



MAY JOY RESOUND AMONG US!

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's Gospel

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 the Lord 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.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Reflection

Matthew's gospel gives us the opportunity to reflect on the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. We can focus our prayer and meditation on Joseph and the choices he made at this crucial moment in time. I'm struck by Joseph's openness to listen to his dream, to understand the Holy Spirit's movement even in his sleep. This tells us that Joseph had a strong faith life and connection to God to take in this dream and interpret it so well.

In this account of Joseph's dream, he wakes up and immediately complies with what the angel had asked of him. I must ask myself, is my relationship with God in a similar place -- where I can so easily trust the Holy Spirit's movement in my life? What about you? How does this story of Joseph's response impact and challenge you?

Joseph took Mary into his home, and upon the birth of their baby -- as noted in his dream -- named him Jesus. Again, the willingness to go against what would normally be the course of action at that time! Instead, Joseph took Mary as his wife. He could easily have made another choice; yet he trusted.

This theme of trust runs through this scripture and the story of the birth of Jesus. Mary accepted the tremendous gift of her child's miraculous conception. Joseph accepted Mary as his wife and Jesus as his foster-child. Trust was such a cornerstone of their faith and life together, and it is something we can all reflect upon in our own lives.

A few other questions surfaced within me as I reflected on this gospel passage about the birth of Jesus. What is being birthed in you and me this Advent? Have we cultivated "advent" in our hearts these past few weeks? If not, it's not too late! This time of preparing and waiting is a time of renewal for us. It is a time to embrace all of what it means to be Christians in our life and time.

May Joy Resound Among Us!

O God, who springs anew in us each day, may we be open to the Spirit's movement within us. Let us not shy away from the seemingly impossible if God's invitation comes to us through unfamiliar avenues.

May we seek a space within us that remains open and receptive to Advent unfolding within us. Let us till this inner ground as we await the birth of Jesus.

Joy resounds this day, as we anticipate our Savior's birth. Like Mary and Joseph, let us join together in faith, bringing joy to all our relationships.

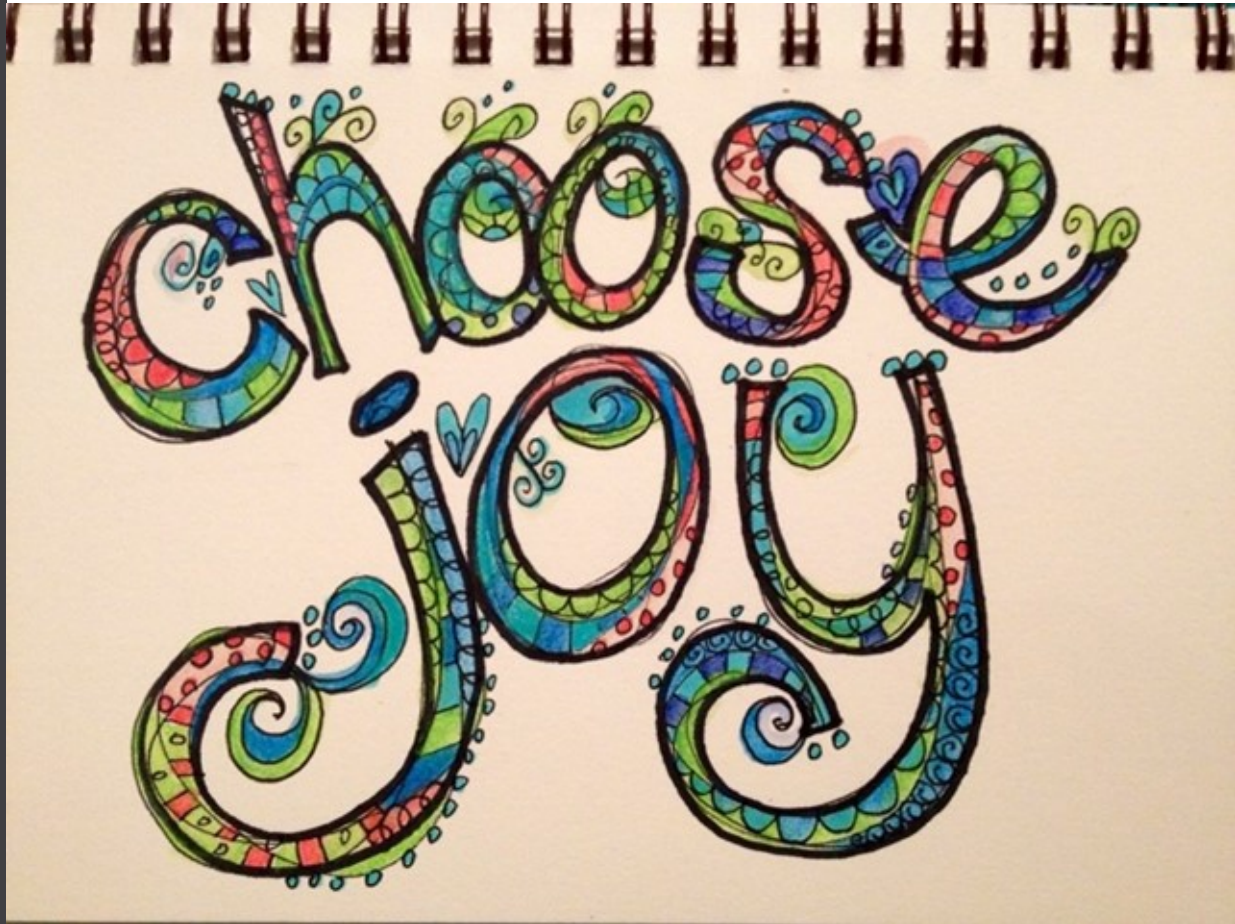


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For Pondering

- How open are you to God's inbreaking presence in your life this Advent? Joseph and Mary show how our lives are impacted by our "yes" to the Holy Spirit ... how strong is your "yes"?
 - Trust and joy are two themes evident in our readings today. As you reflect on your own journey through Advent, how have you noticed your trust in God -- and the presence of joy -- are growing in your life?
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For Prayer

As the gospel for today is about the birth of Jesus, let us pray for the well-being of all women who are pregnant. May the birth of their child(ren) bring joy to their lives and may they bring them up in communities of faith and love. Amen.

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