

There is a classic movie entitled *The Quiet Man* starring John Wayne. The main character is strong physically and mentally, yet reserved and quiet. He lets his actions speak louder than his words.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the Gospel of Saint Matthew tells us of a quiet man, Joseph of Nazareth, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus. Unlike the Gospel of Saint Luke, which narrates the annunciation to Mary that she is to bear God’s Son, Matthew tells us about the annunciation to Joseph of how Jesus is to enter the world.

This annunciation is by way of a dream in which an angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph. He is told that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived. The angel also tells him not to be afraid to take Mary into his home. He was to name the child Jesus, which means “God saves,” because he will save his people from their sins.

Before this divine intervention, when Joseph found that his intended spouse was pregnant, he had decided to divorce her quietly instead of the harsh solution of publicly shaming her and subjecting her to punishment, as the Law of Moses prescribed. Matthew tells us that Joseph came to this decision because he was a righteous but kind man.

Although he is often forgotten in God’s plan for us, perhaps because nowhere in the Scriptures do we have any of his words recorded, yet Joseph teaches us some valuable lessons. He teaches us the importance of being quiet and reflective and not making quick, rash, and harsh decisions.

Joseph teaches us the value of praying quietly and listening to God and trusting in his providence. This can be a challenge for us because we live in a world bombarded with constant noise and distractions, especially in this hectic time before Christmas. Someone once asked St. Padre Pio what language does God speak and his answer was “God speaks the language of silence.” As Psalm 46, verse 10 advises: “be still and know that I am God.” Saint Joseph exemplifies this wisdom.

Another lesson which Joseph teaches us is that actions speak louder than words. What does he do after the angel appears to him in a dream? The Gospel tells us: “when Joseph awoke, he did as the angel commanded him and took his wife into his home.”

When we love someone, as Joseph loved Mary, we express not only in words but also by practical help. In family life, such actions can be helping each other with chores, cleaning, helping with meals, etc. Even children can and should participate.

Down through the ages, the Church has promoted devotion to this quiet man, Joseph. In 1870, Pope Pius the Ninth declared him the patron of the universal Church, because he took such good care of the infant Church present in the holy family. He is the just and righteous man of God who trusted in the Lord. We ask for his intercession that we might imitate his virtues: “Saint Joseph, patron and protector of the Church universal and the domestic Church in our families, pray for us.”