

# THE FORGOTTEN CHARACTER OF CHRISTMAS

December 23-24, 2018 ser3796 Sun E Mon E & L

## I. POINT OF INTRIGUE

**A. If you were asked to name the ten most popular characters in the Christmas season, what names would come to mind? (Give everyone 60 seconds; music underneath.)**

If you Google “*The 10 Most Popular Christmas Characters*,” most likely this is what you’d get:

12. The Nutcracker
11. Jack Frost
10. The Little Drummer Boy
9. Santa’s Elves
8. Frosty the Snowman
7. Ebenezer Scrooge
6. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
5. The Grinch
4. The Christmas Angels
3. The Three Kings (Wisemen)
2. Santa Claus
1. The Belen (Nativity) – Belen is a Spanish word for Bethlehem. The



scene, most popular among Christians, portrays Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. \*Holidappy by Lady Jen Palven & DebW07  
**(show photo, p 1)**



We often see Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus surrounded by the Shepherds and Wise Men **(show photo, this page)**, the latter is an inaccurate portrayal. The

Wise Men, popularly known as The Three Kings, appeared at the home of Jesus when he was two-three years of age.

## **B. Think about the songs we'll hear on the radio during the Christmas season:**

1. *The Christmas Song* by Nate King Cole
2. *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* by Judy Garland
3. *Happy Christmas (War is Over)* by John Lennon
4. *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* by Bruce Springsteen and Bon Jovi
5. *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree* by Brenda Lee
6. *All I Want for Christmas* by Mariah Carey
7. *White Christmas* by Bing Crosby

... and the list goes on. We could direct our attention to *Christmas Carols* like:

1. *Joy to the World* by Michael Bolton
2. *O Holy Night* by Celine Dion
3. *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* by Josh Groban
4. *Do You Hear what I Hear* by Carrie Underwood
5. *What Child is This?* by Charlotte Church
6. *Good King Wenceslas* by Loreena McKinnitt
7. *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* by Harry Belafonte

What you won't hear is a song about the subject of our homily today/tonight, "The Forgotten Character of Christmas."

May I propose that Joseph, the husband of Mary, is the forgotten character of Christmas?

**C. Let us pray!**

## II. OUR TEXT

### The Birth of Jesus

*(Isaiah 7:10-16; Micah 5:1-6; Luke 2:1-7)*

**18** This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged in marriage to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with Child through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and was unwilling to disgrace her publicly, he resolved to divorce her privately.

**20** But after he had pondered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to embrace Mary as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”

**A. I would like to propose to us today/tonight, that the forgotten character in Christmas is Joseph, the husband of Mary and the earthly father of Jesus.**

**1. Joseph was a man of *CHARACTER*.**

**19** Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and was unwilling to disgrace her publicly, he resolved to divorce her privately.

**NOTE!** It was **AFTER** Joseph chose to not shame her that the Lord appeared to him and explained how and why she was pregnant.

Anyone can speak ill of a person who has hurt them; but it takes character, and righteousness, to absorb the hurt. It’s what God did in Jesus. Instead of shaming us, giving us what we deserve, He took upon Himself our sin, our stain, our shame. It’s the heart of God; it was the heart and character of Joseph. Instead of exposing our sin, Jesus took it upon Himself.

**QUESTION:** Where is God asking you to be righteous? To forgive and not expose. To cover and not shame?

## **2. Joseph was a man of *COURAGE*.**

**24** When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and embraced Mary as his wife. **25** But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a Son. And he gave Him the name Jesus.

### **THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MOMENT!**

1) It took courage to take Mary as his wife. Can't you hear his family and friends? "Couldn't Joseph have come up with a better story than that? Mary's pregnant by God. Does he really expect anyone to believe that?"

2) The consequences of taking Mary to wife were huge:

- a) Excommunicated from the Temple.
- b) Ostracized from his family.
- c) Ridiculed by the neighborhood.

3. It took courage to take on the challenges of raising the Son of God. This was far more than a walk in the park. This was climbing Mt Everest.

## **3. Joseph was a man of *COMMITMENT*.**

**25** But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a Son. And he gave Him the name Jesus.

He committed himself to keeping Mary a virgin until after Jesus was born, although the law gave him the right to know her when he took her to be his wife.

He committed to be the provider, protector and priest of his home. We see this when the angel of the LORD

appeared to him two years later and told him to flee to Egypt because Herod had put out a decree to kill every child two years old and under.

Some men, much like many today, abandon their God-given responsibilities as fathers and husbands, but not Joseph.

#### **4. Joseph was a man of *COMPASSION*.**

Just as Joseph embraced Mary and her situation, so God calls us, with compassion, to come to Himself. Just as Joseph sought to cover what he thought was Mary's sin; God in Christ covers ours. There's no "thought to be" in our sin—it's there!

#### **PONDER THIS FOR A MOMENT:**

- 1) A Holy God embraces an unholy people.
- 2) A God to whom vengeance belongs, grants compassion.
- 3) A God of justice offers mercy.

#### **B. Illustration**

I can clearly remember the occasion. It was a date. Strange, I can't remember the girl, but I can remember the moment. My father had purchased my Aunt



Jean's house and totally remodeled it. My sister and I were told not to use the fireplace, which made no sense to me. Why wouldn't the fireplace work—it's burning wood, the smoke of which goes up the chimney ([show photo](#)), or so I thought.

Well, I thought it would be cozy—after all I was on a date—to light the fireplace when my date was at the house. All one does is open the flue and the smoke goes up the chimney. Right? So, I opened the flue and built a fire. Unbeknownst to me the chimney had been blocked off—something to do with squirrels or birds or Santa coming down.

Soon black smoke began bellowing through the house. It was like a tornado. Everything, and I mean everything, was covered with black soot.

Dad came home. Looked at me. Approached me with that look in his eyes—I knew I was down for the count. Maybe it was because my date was sitting in the living room. Maybe it was because he found an extra measure of grace. Whatever...he had compassion on me. By the way, it costs thousands of dollars and took two weeks to clean up the house.

To this day I am forever grateful to my Dad, who is now in Heaven, for exhibiting compassion and granting me mercy.

### **III. INVITATION**

**Today/tonight the Father offers you compassion and forgiveness through His son, Jesus.** Will you receive it? Here's how...

**Admit**– your sins have separated you from God. (*Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3: 23*); **Believe** – that God did something about your sins through Jesus Christ. (The final Pascal Lamb/Messiah.) (*Lev 17:10; Heb 9: 19-22*); **Commit** – yourself to His righteous by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. (*Isa 53:5; Col 1:22*); **Do it today!** (*Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2*).

Father in Heaven, I'm sorry for the things I've done that are wrong: I am a sinner; forgive me. Thank You for loving me and sending your Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for my sin. Holy Spirit, come into my heart; Jesus be my Lord and Savior. I give You my life. Amen!

ser3796, The Forgotten Character of Christmas (A Christmas Eve Homily) 1411 words with Invitation