

## Reflection 5 The Stewardship of Participation

### Scripture

Matthew 1:18-24

*18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[j] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, "which means, "God is with us." 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;[j] and he named him Jesus. (NRSV)*

Stewardship season is upon us. Each year we are asked to reflect on how best we can use our gifts of time, talent, and treasure to further God's kingdom. Stewardship strengthens our relationship with God and with each other. Ponder the life of Joseph, earthly father to Jesus and husband of Mary. So little is known about this man. However, we are told that he quietly, and with obedience, participates in the greatest story ever told. He takes Mary as his wife. He moves his family to safety, and returns them to the location where the ministry of Jesus changes the world for all time. He lived in faithfulness and righteousness by participating.

As our diocese searches for a bishop co-adjutor who will become the next bishop of the diocese, your participation in the process is welcomed and desired. The Search Committee and the Standing Committee want each voice to be heard. Participation is an essential part of our common life.

### Discussion

1. Are there other biblical figures who speak to you about participation? Who are they? What are their stories?
2. St. Paul voiced strongly the need to participate in the life of the church. What keeps people from participating? How can church leaders facilitate more participation?
3. The actions of Joseph, a seemingly minor figure in the Bible, were essential to the gospel narrative. How have small actions had major impact in your life and ministry?
4. What are ways your voice "can be heard" as the diocesan search progresses?
5. The survey, Holy Cow, is designed to create a snapshot of who we are as a diocese. How can you shape this snapshot?
6. What are other ways you can participate in the search process?