

Year of St. Joseph

8 December 2020 - 8 December 2021

20 December 2020



Pope Francis proclaims **“Year of St. Joseph”** (8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021)

In a new Apostolic Letter entitled ***Patris corde*** (**“With a Father’s Heart”**), Pope Francis describes St. Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows.

The Letter marks the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX’s declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. The Holy Father wrote *Patris corde* against the backdrop of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which, he says, has helped us see more clearly the importance of “ordinary” people who, though far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day.

In this, they resemble St. Joseph, **“the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence,”** who nonetheless played **“an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”**

St. Joseph, the Just Man

MATTHEW 1:19-20



Sanctified by working with fidelity

“Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:19-20)

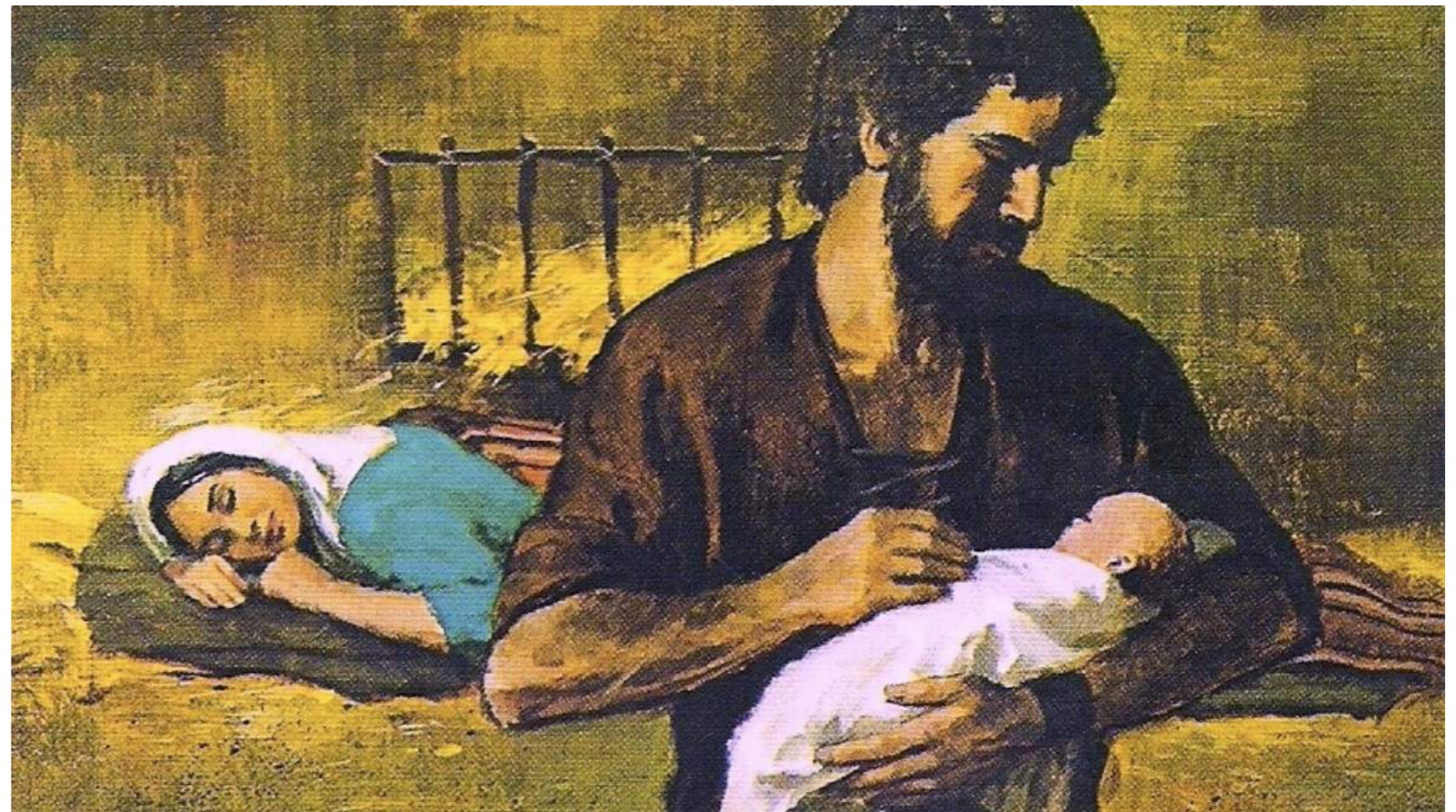
We can learn much from “St Joseph, the Just Man.” To be a just man or woman, to be an obedient servant of God at work means inviting ridicule when we turn down the offer to look at the degrading magazine or to hear the salacious story. At home, it means incurring the wrath of our children when we forbid them unwholesome friends and entertainment. At school, it means getting the honest “C” rather than the dishonest “A.” Since St Joseph wasn’t as cynical as our contemporaries, he probably missed the chance to nod in jaded agreement with the statement, “No good deed goes unpunished.” That’s the way it seems sometimes. Constant striving to do good in the face of such unrewarding prospect leads to moral exhaustion. We need help to be moral in a frequently amoral and immoral world.

A Model of Fortitude

Fortitude is one the gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC, 1831). The Gift of Fortitude is also known as the Gift of Courage. Through this Gift a person is no longer afraid to stand up for God and His truths. A person who has the Gift of Fortitude will stand up for good against evil and is convicted to take a stand when the occasion arises. Isaiah foretold that the Holy Spirit would rest upon the promised Messiah, Emmanuel, and that he would possess wisdom and understanding, counsel and fortitude, knowledge, fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2) and piety. As Jesus was blessed with these gifts by His Father, every believer is blessed with the same gifts by the Holy Spirit. St Joseph manifested a lot of fortitude in refraining from shaming Mary with a public writ of divorce. As it turned out, he became even stronger. In a dream, he learned the full extent of God’s will in this situation. Rather than an affirmation of his discretion, St Joseph heard a call to heroism. He was to go on as if nothing had happened, as if Mary were not pregnant. And when it became obvious to all that she was with child, he was to play the role of the proud papa and give the baby a name, thereby exercising the right to legal paternity. This is enough to make even the most just of men search for an escape. St Joseph however, imbued with the charism of fortitude, saw God’s will in this call. With courage born of faith in the divine plan, took Mary into his house and became, in fact, the foster-father of the Messiah, and, in appearance, the natural father of Jesus of Nazareth.

THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE

The gift of Fortitude has been welcomed by women and men in every age. It seems an absolute necessity for Christian life today. The difficulties which confront the just are so varied and so subtle that merely human defences cannot possibly measure up. Unless the Holy Spirit goes with us into the fray, we go practically unarmed. The Season of Advent is a case in point. The most immature youth knows how to make parents feel guilty for not providing a plethora of presents, Parents are under duress to buy what their children want and place them under the Christmas tree. Instead, they should rely on their good sense that a gift is only a sign of love, not love itself. Such a stance takes fortitude. Workers over-indulged at office parties. In their stupor, their moral standards are forgotten with disastrous results. Moderation during the holidays calls for fortitude. At home, at work, at school, the secular trappings of commercial Christmas stifle the desire to prepare for the birth of the Prince of Peace. To speak up



St. Joseph, a man of integrity and faithfulness

for the true meaning of the season in the face of so much materialism requires fortitude. Fortitude are seen in the days of the martyrs of the early church. We see this strength in the *just decision* which St Joseph made. We need to experience more of this

interior endurance in our own lives when our difficulties are more subtle and our adversaries more cunning.

A DAILY PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH...AND A CHALLENGE...

In his letter, Pope Francis notes how, every day for over forty years, following Lauds [Morning Prayer], he has recited a prayer to Saint Joseph taken from a nineteenth-century French prayer book of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary. This prayer, he says, “expresses devotion and trust, and even poses a certain challenge to Saint Joseph,” on account of its closing words: **“My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power.”**

At the conclusion of Pope Francis’s Apostolic Letter, he adds another prayer to St Joseph, which he encourages all of us to pray together:

***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.***



Let this Christmas season be one of reconciliation, fellowship, prayer and service to God and one another

***Obtain for us grace, mercy, and
courage, and defend us from every
evil. Amen.***



Wishing one and all A Blessed Happy Christmas filled with the joy and peace of the Christ-Child

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