

Joseph, Dreamer of Dreams

Sister Regina Brunelle
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Authentic Jew that he was, Joseph must have had a dream. He must have yearned with all his heart for the coming of the Messiah as much as we today yearn and for peace. And like most of his countrymen, he probably had a personal dream to marry and raise a family faithful to his religious traditions. But Joseph not only had a dream, he also dreamed dreams. If we are to believe the Scriptures, above all else Joseph was a dreamer!

Three times in Matthew's gospel we read that an angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream. In each case, Joseph listens, trusts the message, and acts on the dream. And then he waits. In the listening and the trusting, in the acting and the waiting, Joseph is stretched beyond the letter of the law and gradually freed from its constraints until he can embrace its spirit, regardless of the consequences, regardless of the risks. Attentive to the spirit, rather than the letter of the law, Joseph can be patient, moving cautiously according to his lights, trusting that should he be in error, God will make it clear to him. And so God does through his dreams.

What kind of person would we have to be to have that kind of openness to God's voice? Joseph was a humble man. Teresa of Avila defines humility as truth. To walk humbly before our God as Joseph did means to walk in truth. The truth is, as Jesus told Pilate, that we have no power that does not come from God.

To walk in truth is to walk in the awareness that we are powerless and totally dependent on God for wisdom, clarity, and understanding. It was this humble stance, this conviction, that enabled Joseph to immediately revise his decision to put Mary away quietly, and to choose the way of love and

compassion. Accepting her into his own home went against everything the authorities in his life would indicate. Truth was more important to Joseph than human respect. So, when God spoke to him, even in a dream, he was so finally attuned to that voice that he could change the course midstream without a care.

I wonder—could Saint Joseph, the obedient Dreamer, teach our leaders and us how to listen to

God's voice in the unusual voices being raised around us? These are the voices of people; the voices of other nations; the voice of our collective conscience that is crying out, "Stop this insanity?"

We could learn from Saint Joseph to let the path of humility and compassion lead us to authentic peace rooted in love rather than to put trust in the might of arms. Joseph could teach us as a nation the way of non-violence that Jesus taught. The scriptures say, "Without a dream the people perish."

We dream of peace. Perhaps

in these desperate times we can listen for God speaking to us now through our dreams!

In one of her wonderful posters, Sister Madeleva, CSJ, wrote: "Joseph had dreams. They weren't always clear nor easy but they were his. Eventually they changed his mind and heart."

When Joseph followed his dreams, God put something new into motion that eventually changed not only his mind and heart, but the whole world order. As we continue to nurture our dream for peace, may it change our minds and hearts, leading us to the discovery that our dream for peace, like Joseph's dream for Israel, is one and the same as God's dream for us!

Joseph, Dreamer of Dreams, lead and teach us!

