



December 21, 2025

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Joseph, her husband...was a righteous man. Matthew 1:19



Dear Friends,

Frank Sinatra made the song *"My Way"* famous. At first, he probably didn't realize how badly it reflected on him. Paul Anka who wrote the English version called the song chauvinistic and narcissistic, *"I'll state my case, of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's full. I traveled each and every highway. And more, much more than this I did it my way."* According to *The Financial Times*: *"As it became his signature song Sinatra grew to loathe it, forced to stand before his adoring audience and expose the ugly truth about his aggressive disregard for the thoughts and feelings of other people. 'He was,' says his daughter Tina, 'a man who all his life looked outside for what was missing inside.'"*

In our reading from Isaiah, Ahaz, King of Judah, could have used *"My Way"* as his theme song. He had been unsuccessfully attacked by the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria. He had good reason to fear these enemies. He had killed his son, heir to the throne of David. He offered the child as a sacrifice to the ancient Canaanite gods. Should he be conquered he too would be killed. He makes an appeal to the brutal Assyrian Empire to rescue him.

After Ahaz made the request to Assyria but before he receives an answer, the Prophet Isaiah offers Ahaz a rescue from God. Ahaz declines the offer not out of humility, but because he knew he already secured a deal from the Assyrians. Isaiah speaks God's will for the present moment. His message to Ahaz is your wife is pregnant and it will be a boy. This heir will replace the one that you killed. God will assure the continuation of the line of David which you have jeopardized. And your ally Assyria will capture Israel. The birth of this son is the sign that God is with you. Therefore, you will name him Emmanuel (God-is-with-us). He will be a living lesson for you.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph faces fear and uncertainty. He finds out his betrothed Mary is pregnant. Certainly, the women in the town would be aware of this. Soon their husbands would know. He faces a challenge to the most important value in this culture which is honor. Joseph does not nurse a wounded ego. He thinks about what the best outcome for everyone would be. Rather than create a public scandal, he decides to quietly divorce Mary. Then the father of the child could take her as his wife. He is righteous because he cares for all involved.

Unlike Ahaz, Joseph doesn't speak, he listens. When God speaks in a dream, Joseph changes course. He accepts a role he did not choose and a future he cannot control. His obedience is quiet, costly, and complete: *"He did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him."* It is through Joseph that Jesus has claim to the line of David.

Ahaz and Joseph stand in contrast to one another. Ahaz is about fearful control Joseph is trustful surrender. Ahaz hears God's offer and says 'No.' Joseph hears God's command and says 'yes.' Ahaz wants security before he will trust. Joseph trusts before security. Ahaz protects his power at all costs. Joseph risks everything to fulfill God's promise.

The song that could be an anthem for Joseph is the hymn *"Take, Lord, Receive"* By John Foley SJ:
Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, understanding, my entire will. Give me only Your love and Your grace, that's enough for me. Your love and Your grace are enough for me. Take, Lord, receive all I have and possess. You have given all to me, now I return it. Give me only Your love and Your grace, that's enough for me...

Peace,

Ft Ron

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