

The Silence of Joseph

Luke 2:41-51a

[March 19, 2021](#)

You might have already noticed, but in this Gospel for Joseph he says nothing. In fact, he has no words of his own in the Bible. He remains silent.

In the Gospel this morning, Joseph has spent three days with his wife, searching all around for the child Jesus. I can only think of how they must have felt when they found Jesus: heart rates were probably racing, anxious, joyed that he was found, wonder. I am sure that if I was Mary or Joseph I probably would have asked accusingly: What were you thinking?!

But Saint Joseph says nothing. He stands there in silence. He notices all of the teachers sitting around Jesus, and, surprisingly, it is Jesus who is the teacher. I do not think the silence of Joseph is a timid or passive silence. I think it is a moment of awe and contemplation. The silence that one gets when seeing something shockingly beautiful, coming to some realization or developing a new insight, or when they experience the love of God.

I think Joseph is aware that he is a witness to the unfolding mystery of Jesus Christ. Joseph who has been blessed in being asked to help in raising Jesus, showing him what it means to be a man, also realizes that this boy, Jesus, is his Savior, is the One who will redeem him. Joseph teaches Jesus how to be a man, and Jesus shows Joseph how to be God-like. And so Joseph constantly spends time in silence and awe.

I think that we are called to follow this silence of Joseph. We live in a world that is filled with so much mystery, a world filled with miracles, a world filled with the action and presence of God. But it happens in a whisper, in a thought, in a simple moment. And with all the distractions, all of these phones and gadgets, music, sports, talking, it can be so easy to miss the fact that God is speaking.

It might seem to us that silence is boredom, passivity, or laziness. On the contrary, it requires an active listening and fixing of our heart and minds on God. It is

nurtured by time in front of the Eucharist in the silence of the Church, it is the silence of repeating a verse from Scripture over and over in our mind, the silence of a rosary prayed while walking. As I say to the students in the school: “God is always speaking; we must learn to listen.”

During the rest of Lent be like Joseph and make time to encounter God in the silence. Joseph understood that his silence and reflection said more than words. Beholding the mystery of Jesus Christ and hearing God whisper that He loves you says more than our words ever could.

And that gets to the heart of it: I think when Joseph stood there silently, He knew that He was witnessing the love of God that was about to change and to save the world.