

Advent Thought for the Day 2021

Advent 26 by Maria Henriksson-Bell

Thursday 23 December
St Joseph



St Joseph was, according to legend, a carpenter. The only Gospel to mention his profession is Matthew who calls him a 'tekton'. Scholars have argued over whether this means a lowly labourer, a highly skilled artisan overseeing a number of employees or maybe a general craftsman working in wood, stone and metal.

Regardless, Joseph had a life and an identity of his own, before and after he found himself in the bewildering situation of bringing up a child he didn't feel confident was his biological son. Many parents will no doubt empathise with Joseph, no longer being remembered as a professional but remembered as what I would call him, when storing his mobile number: 'Jesus's Dad'.

As enlightened people, familiar with the biological technicalities of baby-making, we are faced with a significant conundrum at the beginning of the Christmas narrative. Mary is asked to bear a child, not fathered by Joseph her husband to be, but conceived by the Holy Spirit. This isn't how most of us expect a child to be made.

However, as always, the Gospel teaches us to think beyond our petty expectations. We are asked to look beyond the technicalities to see the poetic truths and deep, ethical beauty of that holy story.

There are countless families who do not fit the model of mother+father=child. There are countless people who love and care for children who are not biological kin because love is big and beautiful. There are countless people for whom the biological family is no longer safe, who find family, care and belonging elsewhere because God is love and love is bigger. The love of God and the wisdom of the Gospel (the story of Jesus) is wider than any of our earthly understandings.

May we all be blessed this Christmas time, and always, with belonging and family, whatever shape it is and let us, when we need to, draw comfort from knowing our heavenly parent cares. Amen

There are times when we have things on our minds we feel unable to share even with family or friends. We might even struggle to pray. This might be a time to reach out.

SAMARITANS

Email: jo@samaritans.org (reply within 24h)

Telephone: 116123

or by letter: Freepost SAMARITANS LETTER

<https://www.samaritans.org>

CALM

(Campaign Against Living Miserably – male suicide prevention)

[0800 58 58 58](tel:0800585858)

www.thecalmzone.net

IMAGE:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_Joseph_holding_the_infant_Christ,_after_Reni_ME_T_DP837916.jpg

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