

## ***An Invitation to Dream***

Dreams and visions are powerfully present throughout the Advent Scriptures. The visions of the prophets offer promises to the people to sustain them during difficult times on the journey. Two powerful dreams instruct and guide Joseph. In one, an angel instructs him on what is to happen, and the other dream prompts him to take Mary and Jesus to a safer place. The Magi, after visiting the Christ child, heed their dreams and return home by a different route, thus protecting the child in whom salvation history will unfold. God uses our dreams and visions to tell us about ourselves and to change our lives.

The invitation to reflect on our dreams applies to ordinary day dreams as well as the vivid dreams that happen as we sleep. We may dream about advancing our career or about something in particular we desire. In dreams, we may receive messages about what a certain ailment or situation can teach us. A beloved departed one visits us in a dream, and we feel closer despite their absence in our lives. We wake from a random dream with a solution to a problem that plagues us in daytime hours. Though dreams are often an unconscious field in which we process the day's events, might they also offer us some divine guidance about the happenings of our lives?

The final days before Christmas can easily become a time in which we become consumed with our preparations for the holiday. As the day moves closer, we may be overwhelmed by daily tasks, wrapping gifts and planning dinners. We can lose the hopeful tone of the season if we shift into frenetic activity trying to get everything done. The invitation to hear the messages contained in our dreams calls us back to a quieter state of mind, one in which we can find the rest that Jesus promises to those who are weary. As Advent leads to Christmas, may we be open to our dreams as divinely inspired messages that illuminate our hopes, give us patience to wait and bring us great joy in this season.