

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Risk and Faith Final Days of Advent, December 17-23 Wednesday, December 18, 2013
8:15 AM Jer 23:5-8; **Mt 1:18-24** (Contemplate what Joseph is really being asked and what he is agreeing to do.)

We have heard the story of Joseph so often that, I think, it has become dull in our hearing. But it is astonishing if we **contemplate what Joseph is really being asked and what he is agreeing to do**. He is, first of all, being **approached through a dream**. Now I don't know about you, but I have had very bizarre dreams. I have had dreams that I believe are speaking to me from God, but I also have had dreams that are just plain crazy. So **trusting in dreams itself is already an act of faith**, and a substantial one. To actually decide to live one's life according to what one has perceived to be a dream involves a great deal of risk, the risk of being wrong, the risk of being deceived, the risk of even duping oneself. **So this is a risky life**.

Mary is also in a risky situation, conceiving a child outside of wedlock in an era, in a time, in a society where that was not simply frowned on, it was often punished with death. **Joseph did not want to expose her to shame**, "shame" being this exposure to death. He was righteous, which means he was godly. He looked at things through an order that was not of his own making, and a righteous man cannot be violent. **A righteous man cannot be violent because violence is not of God**. So here he is in a situation: what to do: to believe in the dream and to put his life at the disposal of this message, or to just wake up and dismiss the dream and to follow common sense? That was the dilemma. **He chose to reject common sense and to follow the dream, and this is attributed to him as a great act of faith**. I think there is a great deal we can learn from that as well.