

St Joseph – Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

First Joyful Mystery – The Annunciation

We often think that the Annunciation has three protagonists, God, the angel Gabriel and Mary, but it actually has four. Without St Joseph saying Yes to betrothing Mary, and an implicit Yes to all that God wanted to do in and through their future married relationship, the Annunciation could not have happened. Without that relationship, as soon as Mary's pregnancy became public she would have been subjected to trial and death by stoning. Later on, Joseph will have to wrestle with the suspicion of Mary's infidelity until God reveals the truth to him in a dream and he is invited to take Mary home as his wife because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. Even so, that Yes of his would not have been easy, exposing him to public shame for 'not having kept chaste until the wedding' as well as all the big unknowns that come with being part of God's extraordinary plan.

The Second Joyful Mystery – The Visitation

But before God reveals the truth of the Incarnation to Joseph, suddenly Mary wants to go off on a long journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Being betrothed, it stands to reason that she needed Joseph's permission in order to go. How on earth did she explain that? At a time when they should have been getting to know each other better in preparation for marriage, Mary wants to visit family for a few months. Maybe Joseph accompanied her on some of that journey, maybe not. We can imagine that he spent that time of loneliness preparing the home they were going to live in.

The Third Joyful Mystery – The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem

What a rollercoaster has Joseph's life been! By the fifth month of Mary's pregnancy there would have been a hasty wedding. Then getting used to the idea of being called to act as the earthly father for God's Son. Now the government wants him to go on the long journey to Bethlehem, and a very pregnant Mary insists on coming too. Pregnant women tire easily and need frequent stops on the journey to deal with bladder issues. Travelling quickly is not an option, which is why just about everyone reached Bethlehem before them. Now Joseph needs to find shelter fast, and faces rejection after rejection. In the stable more surprises keep coming, the birth of Jesus and the arrival of many excited shepherds with stories of angels and heavenly messages.

The Fourth Joyful Mystery – The Presentation in the Temple

Being so close to Jerusalem, there is no question of going home. There are the 40 day rituals of purification for Mary, and the redeeming of the first born son to be done in the Temple. Joseph is the loving safety and support of Mary and her infant son. At the Temple, not one but two people come up to this little family and get super excited about Jesus. Simeon prophesises pain and sorrow for Mary and Jesus. But if he says anything to Joseph too, that is not recorded. Imagine with all your heart wanting to protect Mary and Jesus from every kind of bad thing, and getting the news that you were doomed to fail.

The Fifth Joyful Mystery – The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

Other shocks were to come, the Holy Magi and the hurried journey to Egypt and exile. Then a few years of peace watching Jesus grow up in Nazareth. For his Bar Mitzvah, the holy family journeys to Jerusalem. The happy days of celebrating the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood for Jesus over, it is time to head for home. After a day's travel Jesus cannot be found. Mary and Joseph have to leave the safety of the caravan and go back to Jerusalem to search for him. Hour after hour of anxiety torments both Mary and Joseph. What unutterable relief when they find Him in the Temple, but what perplexity when Jesus gives His explanation to them.