



SIEBENQUELL

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## Gifts of the Darkness

# When all are dreaming - of what do we dream?

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SOURCE: ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH ST. JOSEF & ST. ANTONIUS, AFFOLTERN AM ALBIS

In these days hearts are filled with dreams: children dream of the fulfilment of their wishes which they have recorded on lists, and others dream of warm family gatherings and yet others dream of a white Christmas.

The Bible shows us a dreamer of an entirely different kind: it is Joseph, the worker, the pragmatist. Indeed, he had a very concrete concept as to how to fashion a life with Mary, his betrothed. Yet, his plans were disrupted as he realized that she is pregnant. He struggles with himself and makes a decision. He, who is called just in the sense of merciful, wishes to dismiss her quietly. During this phase of reflection – and who does not know how much such things torment us in the darkness – an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and says:

»Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'«

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Joseph could recognize or even suspect nothing of what the angel reveals to him in the dream: that this child is not the fruit of infidelity, but the child of an ancient promise, which he, as a Jew, knew so well. Therefore, fear is not called for, but co-operation, and the angel challenges him: **You** to give him a name. The dream opens a new world to Joseph and shows him that much more is going on than that which he recognizes, and that he is a part of it.

Joseph accepts this, awakens and acts in accordance with what he was told in the dream: he takes Mary as his wife, the child is born and he gives him the name of Jesus.

This is the first of four dreams of Joseph which the Gospel of Matthew recounts, and which the Gospel also entrusts to our hearts: Allow yourself to be shown, that there is more to your life than that which you presently recognize.

Joseph experiences a second dream which tears him out of a more reflective time in which the child was paid homage: »Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.«

The task is clear: He must flee with the child and his mother in order to save his threatened life. Joseph takes these words seriously as well and acts immediately, in the same night, to do what he was told.

The second dream also has a message for us: Do something to protect your life! When life is threatened, act!

Thus, the family experiences a period of exile, which saves them and offers them security. The old tale of the ark, in which Noah and his family survive the flood, offers a parallel. Yet, when the danger has passed, he must leave this ark, otherwise it becomes a coffin. In the same fashion, Joseph, too, must return:

»When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.«

In the third dream, God clearly states that the secure space was a transitional solution. Those who wish to stay there permanently live in a permanent exile. We, too, must leave our transitional securities when a short-lived threat passes and turn to fashion and form life.

Yet, that is not so easy. Where shall we go? Joseph discovers on the way to Judea that it could be dangerous to live there, under the authority of a son of Herod. His attentiveness to the voices and signs that come out of the darkness help him here: »And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.« His fourth dream shows him: Go to Galilee! Look for the right space in which you can live! Fashion, act and make yourself a home! We, too, should be attentive to the voices in the dark. Let us be sensitive to the messages of our God. They lead us to life, they serve to protect life and help us to find the space and the paths in which to fashion our lives.

We dream of this as well, do we not?

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