

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 23)

ANTIPHON: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

RESPONSE: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

LECTOR: The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the world and all its peoples. It is he who set it on the seas; on the waters he made it firm. **R.**

LECTOR: Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? The man with clean hands and pure heart, who desires not worthless things. **R.**

LECTOR: He shall receive blessings from the Lord and reward from the God who saves him. Such are the men who seek him, seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! A virgin will give birth to a son; his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24

NEXT WEEK (Holy Family Year A) Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14: Colossians 3:12-21; Matthew 2:13-15. 19-23

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Accepting God's commands



When Joseph learns that his young fiancée is pregnant, he must have been quite distressed. He probably thought that she had been unfaithful, had been attacked, or was delusional. He knows that the child is not his, so his long genealogy linking the family to David would be irrelevant. We can only imagine the confusion, hurt, and anger of this 'man of honour'.

According to Jewish law, Joseph had the right to shame Mary publicly and have her stoned if she was found to be unfaithful. He decides to divorce her quietly, but God intervenes, and an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him to proceed with his plans to marry Mary. The angel also tells him, that the child that Mary bears has been conceived by the Holy Spirit and is to be named Jesus.

However, there is a surprise in the next sentence when we hear that Jesus is to be named Emmanuel which means "God is with us." This seems to be a contradiction, so how can we explain the two names? The name "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew name "Yeshua" which means "The Lord saves." This name emphasises the purpose of the incarnation and ministry of Jesus which is about His mission which is the salvation of humanity.

The name "Emmanuel" also comes from the Hebrew and means "God is with us." "Emmanuel" is not used as a proper name

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for Jesus in the New Testament, but it serves as a powerful theological statement about His nature. The dual significance of these names, "Jesus" and "Emmanuel," provide a comprehensive understanding of who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish. "Jesus" highlights his role as Saviour, while "Emmanuel" emphasises the divine presence with humanity.

Joseph was faced with a decision, to either put his trust in the law given by God to Moses, and to leave Mary, or to put his trust in something new that God was to do. In making his decision, Joseph is a reminder to us that while observing the law is important, one must always be open to what God is asking of us in the concrete circumstances of our own lives.

This brings us to the question of how we listen to God and allow God to speak to us.

Listening to God will mean that we must continue to wrestle with the complexity of our own lives. We need to listen to the wisdom of tradition, and to the law of the Lord handed down to us, while remaining open to any new initiative that God might be attempting in us and through us.

As we prepare for Christmas, let us pray that we might be able to say yes, like Joseph, to the questions and challenges that we face in life's journey knowing that God is with us and calling us to a deeper relationship with Jesus.

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