



The man who raised Jesus sets an example for us all.

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In December Br. Joe Fisher and I went to see the movie *The Nativity Story*. I was impressed with the way the director portrayed the various characters involved in this very familiar Scripture account.

So often when we reflect upon the birth of Jesus we reflect upon Mary's response to God's plan. While this was present in the movie, we were encouraged to spend some time with Joseph, the husband of Mary, and to see him as a model for our call to selfless giving and reconciliation of head and heart.

In a recent letter, Fr. Dominic Izzo, president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, reflects upon the life of Joseph, husband of Mary. "Joseph did not have to reconcile groups of people. He had to reconcile his head and his heart. We can imitate Joseph by facing our struggles or crises, reconciling our minds and hearts in a peace that will open us to the new things God is doing for us, with us, and through us."

When I think of this kind of reconciliation I think of the lives of our older members, who have seen so much

change in their lifetime. I imagine that there have been times when they felt

like Joseph, asking "How can this be?" They may have said, "This is not what I had planned, Lord." Or, "The life I thought was mapped out for me is so very different than what I started with so many years ago."

These men have experienced changes within the Mass, from Latin into English, from having their backs to the people to facing them in prayer. Closer to home, they have experienced the major transformation of St. Charles Seminary into the Saint Charles Senior Living Community. Today we see that many of the ministries we did exclusively as priests and brothers have evolved into partnerships with the laity. Change abounds.

Recently I was asked, "Fr. Angelo, do you think religious life is going to go the way of the dinosaurs?" My response was to say that some of the things that marked religious life as we know it will pass away. That's the reality of life this side of heaven. Yet, the mission of congregations such as ours will die only if it dies in our heart. God will never abandon the cry of the poor, the needy, the ill, the outcast, the stranger. As we keep this

truth before our eyes and in our hearts others will give their lives to this unique call from the heart of God.

The celibate call to ministry finds its source and purpose in the life and teachings of Jesus and in the most ancient traditions of our Church. This call is an important gift from the Holy Spirit. It is not the strong institutions marking the glorious history of religious congregations in this country that are important. Rather, it is the simple, profound "yes" of a person, who like Joseph did not fully understand what was happening yet trusted that God did and that was enough. Is that enough for us?

I am proud of all our members who remain committed to the journey even though they do not know the end results. This is what faith is all about. Your faithfulness and selfless giving is a source of hope and strength for me and so many others.

When we look at the life of Joseph we can see that his actions are rooted in the Word of God. The Lord speaks to Joseph through an angel in a dream telling him that Mary's child has been conceived through the Holy Spirit to fulfill the words of the prophet. That would be a tough thing to wrap your mind around! In spite of his inner struggle

Joseph says “yes” and creates a home for the Holy Family.

I pray that you greet tomorrow and every day through the eyes of Joseph. May we tend to reconciling our heads and hearts so that God’s plan for us will not be stifled, but rise out of the struggles of our inner doubt and darkness to a place of acceptance and trust that God’s Word will be fulfilled in ways we cannot yet imagine.

Discussion Questions

1. Can we think of an example of a living “Joseph” that we have known in our lives? Share stories about these special people who say “yes” to God.
2. What things has God asked us to do that have been difficult or unsettling? How did we find the courage to say yes, and what was the result?