

[Spirituality](#)
[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

March 18, 2020

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream” (Matt 1:20).

2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 21; Matt 116, 18-21. 24a

The word “behold” in the quote above marks the transition from human intentions and logic to divine intervention for Joseph. He was a righteous man, committed to the law regarding Mary, his betrothed, and her mysterious pregnancy. But because law was colliding with love, Joseph fell exhausted to sleep, in anguish over the dilemma weighing him down.

As so often happens when reason is not enough to explain real life, Joseph is graced with a dream in which an angel tells him, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid.” In the long history of God’s covenant with us, from Father Abraham to King David to Joseph the carpenter, the words “Do not be afraid” have been the first instruction. Fear is useless for any challenge, much less an encounter with God.

Joseph enters the dream that transcends history and is entrusted with the Incarnation, God’s plan to save the world. “Take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.”

Joseph wakes to the reality of loving a wife he cannot have and a child that is not his own. A demanding, selfless vocation, but isn’t it the model for every husband and father who takes the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to care for those he

loves? This is what makes a family holy.

Joseph does not say a word in the Gospels. Instead, the Word enters him as fully as it entered Mary. The Holy Spirit overshadows them both as the parents and the first teachers of Jesus. He learns from them what it means to be God in the world. We learn it, too, and, behold, this is why we honor Joseph today.

Advertisement