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Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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## Celebrating Advent with St. Joseph

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on DECEMBER 2, 2019

Advent is a good time to reflect on St. Joseph. Although many things can be said about him, I have chosen to focus on three.

First, Joseph takes a back seat in the gospels. John's gospel doesn't mention him at all. Mark refers to him only obliquely, calling Jesus "the carpenter's son." Luke's focus is on Mary. Only in Matthew's Gospel is Joseph given any real attention.

This means that Joseph did not have to be center stage. He was content to play a supporting role in the great drama of salvation. Being where God wanted him to be was more important to him than being where he wanted to be. Being faithful was more important than being powerful or popular.

## About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame,  
teacher, student, author,  
speaker, listener, friend,  
poet, farm girl.



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## About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality—the everyday kind of spirituality that includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.



Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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Secondly, Joseph allowed God to enter his world as an earthquake. The Annunciation turned Mary's life upside down. It also turned Joseph's life upside down. Mary's pregnancy caused him great anguish, an anguish eased only by some kind of a nocturnal heavenly visitor. He said his "yes" to marrying this young pregnant woman and raising her child as his own. What generosity! What faith!

Thirdly, Joseph had to navigate the trials of life just as we must do. His life was no walk in the park. The journey to Bethlehem was an arduous trek through inhospitable lands with a wife nine months pregnant with her first child. Later, the flight into Egypt had to be traumatic. We catch a glimpse of what this upheaval must have meant for Joseph when, in today's news, we see the weary and terror stricken faces of our contemporary refugees.

Joseph bore his trials with considerable grace. Through the ups and downs of daily living, he clung to what really mattered: his faith in a God who was powerful, loving, and good. He was a man of humility and personal integrity despite the greed and corruption of some of the religious and political leaders of his day. In one way, Joseph lived a very ordinary life, but he lived it in an extraordinary way, working hard to support his family, drawing strength from his religious faith and traditions, and pouring out his love on his wife, son, and the community beyond his door.

Let us pray: *St. Joseph, walk with me this Advent as I once again prepare for God's continual entry into my life. May I welcome God's coming in whatever form that coming may take—from a gentle breeze to a turbulent earthquake. Give me courage to*

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*face the challenges life sets before me. When life is rough, may I, like you, cling to my faith in a God who is powerful, loving, and good. May I strive to be a person of personal integrity, no matter what. May I pour my love out on my family, my friends, and the communities of which I am a part. And finally, I thank you, St. Joseph, for being such an example of humility, faith, prayerfulness, courage, and love. Amen.*

What qualities in Joseph are you attracted to the most?

If you could ask one gift from St. Joseph (for yourself or for our world today), what would you ask for?

This Christmas song is from Joseph's perspective. It's called "A Strange Way to Save the World" and is sung by 4Him. To me it captures some of Joseph's thoughts and feelings about the wonder and mystery of the birth of Jesus.



I invite you to respond below to anything in this reflection or to add your own thoughts about St. Joseph and/or Advent.

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**John E Hopkins** December 2, 2019 at 5:11 am



Good morning, Melannie, and happy advent to you and all!

For some reason, I've been drawing closer to Joseph these past few years. He is the father of the Holy Family, but if this family were to emerge in the year 2019 would our church call it holy? Or would it call their union "irregular"?

Consider: During his day, Joseph had all the backing of scripture to either call Mary out for public humiliation (or worse) or quietly divorce her. But he doesn't because of a dream. Yes, Matthew tells us he was visited by an angel, but I like to read it as he listened to his conscience, the still, small voice of God. In essence, Joseph practiced a type of "religious disobedience." He also had the courage to believe the story of a young girl and her pregnancy – imagine if had told everyone that Mary was actually pregnant due to the Holy Spirit! How "irregular" is that!

This past July, my daughter married her girlfriend. It was a joyous affair, bursting with love. Of course, such an event is not sanctioned by our church, but these two women, both raised Catholic (my daughter's wife had attended two World Youth Days), like Joseph perhaps, knew in their hearts this was right, their love was real. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph bless them! Bless us all!

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** December 2, 2019 at 6:57 am



Dear John, Thank you for your particular slant on St. Joseph—especially your comment about his "irregular union" with Mary and her child... And congratulations on your family's recent wedding! I wish the couple love and happiness. I know they're lucky to have you! Melannie

REPLY

**Jean Canatsey** December 2, 2019 at 9:09 am



Thank you, John.....

REPLY

**David** December 3, 2019 at 12:43 am



With respect, to compare the union of St Joseph and Our Lady to a same sex union (it is not a marriage) is more than a little offensive.

REPLY

**Thomas DeFreitas** December 3, 2019 at 3:35 pm



John, always a joy to read your comments! Grace is like Mary Oliver's finch sipping from a rainpuddle (see her poem "Yellow," p. 1 of the book EVIDENCE); it is not always "institutional." Oftener, it is unpredictable and highly "irregular"!

May you and yours be blessed this Advent!

REPLY

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**Kathleen Magiera** December 2, 2019 at 5:13 am



What a beautiful reflection on St. Joseph! I so admire St. Joseph's quality of persistence. He carried on in faith even in the turbulence.

I would ask for that gift of perseverance. Sometimes, I just need to keep moving toward God.

Have a blessed first week of Advent Sr. Melannie.

Kathleen

REPLY

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**Ed Johnson** December 2, 2019 at 6:13 am



One of our parish men's groups is named after St Joseph. We pray weekly for his virtues to be part of our lives. The prayer you offered to St Joseph is beautiful. I particularly like Joseph's example of quiet humility. I would ask Joseph to help me with more patience.....of mind, heart, and action. Thank you, Sister. A most blessed Advent to you and all.

Ed J

REPLY

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**Karen** December 2, 2019 at 6:26 am



Dear Sr. Melanie,  
What a beautiful choice of songs. So simple but so powerful. Another great reflection from you.

Karen

REPLY

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**Salinas** December 2, 2019 at 7:09 am



Dear Sister Melanie,  
Starting Advent with St. Joseph was a special gift though I shouldn't be surprised coming from you. Still thank you and blessings on you and your community. I plan to reread this for a long time. Rc

REPLY

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**Mary M Nausadis** December 2, 2019 at 8:48 am



Good morning all,

A favorite sculpture of mine is of the Holy Family with Joseph sitting with his legs akimbo and Mary cradled in his lap with the Babe in her arms, all in the embrace of Joseph.

One year on a silent retreat I really noticed the sculpture and broke into sobbing tears...you see my dad had left our family when I was 15, the second oldest of 5 and I felt bereft at missing out on that kind of fatherly love. So, I have a real love for Joseph and his commitment of love.

The song was beautiful and as I watched the video and the pictures of the babies, the thought came to me that our world may be "saved" by the children. Thinking of all the young people who are taking a firm stand about climate change and pushing for the adults to make major changes, could be what saves our world from complete devastation.

I love beginnings, so Advent is a most favorite time of the liturgical year.  
Let us bring joy wherever we go.

O Come Emmanuel!

REPLY

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**Jean Canatsey** December 2, 2019 at 9:26 am



Dear Sister Melannie,

Thank you for your blog on St. Joseph. I'm aware that my father wasn't perfect but I never once doubted his love for me. When I look at my husband of 63 years, I see the same kind of love in him. Just like Joseph, they both walked/walk through life doing "what was/is their's to do.

My husband and I absolutely loved the song and listened twice.

P.S.

Thank you, John Hopkins, for sharing the beautiful story about your daughters.

REPLY

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**Sr. Sheila Foy** December 2, 2019 at 9:42 am



Thank you for this beautiful reflection on St. Joseph. I often spend some time during Advent thinking of his situation. There is a comfort when things are not clear, how much we need this example of Joseph. We wait in hope,!

REPLY

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**Fran McCreary** December 2, 2019 at 10:57 am



I love this quiet reflection - so fitting for our entry into Advent. I thank both you & John Hopkins for the heartfelt reflections.

I think what I admire most in St. Joseph & will ask for his help with in my own life is his humility. Whether intended or not, it is a strong reminder & example to me.

REPLY

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**Marian** December 2, 2019 at 11:11 am



Dear Sister :

Saint Joseph was my Mother's favorite. She prayed to him her whole adult life. He got her through some really hard times. What a wonderful Father figure to us all.

Have a Blessed Advent everyone.

REPLY

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**Sister Irene Martineau, SASV** December 2, 2019 at 11:12 am



Dear Sister Melannie,

A dear friend of mine, knowing my devotion to St. Joseph, sent me an e-mail and attached your reflection on St. Joseph. I was very touched by her thoughtfulness, but even more after I read your reflection and listened to the song, which I will listen to again.

Thank you for making my favorite liturgical season even more by sharing St. Joseph with us in a most unique way. My favorite virtue is SILENCE and St. Joseph surely typifies it.

Peace

REPLY

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**Melissa Medeiros** December 2, 2019 at 11:41 am



John Hopkins...you made my day. Thank you for sharing. Bless us all this day...

REPLY

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**John E Hopkins** December 2, 2019 at 5:31 pm

You're welcome, Melissa!



REPLY

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**Suzanne** December 2, 2019 at 12:26 pm



Yes, Joseph often takes a back seat in the scriptures. Like Mary, Joseph was full of grace and open to "going with the flow" of it to meet the challenges of his family life. Thank you for your ponderings on Joseph, Melannie. I pray I am more conscious of Joseph's role during the Advent season.

REPLY

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**Mary Zogelman** December 2, 2019 at 10:31 pm



Pray for us St. Joseph!! Come oh come Emanuel!!



REPLY

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**LJ Fratto** December 3, 2019 at 2:10 pm



Sister, One of my favorite Christmas hymns is by Trisha Yearwood, and is called, "It wasn't his child". It speaks beautifully of St. Joseph, I share the link below:

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=it+wasn%27t+his+child&view=detail&mid=D81C2FOA9B55B9006781D81C2FOA9B55B9006781&FORM=VIREO)

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REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** December 3, 2019 at 4:45 pm



Thank you for the link. It is a beautiful song. Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Thomas DeFreitas** December 3, 2019 at 3:43 pm



I think the quality of St Joseph that I most admire is his patience. He is, of course, noted for chastity ("Blessed be St Joseph, her most chaste spouse"), but perhaps that's a subdivision of patience.

And yes, there are those (and I was one of them, for way too many years) who'd write off folks for their apparent insouciance about, or non-conformity with, religious norms. But if Advent teaches us nothing else, it teaches us to wait and see. There's a saying in church basements: "More will be revealed." Yes.

Grace is EVERYwhere and works with EVERYone where they are. Some days, it might even work through me (no paragon of virtue, I) if I can get out of Grace's way long enough! My job isn't (as I used to think it was) to judge where others are going off the rails, by the lights of my finite wisdom. My job is to accept others as they are, where they are, for who they are. As best I can.

Peace and light to Sr Melannie and all who visit this place. Thanks for letting me run off at the keyboard.

REPLY

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**Susn** December 4, 2019 at 7:07 am



Thank you John Hopkins for opening my mind and heart to looking at the union between Mary and Joseph through a different light. My prayer this Advent is for all of us to become a more compassionate and fully encompassing people. Especially our beloved church.

REPLY

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