



*19 March, Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary*





**We celebrate the Solemnity of St Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster father of Jesus (Friday 19 March 2021). Great saints had deep devotion to St. Joseph. St. Teresa of Avila, among others, assigned special value to his intercession. In 1817 Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church. Pope Pius XII often urged the faithful to go to St Joseph for their needs. Today, we too confidently go to St. Joseph for our various material and spiritual needs.**

## Give Glory to God through work

We go to St. Joseph to imbibe his right attitude and motivation for our daily work. St. Joseph was a carpenter (Mark 6:3). He could have been a craftsman or artisan. But it did not matter to him. He believed in what St Paul later said: “Whatever your work is, if you put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord, give glory to God” (Colossians 3:23). We learnt from him that it is not only prayer that gives glory to God, but work of any kind, hammering on a metal pipe, preparing a beam, white-washing a wall, driving, teaching, nursing, everything gives God glory. St. Joseph also teaches us to do our work, whether menial or glamorous, not solely for money but also for love of God and the society we live in. If we, too, do our work wholeheartedly with a motive of love for God and society, we will find great fulfilment in life as St. Joseph found.

**DON'T WORK  
FOR MAN'S  
APPROVAL.  
WORK FOR  
THE GLORY  
OF GOD.**

## Simple and Joyful Obedience to God

We can go to St. Joseph to acquire a sense of justice. When the Bible calls St. Joseph “the just man” (Matthew 1:19) it means more than paying our bills promptly. When God justifies us, He so transforms us that we become completely open to all that God wants to do for us. That is why, St. Joseph obeyed God in all things. Simple and joyfully he was obedient to God. In taking Mary to be his spouse, in naming Jesus, in protecting Mary and the Baby Jesus during the flight to Egypt, in bringing them safely to Nazareth, in the unassuming number of years of quiet caring for the family, in everything else, St. Joseph did as God wanted.

## Just towards God, Just toward Others

When a person is just towards God in this way, he becomes just also towards his neighbours. We see this in St. Joseph’s treatment of his spouse Mary. When he realised that she was with a child, he decided to divorce her, but he planned to do this quietly. “Being a just man and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally” (Matthew 1:19). In our world today, we are only too conscious of the appalling sense of injustice done by one human being to another. The injustice done to an individual is sometimes perceived as a service to the public. There are some, of course, who are just but their love of justice is often no more than the fear of suffering injustice. In such a twisted world, we need the inspiring example of St. Joseph who had the constant wish to give God what is His and to every neighbour his or her due.

## Faith put to the test

We can go to St. Joseph in order that we may share his deep faith. There is a striking similarity between Abraham, the husband of Sarah, and Joseph, the spouse of Mary. Both have their faith tested. To believe that Sarah in her advanced age would bear him a son required a tremendous faith on Abraham’s part. To believe Mary had conceived a Son by the Holy Spirit required even greater faith from St. Joseph. Why does God require from us faith in Him, and at times such heroic faith, before He gives us what we need or what He wants to give? So that we may be convinced beyond all doubt that we are what we are only by the grace of God and that everything we have is a free gift of God and not as the result of our performance. If we think that we will get to heaven by our own work, we are like a man who thinks of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand. In fact, even our faith in God is not our achievement but a free gift of God. It is true that God often tests our faith. That is, supposedly because our limitless faith in God corresponds to His limitless faithfulness towards us. Therefore, we need to raise up our faith or else it lies dormant, to warm it up or else it is frozen and to rouse it or else it grows tepid. This is the reason why we need to go to St. Joseph, not just the fathers, but the whole family.





**How, then, is St. Joseph the exemplar of fatherhood? He is the prototype of what all human fathers should be. They should reflect, in their families the seven virtues which the Church specially honours in St. Joseph's relationship to Jesus and Mary, in the Holy Family of Nazareth.**

**Like Joseph, fathers should be:**

- Just without partiality or human respect.
- Chaste according to their married state of life.
- Prudent in knowing God's will through constant prayer.
- Valiant in courageously accepting the cross every moment of the day.
- Obedient, in seeing every event as part of divine Providence, *"Here I am Lord. I am ready to do Your will."*
- Faithful, in loving their wives with perfect fidelity, and their children with tireless generosity.
- The strength of the home by their exercise of manly courage.
- They are to protect their families from the plots of the modern "Herods".
- Who are inspired by the evil spirit to destroy the Christian family in the modern world.

**According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the *Father Absence Crisis* in America has resulted in 18.3 million children or one-fourth of our children living without a biological, step - or adoptive father in their homes. Children growing up in fatherless households are:**

1. Four times more likely to live in poverty
2. Seven times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
3. Two times at greater risk of infant mortality
4. Two times more likely to drop out of school
5. More likely to face abuse and neglect
6. More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
7. More likely to commit a crime and go to prison
8. More likely to have behavioural problems





Pope Francis refers to St. Joseph as a tender and loving father. He suggests that Jesus drew upon His own experience of St. Joseph's generous and paternal love in His description of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. Pope Francis recognises St. Joseph as a creatively courageous father who does not complain about major interruptions in his life but, instead, approaches them as problems that can be turned into possibilities. St. Joseph is resourceful and creative in finding ways to cooperate with God's will. Pope Francis writes: "The Son of the Almighty came into our world in a state of great vulnerability. He needed to be defended, protected, cared for and raised by St. Joseph. God trusted Joseph, as did Mary, who found in him someone who would not only save her life, but would always provide for her and her child." Pope Francis points out that Joseph was a working father. He provided for Mary and Jesus through hard work. The Holy Father observes that from Joseph: "Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labour."



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Fr. Andrew Wong, Spiritual Director & Veronica Nathan, Programme Manager/Counsellor

During this year of St. Joseph, let us consecrate ourselves and our families to St. Joseph

## Prayer of Consecration to St. Joseph

O Glorious Patriarch and Patron of the Church! O Virgin Spouse of the Virgin Mother of God! O Guardian and Virginal Father of the Word Incarnate! In the presence of Jesus and Mary, I choose you this day to be my father, my guardian, and my protector.

O great St. Joseph, whom God has made the Head of the Holy Family, accept me, I beseech you, though utterly unworthy, to be a member of your "Holy House." Present me to your Immaculate Spouse; ask her also to adopt me as her child. With her, pray that I may constantly think of Jesus, and serve him faithfully to the end of my life. O Terror of Demons, increase in me virtue, protect me from the evil one, and help me not to offend God in any way.

O my Spiritual Father, I hereby consecrate myself to you. In faithful imitation of Jesus and Mary, I place myself and all my concerns under your care and protection. To you, after Jesus and Mary, I consecrate my body and soul, with all their faculties, my spiritual growth, my home, and all my affairs and undertakings.

Forsake me not, but adopt me as a servant and child of the Holy Family. Watch over me at all times, but especially at the hour of my death. Console and strengthen me with the presence of Jesus and Mary so that, with you, I may praise and adore the Holy Trinity for all eternity. Amen.

