



From Our Vicar

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The Holy Family Show the Path to Joy and Peace

As so often happens in the Bible, we get complementary accounts of the Christmas story. Mary's story is told in Luke and Joseph's in Matthew. Both are naturally disturbed by their experience and question how such an impossible event could take place. Indeed, Joseph has not yet got past the obvious implications of a pregnant fiancée with whom he knew he had not been intimate.

He resolved to divorce Mary quietly. Mary receives an answer to her question, which however unbelievable it may seem, she submits to, revealing, no doubt, the reason why God chose her – 'I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.'

Both show their character in their responses. Joseph, feeling deeply betrayed, chooses not to expose Mary to public shame or to exact the full extent of the law against her, acting with consideration and restraint. Mary accepts the Lord's word and surrenders herself to it. God was gracious to them both, providing Joseph with reassurance in a dream where an angel explained what was taking place, revealing the name the child was to be given.

Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth, who at Mary's greeting burst into prophetic song, eulogising Mary and praising God for the child that she was carrying. This was such rich reassurance for Mary that Mary herself poured out praise to God in words we now know as the Magnificat.

The world owes a great deal to this couple. Yet they were simple people. Nazareth was a remote town of no distinction. 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' was proverbial. Yet their humble dignity and ready obedience to God's instruction proved critical to the fulfillment of God's plan for the reconciliation of the world to himself.

Such humility and faithful obedience are available to each of us, as we reflect on the greatness of God's love, power, and mercy, yet also the vulnerability and simplicity of his entrance into human experience. This is a cause for awe, and of being disarmed of our usual self-sufficiency and proud defences. May our hearts bow before him to whom we owe our very existence. May we likewise surrender our will to him, declaring our readiness to be led and used for his purposes as he determines. This will be our joy and peace, and will result in praise to God and blessing to others beyond our imagining.

The Lord be with you,

Wayne