Advent 4 A

# MDP of God

When I read these readings this week – the thought that jumped out at me was trust

We have quite a contrast between King Ahaz in our first reading- and St Joseph in our gospel

 *Ahaz didn’t trust God* – **Joseph did**

Most people have no clue who Ahaz is – but most people in the world do know who St Joseph is [*trusting God makes a difference*]

I can even go so far as to say – trusting the messengers of God makes a difference- because in both cases it was a messenger of God who was either accepted or rejected

Ahaz was the king of the southern Kingdom of Judah – he was a descendent of David- he’s in the genealogy of Jesus- *he’s an ancestor of the Savior*

###  But he didn’t trust God

In our first reading today – Ahaz had made a several decisions that were disastrous to the faith of the people of Judah and had put the kingdom in great danger

*And the Prophet* **is begging the king** to trust God – *and he makes him an offer that no one else in the bible ever received* – he says to him – If you want proof that God will protect the kingdom ask for a sign – **any sign king** – *and God will do it for you so that you don’t continue in your disastrous ways*

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*Ahaz has his mind made up* – and **he doesn’t want a sign** – he doesn’t want to do things God’s way –he’s going to do what he decided to do – **and that’s it!**

Contrast that with St. Joseph – *he had to be devastated* – the woman he’s engaged too is pregnant and he knows it’s not his –at that time engagement was considered like being married (except that they didn’t have marital relations)

Who knows what was going through his mind – Mary must have told him about the angel – *but how did he react?*

Joseph could have had Mary stoned to death – but he decides to divorce her quietly

 After all -*it wasn’t a real believable story*

Then the angel comes to him in a dream and says, “trust” – this child is of God- “trust”

 *And Joseph does* – **his trust changed world history**

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So the question is – are we more like Ahaz or like Joseph?

Do we trust in the ways of God – or like Ahaz will we go with the ways of the world?

 Do we follow God’s Wisdom *or earthly wisdom*?

Earthly wisdom would have told St Joseph – “*It was only a dream* – it’s insane to believe that Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit – get rid of her”

And even if it’s not a dream- why should you have to raise a kid who isn’t yours? **God’s asking too much of you**!!

My friends there’s a lot of times in our lives – where the ways of the world – the wisdom of the world seems a lot more appealing then God’s Wisdom

 *Will we make that leap of faith like Joseph did?*

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And by that I mean, will we believe what God teaches through the bible and His Church – or will we follow the attitudes of our culture?

In the last 20 years, my friends-- **trust in the Church has been badly shaken**—and it was shaken because some priests betrayed their call to holiness

It was broken because many in authority in the Church failed to deal with issues in an honest and upfront way

And it’s important that we make a distinction between individual leaders in the Church who failed to be trustworthy—who failed to be open and honest about problems in the church

To make a distinction between that **and the teaching** of the Church—*which Jesus promised He would lead in all truth*—Jesus gave His Word that what His Church taught as revealed by God would always be true—can always be believed—is always a true depiction of what God wants us to know

But because individual members of the clergy—priests and bishops have acted in untrustworthy ways— *it’s been tough for us to make that leap of faith* –that Jesus kept His promise to keep the **teaching** of the Church free from error

So we’re tempted today to be ambivalent—*it’s really hard to make that leap of faith that Jesus will without error guide the teaching of the Church*—when we’ve seen not a few shepherds of the Church fail to be trustworthy

 And my friends—we all need to bring that to prayer

We don’t want to fall into cynicism---as tempting as that can be at times

We certainly don’t want to refuse to trust that Jesus has kept His promises---because my friends—Jesus is 100% trustworthy---He promised to be with His Church to the end of time

He promised to send the Holy Spirit so that you and I can know the truth that will set us free

In a few days’ time we’re about to celebrate that He loves us so much that He humbled Himself to become one of us—that He humbled Himself to be born in a stable—that He humbled Himself to become obedient to His earthly Mother and Father

It’s in light of that incomprehensible love of our Lord—that He calls us to make a leap of faith even when the people He’s entrusted His saving message to –have personally in their lives been untrustworthy

And we want to especially my friends, avoid the cynicism of Ahaz in our 1st reading

In that 1st reading Ahaz pretends to be pious -he says to the prophet- “*Oh no. I could never put God to the test- I won’t presume to ask God for a sign”*

But it was make believe piety – **he didn’t want to hear what God had to say**

The fact is—God’s call to holiness—*is a call we struggle with*—**the path to holiness often is not the most appealing path to take** (from this worldly point of view)

*Ahaz made up his mind*—he didn’t care what God was calling him to do—*he wasn’t going to follow another path*—**he didn’t want a sign from God**

And my friends, in light of the betrayal of trust that we’ve encountered in the Church in recent decades—we can fall into the cynicism of Ahaz

 *I really want to encourage you not to follow that path*

 We need to bring these struggles with trust to the Lord in prayer

God was speaking to Ahaz through the prophet (through a human instrument) – God speaks to us today through the bible and through the teaching of His Church (through human instruments)

Jesus promised that His Church would always teach the truth—*He didn’t promise to keep those who represent the Church free from sin*

He didn’t promise that leaders in the Church would always deal with problems in a wise manner---and unfortunately we’ve seen some shepherds of the Church deal with serious issues **in really foolish ways**

Which has caused a serious crisis of faith—based on a crisis of trust

My friends—God knows the struggle we face with trust and in His incredible love He’s patient with us in those struggles

 That’s why we need to bring those struggles to prayer

That’s why we need to turn to the 2000 year Tradition of the Church which comes to us under the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit

I know for myself—it’s been easier to turn to the Wisdom of the saints and others who proved themselves trustworthy rather than listening to more recent voices who sometimes muddy the waters

However we process through some of these betrayals of trust—it’s really important that we seek to follow the example of St Joseph—who made a leap of faith in our all-knowing and all loving God

It’s important that we don’t follow Ahaz’s example of trusting his human wisdom rather than the prophet’s Divine Wisdom

 My friends, Jesus is trustworthy

 Jesus has demonstrated His incomprehensible love for us

Let’s like Joseph trust in our God—Let’s like Joseph seek to live by our Lord’s Wisdom—Amen? Amen