirit is more important. The angel that spoke to Joseph could be the same angel that spoke to Timothy through St. Paul, "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our God" (2 Tim 1:7-8). We too must not be afraid of our testimony to God. We must follow our guardian angels' spiritual direction like Joseph and say Yes.

*How will you respond to your angel's spiritual direction today, saying Yes, or Maybe next year?*

### **Silent reflection**

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question from the Judith's reflection: ***How will you respond to your angel's spiritual direction today, saying Yes, or Maybe next year?***

After our prayer service is over, we encourage you if you are with others, to share your answer to tonight's question. If you aren't with others but would like to share in a small group after tonight's prayer, we'll send everyone into breakout rooms with a few other people to share. We'll take now just about 3-4 minutes of silence to reflect quietly.

(In preparation for the Prayers of the Faithful, feel free to enter into the chat any prayers you have that you want those of us on this call to lift up over the coming week.)

### **Prayers of the faithful**

Our response is: God of hope, hear our prayer.

### **Closing prayer**

#### **Prayer from Sr. Thea Bowman**

O, Lord, help us to be attentive to your commands. Help us to walk in unity. Help us to celebrate who we are and whose we are. Help us to overcome selfishness, anger, and violence in our hearts, in our homes, in our Church, in our world. Help us to knock down, pull down, shout down the walls of racism, sexism, classism, materialism, and militarism that divide and separate us. Help us to live as your united people, proclaiming with one voice, our faith, our hope, our love, our joy. Amen.

*(In 1-2 minutes everyone who wants to stay on the call will be sent to breakout rooms to discuss tonight's reading, reflection and Lenten question. Breakout rooms will automatically close after 20 minutes.)*