

November 2024 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Arlington-our Golden Jubilee!! We are in Year 2 of preparation for our Jubilee. Theme for Year 2: "My soul rejoices in the Lord!"



## *Betrothal and Espousals of the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Joseph*

*Feast Day: January 22/23*

There are two feast days that honor the union between the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. The feast days were once celebrated in the liturgy but have since been removed except for in certain places. January 22 is the Feast of the Betrothal of the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Joseph. January 23 is the Feast of the Espousals of The Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Joseph.

There were two phases to Jewish marriages in the first century. The first was the **betrothal** where the couple entered a legal contract. The bride was around age 14 and the groom was about 18. They had to live apart for a time without consummating the marriage, though they were legally husband and wife. If one died during this period of abstinence, the other was considered widowed. The male could divorce the wife if he found her unfit such as having been unfaithful.

Around 3 months to a year later, the groom would process to the bride's house and bring her into his home. Consummation of the marriage would take place and then a wedding feast would follow such as the Wedding Feast of Cana mentioned in the Gospel of John. The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph remained chaste, thus instead of a "wedding" the second part of their marriage is sometimes referred to as an **espousal**.

The Blessed Virgin Mary was in the first stage of marriage to Joseph when the Archangel Gabriel revealed to her that she would be the mother of the Messiah. Mary's response was "How can this be since I do not know man?" implicating her intention to remain a virgin. Fr. Roland Gauthier reflects, "Joseph loved Our Lady and Our Lady loved Joseph, not with a brotherly love but a pure conjugal love. It was so deep that any carnal relation was made totally superfluous."

In compliance with Divine Will, Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit and bore the Son of God Incarnate. Legally married to Joseph who was of the royal line of David, Jesus was the legitimate heir in the line of David, thus fulfilling prophecy.

The espousals of Mary and Joseph were the foundation for the Holy Family into which Jesus was born. St. John Paul II explains, "Where Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Savior began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union."

*"Mary and Joseph brought to their espousals not only their vow of virginity but also two hearts with greater torrents of love than had ever before coursed through human breasts. No husband and wife ever loved each other so much as Joseph and Mary." ~Venerable Fulton Sheen*

This year, we focus on Mary, [the Mediatrix of All Graces](#), the model disciple, who shows us how to receive and bear the Word to the world. For more on Year 2 preparation, visit: [www.arlingtondiocese.org/goldenjubiliecelebration/](http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/goldenjubiliecelebration/)