

BE A JOSEPH
By Madeline Bialecki

The innkeeper in the Nativity story, the guy who said there was no room and turned Joseph and Mary out, was probably a realist—all his rooms were filled (Luke 2:7). Granted, he may have been inundated with people seeking shelter because of the census so he had no empty rooms. But did the innkeeper consider all his options? Had he thought of giving up his bed so that a pregnant woman could rest comfortably?

We don't know. Maybe another pregnant woman had arrived earlier. Maybe.... Well, we just don't know. The story handed down to us is not a first-person account, so we can only guess at what really happened that night.

The more important thing to consider, though, are our own actions.

We don't have to go far to find people in need, people facing difficulties, struggling with illness or life's challenges.

How are we like the innkeeper, turning people away when we feel we are at our limit and they are asking us to make room for them?

Do we do things a certain way because we have always done them that way? Are we so focused on one course of action that we cannot see alternatives?

When life seems full, do we shut the door and say *enough*? Or do we make room for one more?

Compare that to Joseph, who had *already made up his mind to divorce* Mary, until he had a dream suggesting a different course of action. Then he pivots and does as the angel in the dream instructed (Matthew 1:19-24).

I wondered if the innkeeper might have had a dream that night after turning Joseph and Mary away, a dream when an angel told him to go find Joseph and Mary and offer them his bed. But upon waking from the dream, he only said, "I had the weirdest dream last night," and went about his day as usual. Haven't most of us done that?

We are all invited to change course from time to time, to reframe a situation, get a different perspective.

Can we be like Joseph and be willing to rethink our decisions, to make new decisions based on new information? Can we be guided by the whispers of the Spirit when we feel a nudge to reach out to someone, to offer assistance or comfort? Can we hear the voice of God in our dreams and gain insight into a new direction for our lives?