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24 Wednesday

CHRISTMAS EVE, Evening

Isaiah 62: 1-5

Ps 88: 4,5, 16,17, 27,29

Acts 13: 16,17, 22-25

Matt 1: 1-25

“Today you will know that the Lord is coming to save us, and in the morning you will see his glory”: this verse, for the Entry Song at today’s afternoon or early evening Mass, catches the quiet mood of expectancy before the celebration of Christmas. The long genealogy of Christ that begins St Matthew’s gospel symbolises the long time of preparation that St Paul spoke about in Antioch (Acts 13), and that’s now ending with the wedding of God with His people (Isaiah 62). We hear St Matthew’s account of how Jesus came to be born; about Joseph’s problem and perplexity in finding that Mary was pregnant; the angel’s message to him about this, and that he must name Mary’s son ‘Jesus’, “because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins”; and how all this was in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin conceiving a son who would be called Emmanuel. Joseph is maybe the most neglected figure in our Christmas celebrations, despite his important place in the gospel story. A little time of reflection and prayer centred with him may therefore be appropriate this evening. After all, Joseph did believe the angel’s message and explanation, and did do what the angel told him to do. The gospel doesn’t say much about him or his feelings, but we should be able to appreciate his crucial role in all that happened, his closeness to Mary and her Child, and his role-model position for us as we rejoice with them. With Joseph let us sing: “The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all humankind will see the saving power of God.”