

Dreams

Intro. Dreams have had an important place in the lives of human beings. Dreams are sometimes memories from the past or a peek into the future. In Greek history there was a woman who was said to see the future. The Oracle of Delphi as she was known, would go into a dream-like trance and often tell the future. Native Americans have what is called a Vision Quest in which one would go into the mountains or the desert alone, fast from food and drink and have dreams or visions which gave them insights to their lives. Going to a quiet place and fasting is a part of many religious traditions.

I. The Old Testament people believed in dreams as divine communications about the future such as the coming of prophets and especially the Messiah.

Angels were the usual messengers believed to be from God. Jacob in Genesis 28 and Daniel in the Book of Daniel refer to dreams and their interpretation [*Sacra Pagina, Matthew*, p. 38]. . In Matthew's gospel, the major figure in the Lord's birth is Joseph, establishing the Lord's genealogy through him to King David [*Ibid*]. Joseph's first dream was not the kind while sleeping. It included having his own carpentry shop. It certainly included having Mary as his wife. She had *her* dream; to marry a good man and raise a family. Both their dreams were drastically altered by the kind of dreams that come at night while asleep. Mary's dream was surely shaken by the angel's visit. It was confusing at first but given the news of Elizabeth's miracle, she trusted God. Rather than an angel, it was *Mary* who disturbed Joseph's dream. Imagine

the anxiety she must have felt trying to think of a good way to tell Joseph the news. There *was* no good way. Like Mary at first, Joseph couldn't understand what was happening. All he knew was his heart was broken. Imagine the agony he must have felt as he fought to decide what to do. Matthew tells us even though Joseph knew the law, he would not embarrass Mary in such a public way. Then came his own divine communication in a dream. It confirmed what Mary had told him and his pain turned into joy. Now imagine Mary's fear when he asked to see her; it quickly turned into joy also. Together they embraced a *new* dream and their part in God's plan.

Concl. It is good to have a dream. Dreams free us to imagine more for ourselves and our families and make plans to achieve them. Dreams need to be

based in some reality or they become fantasies that lead to nightmares and disappointment. *Our* dreams mature as we grow and accumulate more facts. Most of Joseph and Mary's dreams came true; they had each other and a good life in Nazareth. With faith in the Lord, we should keep dreaming new dreams as our lives change and grow. It is a hard reality that not all of our dreams come true. It is difficult not to let the disruption keep us from new dreams. Joseph's faith (and Mary's) encourages us to trust God and to constantly discern where God is leading and what he is asking of us. Like our lives, theirs was no "happily ever after" story [M.McGlone, NCR]. There were more difficulties still to face, but also more joys. Keep dreaming and keep faith in what God continues to do in us and for us.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft, December 22, 2019