

December 20, 2020 Fourth Sunday of Advent



# SAINT JOSEPH

## SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

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# (EXCERPTS FROM) THE APOSTOLIC LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF SAINT JOSEPH AS PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

WITH A FATHER'S HEART: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as "the son of Joseph." Matthew and Luke, the two Evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little, yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was, and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter, betrothed to Mary. He was a "just man" (Mt 1:19), ever ready to carry out God's will as revealed to him in the Law and through four dreams. After a long and tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he beheld the birth of the Messiah in a stable, since "there was no place for them" elsewhere (cf. Lk 2:7). He witnessed the adoration of the shepherds and the Magi, who represented respectively the people of Israel and the pagan peoples.

Joseph had the courage to become the legal father of Jesus, to whom he gave the name revealed by the angel: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). As we know, for ancient peoples, to give a name to a person or to a thing, as Adam did in the account in the Book of Genesis, was to establish a relationship.

In the Temple, forty days after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary offered their child to the Lord and listened with amazement to Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus and his Mother. To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt. After returning to his own country, he led a hidden life in the tiny and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, far from Bethlehem, his ancestral town, and from Jerusalem and the Temple. Of Nazareth it was said, "No prophet is to rise" and indeed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (cf. Jn 1:46). When, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary lost track of the twelve-year-old Jesus, they anxiously sought him out and they found him in the Temple, in discussion with the doctors of the Law.

After Mary, the Mother of God, no saint is mentioned more frequently in the papal magisterium than Joseph, her spouse. My predecessors reflected on the message contained in the limited information handed down by the Gospels in order to appreciate more fully his central role in the history of salvation. Blessed Pius IX declared him "Patron of the Catholic Church," Venerable Pius XII proposed him as "Patron of Workers," and Saint John Paul II as "Guardian of the Redeemer." Saint Joseph is universally invoked as the "patron of a happy death."

Now, one hundred and fifty years after his proclamation as Patron of the Catholic Church by Blessed Pius IX (8 December 1870), I would like to share some personal reflections on this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience... My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic, when we experienced, amid the crisis, how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the decisive events of our history. Doctors, nurses, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caregivers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests, men and women religious, and so very many others. They understood that no one is saved alone... How many people daily exercise patience and offer hope, taking care to spread not panic, but shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday ways, how to accept and deal with a crisis by adjusting their routines, looking ahead and encouraging the practice of prayer. How many are praying, making sacrifices and interceding for the good of all. Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all.

The greatness of Saint Joseph is that he was the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus. In this way, he placed himself, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, "at the service of the entire plan of salvation."

Saint Paul VI pointed out that Joseph concretely expressed his fatherhood "by making his life a sacrificial service to the mystery of the incarnation and its redemptive purpose. He employed his legal authority over the Holy Family to devote himself completely to them in his life and work. He turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home."

Thanks to his role in salvation history, Saint Joseph has always been venerated as a father by the Christian people. This is shown by the countless churches dedicated to him worldwide, the numerous religious institutes, confraternities and ecclesial groups inspired by his spirituality and bearing his name, and the many traditional expressions of piety in his honor. Innumerable holy men and women were passionately devoted to him...

Joseph saw Jesus grow daily “in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor” (Lk 2:52). As the Lord had done with Israel, so Joseph did with Jesus: “he taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him” (cf. Hos 11:3-4).

In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God: “As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him” (Ps 103:13).

In the synagogue, during the praying of the Psalms, Joseph would surely have heard again and again that the God of Israel is a God of tender love, who is good to all, whose “compassion is over all that he has made” (Ps 145:9).

The history of salvation is worked out “in hope against hope” (Rom 4:18), through our weaknesses. All too often, we think that God works only through our better parts, yet most of his plans are realized in and despite our frailty...

The evil one makes us see and condemn our frailty, whereas the Spirit brings it to light with tender love. Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us. Pointing fingers and judging others are frequently signs of an inability to accept our own weaknesses, our own frailty. Only tender love will save us from the snares of the accuser (cf. Rev 12:10). That is why it is so important to encounter God’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we experience his truth and tenderness. Paradoxically, the Evil one can also speak the truth to us, yet he does so only to condemn us. We know that God’s truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us. That truth always presents itself to us like the merciful father in Jesus’ parable (cf. Lk 15:11-32). It comes out to meet us, restores our dignity, sets us back on our feet and rejoices for us, for, as the father says: “This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (v. 24).

Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses.

He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture...

In his role as the head of a family, Joseph taught Jesus to be obedient to his parents (cf. Lk 2:51), in accordance with God’s command (cf. Ex 20:12).

During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food (cf. Jn 4:34). Even at the most difficult moment of his life, in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to do the Father’s will rather than his own, becoming “obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews thus concludes that Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” (5:8).

All this makes it clear that “Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood” and that in this way, “he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation.”

Joseph accepted Mary unconditionally. He trusted in the angel’s words. The nobility of Joseph’s heart is such that what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity. Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man. Even though he does not understand the bigger picture, he makes a decision to protect Mary’s good name, her dignity and her life. In his hesitation about how best to act, God helped him by enlightening his judgment.

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow...

Just as God told Joseph: “Son of David, do not be afraid!” (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: “Do not be afraid!” We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning.

Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground. Even if our heart condemns us, “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 Jn 3:20).

Here, once again, we encounter that Christian realism which rejects nothing that exists. Reality, in its mysterious and irreducible complexity, is the bearer of existential meaning, with all its lights and shadows. Thus, the Apostle Paul can say: “We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God” (Rom 8:28). To which Saint Augustine adds, “even that which is called evil.” In this greater perspective, faith gives meaning to every event, however happy or sad.

Nor should we ever think that believing means finding facile and comforting solutions. The faith Christ taught us is what we see in Saint Joseph. He did not look for shortcuts, but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it.

Joseph’s attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak (cf. 1 Cor 1:27). He is the “Father of orphans and protector of widows” (Ps 68:6), who commands us to love the stranger in our midst. I like to think that it was from Saint Joseph that Jesus drew inspiration for the parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32).

As we read the infancy narratives, we may often wonder why God did not act in a more direct and clear way. Yet God acts through events and people. Joseph was the man chosen by God to guide the beginnings of the history of redemption. He was the true “miracle” by which God saves the child and his mother. God acted by trusting in Joseph’s creative courage. Arriving in Bethlehem and finding no lodging where Mary could give birth, Joseph took a stable and, as best he could, turned it into a welcoming home for the Son of God come into the world. Faced with imminent danger from Herod, who wanted to kill the child, Joseph was warned once again in a dream to protect the child, and rose in the middle of the night to prepare the flight into Egypt...

The Gospel does not tell us how long Mary, Joseph and the child remained in Egypt. Yet they certainly needed to eat, to find a home and employment. It does not take much imagination to fill in those details. The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger.

In this regard, I consider Saint Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty...

In his continued protection of the Church, Joseph continues to “protect the child and his mother,” and we too, by our love for the Church, continue to love the child and his mother. That child would go on to say: “As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Consequently, every poor, needy, suffering or dying person, every stranger, every prisoner, every infirm person is “the child” whom Joseph continues to protect. For this reason, Saint Joseph is invoked as protector of the unfortunate, the needy, exiles, the afflicted, the poor and the dying...

Saint Joseph was a carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family. From him, Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one’s own labor.

Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion. It becomes an opportunity for the fulfilment not only of oneself, but also of that primary cell of society which is the family. A family without work is particularly vulnerable to difficulties, tensions, estrangement and even break-up. How can we speak of human dignity without working to ensure that everyone is able to earn a decent living?

Working persons, whatever their job may be, are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around us. The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new “normal” from which no one is excluded. Saint Joseph’s work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities. Let us implore Saint Joseph the Worker to help us find ways to express our firm conviction that no young person, no person at all, no family should be without work! ...

Fathers are not born but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person.

Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers. The Church too needs fathers. Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians remain timely: "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor 4:15). Every priest or bishop should be able to add, with the Apostle: "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (ibid.). Paul likewise calls the Galatians: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (4:19).

Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities. Perhaps for this reason, Joseph is traditionally called a "most chaste" father. That title is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the center of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs. It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration...

Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child's freedom. A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes "useless," when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied.

When he becomes like Joseph, who always knew that his child was not his own but had merely been entrusted to his care.

In the end, this is what Jesus would have us understand when he says: "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Mt 23:9).

The aim of this Apostolic Letter is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal. Indeed, the proper mission of the saints is not only to obtain miracles and graces, but to intercede for us before God, like Abraham and Moses, and like Jesus, the "one mediator" (1 Tim 2:5), who is our "advocate" with the Father (1 Jn 2:1) and who "always lives to make intercession for us" (Heb 7:25; cf. Rom 8:34).

The saints help all the faithful "to strive for the holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life." Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice.

Jesus told us: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29). The lives of the saints too are examples to be imitated. Saint Paul explicitly says this: "Be imitators of me!" (1 Cor 4:16). By his eloquent silence, Saint Joseph says the same.

Before the example of so many holy men and women, Saint Augustine asked himself: "What they could do, can you not also do?" And so he drew closer to his definitive conversion, when he could exclaim: "Late have I loved you, Beauty ever ancient, ever new!"

We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion. Let us now make our prayer to him:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
To you God entrusted his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.  
Blessed Joseph,  
to us too, show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.  
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

*Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 8 December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 2020, the eighth of my Pontificate.*

(The full version of the letter can be found online.)



## MASS SCHEDULE & INTENTIONS

Saturday, December 19

4:00 p.m. Marilyn Palumbo

5:00 p.m. Dennis Kane, Betty Kane,  
Marie Mancuso

Sunday, December 20

8:00 a.m. Thomas Drennan, Ralph Groves,

9:00 a.m. Katie DeCubellis, William Smith,  
Margaret & Thomas Ryan,

10:00 a.m. Larry Caswell, Bob & Betty Parrillo

11:00 a.m. Andrea Rizzo, Liz Nayman,  
William Kovacs

Wednesday, December 23

9:00 a.m. Barbara Stamford, Susan Greene

Thursday, December 24

2:00 p.m. All deceased relatives and friends

3:00 p.m. All deceased parishioners

4:00 p.m. All deceased relatives and friends

5:00 p.m. All deceased parishioners

6:00 p.m. All deceased relatives and friends

Friday, December 25

8:00 a.m. All deceased parishioners

9:00 a.m. All deceased relatives and friends

10:00 a.m. All deceased parishioners

Saturday, December 26

4:00 p.m. Stephen Nicklus, Francis Nicklus

5:00 p.m. David Splaine, Joseph Jacome

Sunday, December 27

8:00 a.m. Andrea Bassett, John Addington,  
Bob & Betty Parrillo

9:00 a.m. Sam LoPresti, Raymond Craig,  
Edward McCool

10:00 a.m. All deceased parishioners

11:00 a.m. Harold Waters, Gerard McDavitt, Sr.,  
Doris Gillis

*Please see each week's bulletin for the schedule of  
weekday Masses, as the schedule will change from  
time to time.*



## Religious Formation News

Our program for 2021 will begin in December with a **series of emails** introducing the “easy to do” Home Programs for each grade level. These programs are being developed and will have easy to follow directions for parents and lessons for the children.

This will be a staggered roll out:

**Grade 1:** lessons went out via email this week.

**Grade 2:** Packets are ready for pick –up. (see below)

**Grade 3:** received their lessons via email the first week of December

Other grades will follow as development continues

**Updates will continue to be posted in the weekly bulletin.** If you are not getting the weekly bulletin – call and check with the office to insure that the correct email is on file for the family. All Religious Formation information is using email to distribute information and up dates

### Grade 2 First Communion

Packets are available for pick-up in the Parish Office during Business hours, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday and during masses on the weekend. The students will be preparing for First Reconciliation and First Communion. Lessons after the initial packet pickup will be sent via email.

### \*\*\*\*\* Religious Formation Registration:

New students to the parish and Catholic school students who are preparing for First Communion (grade 2) and **ALL Confirmation (grade 8)** students need to register for classes ONLINE- [ctkri.org](http://ctkri.org) - Religious Formation.

### CONFIRMATION 2020-21

For those who missed the first class parent/candidate meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup> the information slides are now on our web page under CONFIRMATION. In addition the sponsor requirement and saint name forms have been added. Our next meeting for candidates will be SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2021 from 6:00-7:00pm via zoom. A link will be sent to the email provided on the sacramental registration form. I wish all candidates and their families a wonderful Christmas season and look forward to seeing you at mass

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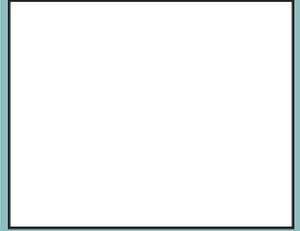
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