CHRISTMAS EVE 2011

IN ANY IMPORTANT HISTORIC EVENT, IN ANY STORY THERE ARE ALWAYS MAJOR CHARACTERS AND MINOR CHARACTERS . . .

THAT IS ALSO TRUE WHEN THE EVENT, THE STORY INVOLVES A BIRTH . . .

AND WHEN THERE IS A BIRTH . . .

IT IS THE NEWBORN INFANT WHO IS ALWAYS THE MAIN CHARACTER . . .

THE STAR, THE CENTER OF ATTENTION . . .

AND THAT CONTINUES FOR QUITE SOME TIME ACTUALLY . . .

E.G. EVEN DURING THE KISS OF PEACE HERE . . .

IF THERE IS AN INFANT IN A PARENT'S ARM . . .

THE INFANT IS ALWAYS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION FOR THAT PARTICULAR CIRCLE — AND THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE . . .

THE MIRACLE OF NEW LIFE . . .

THE CHRISTMAS EVENT, THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS NO EXCEPTION . . .

THE INFANT, CHRIST JESUS IS THE MAIN CHARACTER . . .

AND OF COURSE, THE MOTHER IS ALMOST ALWAYS THE OTHER MAIN CHARACTER . . .

AND THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE ALSO . . .

THE MOTHER IS THE ONE WHO HAS CARRIED THE CHILD FOR 9 MONTHS AND ENDURED THE LABOR PAINS LEADING UP TO THE BIRTH . . .

AS A CONSEQUENCE THE FATHER, WHO HAS PROBABLY PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE PREPARATIONS, IS USUALLY SEEN AS A MINOR CHARACTER IN THE EVENT . . . IF YOU WILL
E. G. "TOOTHPICK" DREAM

IT MUST NOT HAVE BEEN EASY FOR JOSEPH TO SWALLOW HIS DREAM EITHER . . .

IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WHAT HE HAD IN MIND . . .

REALIZING THIS CHILD WAS NOT HIS CHILD . . .

BUT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO CARE FOR MARY AND THE CHILD AS IF IT WERE HIS OWN . . .

AND PERHAPS THIS EVENT, THIS STORY SAYS A LOT TO US ABOUT HOW CHRIST, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, IS BORN ANEW AMONG US TODAY . . .

ESPECIALLY, IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS AS MEN AND WOMEN . . .

CHRIST IS BORN ANEW . . .

WHEN WE RELATE LIKE JOSEPH RELATES TO MARY IN OUR STORY . . .

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON, IS IT, FOR A MALE TO HAVE NO WAY OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON IN THE INNERMOST BEING OF A FEMALE . . . EVEN AN INTIMATE, LOVED ONE

AND THE TENDENCY MIGHT BE TO RUSH TO JUDGMENT . . .

ESPECIALLY, IF OUR OWN EGO IS INVOLVED AND AT RISK . . .

BUT IF WE CAN SUSPEND OUR JUDGMENT AND OUR EGO . . .

BE SENSITIVE TO HER SITUATION EVEN IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND IT . . .

AND BE OPEN TO ASSISTANCE FROM THE DIVINE SPIRIT . . .

BEYOND OUR OWN EGO . . .

RESPONDING TO THE SITUATION IN A SENSITIVE MANNER . . .

AND MAINTAINING OUR OWN DIGNITY . . .
MOST MALES CERTAINLY WOULDN'T DEAL WITH IT LIKE JOSEPH DID . . .
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS PROBABLY ONLY ABOUT 18 OR 19 JOSEPH WAS
AMAZINGLY MATURE AND SECURE IN HIS OWN MASCULINITY AND
INCREDI BLY SENSITIVE AND PROTECTIVE OF THIS YOUNG MOTHER . . .
IT WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR HIM TO LASH OUT IN ANGER AND RAGE AT
ANYONE, PARTICULARLY THIS YOUNG MOTHER . . .
OBVIOUSLY, HE WAS ALSO NOT LEGALISTIC . . . AND RIGID . . .
HE DID NOT SEE THE LAW AS AN END IN ITSELF, BUT INSTEAD SAW THE
LAW LIKE JESUS WOULD SEE THE ROLE OF LAWS . . .
MOST PROBABLY, IN FACT, JESUS FIRST LEARNED HIS ATTITUDE
TOWARD THE LAW FROM JOSEPH—BECAUSE IT WAS THE FATHER WHO
TAUGHT THE LAW TO HIS CHILDREN IN FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM . . .
CLEARLY, JOSEPH WAS ALSO ATTENTIVE TO HIS DREAMS . . .
HE TRUSTED HIS DREAMS . . .
AS A SOURCE OF WISDOM BEYOND HIS OWN EGO . . .
HIS OWN RATIONAL, REASONABLE MIND
PARTICULARLY, IN TIMES OF CRISIS . . .
WHEN DREAMS CAN BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL FOR US . . .
ALTHOUGH THE DREAM IS NOT LIKELY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM FOR US
IT WILL THROW A LITTLE DIFFERENT KIND OF LIGHT ON OUR
SITUATION . . .
LETTING US KNOW WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST AND PERHAPS SOME
DIRECTION IN RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS . . .
BUT NOT BY ME . . .

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN TOUCH THE CORE OF A MALE MORE THAN SUCH A REALIZATION . . .

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN FUEL THE RAGE OF A MALE MORE THAN THAT . . .

THE FIRST REACTION IS INSTINCTIVE . . . TERRITORIAL, IF YOU WILL . . .

SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF . . .

SHE IS MINE AND MY MANHOOD HAS BEEN CHALLENGED . . .

WHAT IS EVEN MORE AMAZING IN THIS PARTICULAR STORY, AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME IN HISTORY . . .

THE LAW WAS ON JOSEPH’S SIDE—QUITE CLEAR AND PROTECTIVE OF THE MALE’S RIGHTS, IF YOU WILL . . .

AN ESPoused GIRL WHO LOST HER VIRGINITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

"SHALL BE TAKEN TO THE DOOR OF HER FATHER’S HOUSE AND HER FELLOW CITIZENS SHALL STONE HER TO DEATH FOR HAVING COMMITTED AN ACT OF INFAMY IN ISRAEL BY DISGRACING HER FATHER’S HOUSE. YOU MUST BANISH EVIL FROM YOUR MIDST."

SO, JOSEPH WAS BREAKING THE LAW WHEN HE CHOSE TO "SPARE HER PUBLICLY AND DIVORCE HER INFORMALLY."

IN THOSE DAYS . . . THAT MUST HAVE BEEN UNHEARD OF . . .

AND TODAY . . .

THE MALE WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO ARRANGE FOR AN APPEARANCE ON THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW . . . AND TRY TO EMBARRASS HIS WIFE
I CAME ACROSS THIS QUOTE FROM BILL COSBY THAT SORT OF BRINGS OUT THIS NOTION . . .
WHERE HE SAYS, "WE WERE WELL PREPARED FOR NATURAL CHILDBIRTH, WHICH MEANS THAT NO DRUGS CAN BE GIVEN TO THE MOTHER DURING DELIVERY. THE FATHER, HOWEVER, CAN HAVE ALL HE WANTS."
THIS CHRISTMAS, HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS FOR A FEW MINUTES ON A MINOR CHARACTER, IF YOU WILL, IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY—JOSEPH—THE FATHER—COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE FOSTER FATHER.
AND ALTHOUGH HE IS A MINOR CHARACTER IN THE OVERALL CHRISTMAS STORY HE IS CERTAINLY THE MAJOR CHARACTER IN OUR GOSPEL READING THIS EVENING . . .
WHICH BEGINS—LIKE ANY GOOD STORY—WITH A MAJOR DILEMMA, A MAJOR CONFLICT . . . A MAJOR PROBLEM—WHICH WE MIGHT SKIP OVER WE HEAR THAT JOSEPH IS ENGAGED TO MARY, WHICH OBVIOUSLY, IN ANY STORY AN ENGAGEMENT IS ALWAYS VERY GOOD NEWS . . .
BUT THEN WE HEAR THAT MARY, HIS FIANCEE, IS PREGNANT BUT NOT BY JOSEPH . . .
THAT PRESENTS A PROBLEM, A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR JOSEPH . . .
AS ANY RED BLOODED MALE WOULD BE QUICK TO RECOGNIZE . . .
SUCH A SITUATION GOES TO THE CORE OF ANY MALE . . .
MY LOVED ONE, MY PARTNER, MY SPOUSE IS PREGNANT . . .
BUT NOT LASHING OUT . . .
CERTAINLY NOT EASY . . .
BUT IN SUCH SITUATIONS WE CAN GIVE BIRTH ONCE MORE TO CHRIST
AND HIS SPIRIT AMONG US . . .
LET US PRAY THIS EVENING AND ESPECIALLY WHEN WE APPROACH THE
ALTAR . . .
LET US PRAY FOR THAT SAME SPIRIT MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE OF
JOSEPH . . .
THAT WE TOO MIGHT ENABLE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN OUR DAY . . .
IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS . . .
IN OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES . . .

“A TRIBUTE TO ST. JOSEPH”

REV. TOM SCHROER, S.M.

DECEMBER 24, 2011