



# Devotion to St. Joseph

Edited by F. Delclaux

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### Devotion to St. Joseph

Reprint of Encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII Quamquam Pluries on the Holy Rosary and the Patronage of St. Joseph (Reprinted with permission of Mundo Cristiano)

Edited by F. Delclaux



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## The Seven Sundays of St. Joseph

The Seven Sundays of St. Joseph is a devotion to the patron of the universal Church. On the seven Sundays preceding his feast, March 19, the faithful have traditionally contemplated a series of circumstances—seven sorrows and joys—in his life so that they might confront the joys and sorrows of their own lives as he did.

### First Sunday

And this was the manner of Christ's birth. His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, but they had not yet come together, when she was found to be with child, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon her husband Joseph (for he was a right-minded man and would not have her put to open shame) was for sending her away in secret. But hardly had this thought come to his mind, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said,

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary to yourself, for it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that she has conceived this child; and she will bear a son, whom you shall call Jesus, for he is to save his people from their sins.

All this was so ordained to fulfil the word which the Lord spoke by his prophet: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel (which means, God with us). And Joseph awoke from sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, taking his wife to himself; **(Matthew 1; 18-25)**

Until the angel appeared, Joseph suffered immensely. His sorrow was as great as his love for the virgin Mary. The Fathers of the Church comment on this scene in different ways. The interpretation that St. Thomas Aquinas gives to Joseph's perplexity corresponds to the reality of the situation. He explains: "Joseph wanted to leave Mary not because he was suspicious but because, out of humility, he was afraid to live beside such great sanctity. That is why the angel told him, 'Do not be afraid'"

Joseph felt that he was nothing compared to the incomprehensible mystery that surrounded Mary. To his great sorrow, he determined to withdraw discretely. But he received from the angel confirmation that what had happened to her was God's work and that, besides, he too had a part, a mission, in the mystery: "You shall call his name Jesus." In Biblical language this expression meant that he was going to be Jesus' father according to the law. Knowing this, St. Joseph was filled with the joy of his vocation.

**Prayer:** O chaste spouse of most holy Mary, glorious St. Joseph: the trouble and anguish in your heart were great when you were perplexed over sending away your immaculate spouse; yet your joy was immense when the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to you by the angel.

By this sorrow and this joy we ask you to comfort our souls, now and in the sorrows of our final hour, with the joy of a good life and a holy death like your own in the company of Jesus and Mary.

## Second Sunday

It happened that a decree went out at this time from the emperor Augustus, enjoining that the whole world should be registered... and Joseph, being of David's clan and family, came up from the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, to David's city in Judaea, the city called Bethlehem, to give in his name there. With him was his espoused wife Mary, who was then in her pregnancy; and it was while they were still there that the time came for her delivery. She brought forth a son, her first-born, whom she wrapped in his swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. **(Luke 2; 1, 4-7)**

The mystery of the Incarnation is veiled in this humble scene. Joseph loves Jesus and suffers seeing him who he knows is the Word, the King of the universe, lying in a manger. He would give him anything and everything, yet he has nothing to give. The difference between what he would like to do and his poverty places his soul in great distress.

But then he grows calm. His sorrow recedes. He renews his dedication to God and carries out the divine command to love him with his whole heart, with his whole soul, and with his whole strength. He gives himself completely to God who lies in his arms.

St. Josemaría has written:

There is great simplicity about his birth. Our Lord comes without fanfare. No one knows about him. On Earth only Mary and Joseph share in the divine adventure. And then the shepherds who received the message from the angels. And later on, the wise men from the East. They were the only witnesses of this transcendental event which unites Heaven and Earth, God and man... The greatness of this Child who is God! His Father is the God who made Heaven and Earth; and there he is, in a manger, "because there was no room at the inn"—there was nowhere else for the Lord of all creation.

Our father and lord St. Joseph...apparently has a very minor role in the Epiphany—as usual. I can imagine him recollected in prayer, lovingly protecting the Son of God made man who has been entrusted to his paternal care. With the marvelous refinement of one who does not live for himself, the holy patriarch spends himself in silent prayer and effective service.... If you want my advice, which I have never tired of repeating these many years, it is to go to Joseph: "Go to Joseph." He will show us definite ways, both human and divine, to approach Jesus. And soon you will dare, as he did, "to take up in his arms, kiss, clothe and look after" this child God who has been born to us. As a homage of their veneration, the Magi offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus. But Joseph gave his whole youthful and loving heart.

**Prayer:** Blessed patriarch, glorious St. Joseph, chosen to serve as father of the Word made flesh, the sorrow which you felt when you saw the infant Jesus born into poverty was turned into heavenly joy when you heard the song of the angels and when you saw the glory of that resplendent night.

By this sorrow and this joy, we ask you to obtain for us that, after the course of this life, we hear angelic songs of praise and rejoice in the splendors of heavenly glory.

## Third Sunday

When eight days had passed, and the boy must be circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name which the angel had given him before ever he was conceived in the womb. **(Luke 2; 21)**

Joseph teaches us to deal confidently with the Word made flesh. St. Teresa of Avila reveals her great love for the patriarch. She tells us her personal experience:

I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph and commended myself earnestly to him; and I found that this father and lord delivered me both from this trouble and also from other and greater troubles concerning my honor and the loss of my soul, and that he gave me greater blessings than I could ask from him. I do not remember even now that I have ever asked anything from him which he has failed to grant. I am astonished at the great favors which God has bestowed on me through this blessed saint... I beg for the love of God that any- one who does not believe me will put what I say to the test, and he will see by experience what great advantages come from his commending himself to this glorious patriarch and having devotion to him. Those who practice prayer should have a special affection for him always. I do not know how anyone can think of the queen of the angels, during the time that she suffered so much with the child Jesus, without giving thanks to St. Joseph for the way he helped them. If anyone cannot find a master to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious saint as his master, and he will not go astray.

**Prayer:** Obedient follower of the law of God, glorious St. Joseph, the precious blood which flowed at the circumcision of the infant Jesus caused your heart to be pierced, but the name of Jesus gave new life and filled you with peace.

By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that by struggling against the slavery of sin we die in joy with the most holy name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips.

## Fourth Sunday

And when the time had come for purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him before the Lord there. It is written in God's law, that whatever male offspring opens the womb is to be reckoned sacred to the Lord; and so they must offer in sacrifice for him, as God's law commanded, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. At this time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem, an upright man of careful observance, who waited patiently for comfort to be brought to Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him; and by the Holy Spirit it had been revealed to him that he was not to meet death, until he had seen that Christ whom the Lord had anointed. He now came, led by the Spirit, into the temple; and when the child Jesus was brought in by his parents, to perform the custom which the law enjoined concerning him, Simeon too was able to take him in his arms. And he said, blessing God:

“Ruler of all, now do you let your servant go in peace, according to your word; for my own eyes have seen that saving power of yours which you have prepared in the sight of all nations. This is the light which shall give revelation to the Gentiles, this is the glory of your people Israel.”

The father and mother of the child were still wondering over all that was said of him, when Simeon blessed them, and said to his mother Mary,

“Behold, this child is destined to bring about the fall of many and the rise of many in Israel; to be a sign which men will refuse to acknowledge; and so the thoughts of many hearts shall be made manifest.” **Luke (2:22-35)**

Simeon tells them that Jesus will be a sign of contradiction, a standard which people will either follow or oppose. And he adds that the Son's sufferings will be intimately connected with his Mother's sorrows.

The sorrows of Jesus and Mary are made known. This revelation enables St. Joseph to glimpse more clearly the mystery of the Son's cross. It is impossible to guess the depth of his suffering. He always wanted to protect the child whom he loved with the greatest of fatherly love, for, as St. Pius X says, he is "the virgin father of Jesus." Now he understands with new insight all the Old Testament prophecies related to Christ's passion.

St. Joseph's mind and heart have been marked by the cross. As Mary offered her Son on the cross, so did St. Joseph. This offering constitutes the holy patriarch's greatest act of generosity. "It took all the generosity of his love to offer Jesus and Mary to God. It was his supreme sacrifice since he loved them immeasurably more than his own life."

**Prayer:** O glorious St. Joseph, model of faithful fulfillment of God's plans, the prophecy of Simeon about the future sufferings of Jesus and Mary brought mortal fear to you but at the same time filled you with blessed joy for the salvation and glorious resurrection which he prophesied would follow for numberless souls.

By this sorrow and this by obtain for us that we may be among those who through the merits of Jesus and the intercession of the Virgin Mother are to rise in glory.

## Fifth Sunday

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said, “Rise up, take with thee the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt; there remain, until I give thee word. For Herod will soon be making search for the child, to destroy him.”

He rose up, therefore, while it was still night, and took the child and his mother with him, and withdrew into Egypt, where he remained until the death of Herod, in fulfilment of the word which the Lord spoke by his prophet, I called my son out of Egypt.

St. John Chrysostom comments on this scene:

On hearing this, Joseph was not shocked, nor did he say: “This is strange. You yourself made it known not long ago that he would save his people, and now you are incapable even of saving him—we have to flee, to set out on a long journey and spend a long while in a strange place; that contradicts your promise.”

Joseph does not think in this way, for he is a man who trusts God. Nor does he ask when he will return, ever, though the angel left that time vague: “Stay there until I tell you to return.” Joseph does not object; he obeys and believes and joyfully accepts all the trials.

St. Joseph faithfully fulfills God's will.

St. Josemaría adds:

The Gospels give us a picture of St. Joseph as a remarkably sound man who was in no way frightened or scared of life. On the contrary, he faced up to problems, dealt with difficult situations and showed responsibility and initiative in whatever he was asked to do. I don't agree with the traditional picture of St. Joseph as an old man, even though it may have been prompted by a desire to emphasize the perpetual virginity of Mary. I see him as a strong young man, perhaps a few years older than our Lady, but in the prime of his life and work.

You don't have to wait to be old or lifeless to practice the virtue of chastity. Purity comes from love; and the strength and gaiety of youth are no obstacle for noble love. Joseph had a young heart and a young body when he married Mary, when he learned of the mystery of her divine motherhood, when he lived in her company, respecting the integrity God wished to give the world.

**Prayer:** Watchful guardian of the incarnate Son of God, glorious St. Joseph, you gave your toil in supporting and serving the Son of the Most High, especially when you were forced to flee into Egypt; yet you felt great joy having God himself always with you and seeing the idols of Egypt fall to the ground. By this sorrow and this joy obtain for us that we keep the infernal tyrant far away from us, especially by flight from occasions of sin, and that every idol of earthly affection fall from our hearts; and being wholly employed in the service of Jesus and Mary let us live and happily die for them alone.



## Sixth Sunday

As soon as Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream, and said: "Rise up, take with thee the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel; for those who sought the child's life are dead."

So he arose, and took the child and his mother with him, and came into the land of Israel. But, when he heard that Archelaus was king in Judaea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to return there; and so, receiving a warning in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee; where he came to live in a town called Nazareth, in fulfilment of what was said by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

**(Matthew 2;19-23)**

After the sorrow of not being allowed to go to Judea, St. Joseph experiences the joy of returning to Nazareth. His joy increases as the days of Christ's hidden life go by. The home life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph resembled that of their neighbors. Time was spent in family life. Sometimes Joseph would contemplate the Child "in the most pure arms of Mary, the blessed Mother. She held God veiled in flesh, and pressed her lips in sweet kisses on the flesh of the One who is true God and true man" (Paulinus of Aquileia). And St. Joseph, as F. de Eximensis so charmingly says, "showed delight and joy in providing for the infant Savior's needs, bathing him, reverently handling the small limbs of his precious body, changing his clothes, and doing other things that little children require."

Contemplating Joseph's life in the company of Jesus and Mary, we can make our own the words of a prayer composed by Pius XII:

St. Joseph, grant that according to your example we keep our eyes fixed on our Mother Mary, your most sweet spouse, who silently used to do her weaving in a corner of your workshop, with a smile on her lips. Grant that we not lose sight of Jesus, who busied himself with you at your carpenter's bench. Thus may we be able to lead a peaceful and holy life on earth, as a prelude to that eternally happy life which awaits us in Heaven for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer:** Glorious St. Joseph, you marveled to have the King of Heaven subject to your commands; though your consolation in leading him out of Egypt was troubled by fear of Archelaus, nevertheless, being reassured by the angel, you lived at Nazareth with Jesus and Mary.

By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that our hearts be freed from harmful fears, and that we have peace of conscience living in security with Jesus and Mary and dying in their company.

## Seventh Sunday

Every year, his parents used to go up to Jerusalem at the paschal feast. And when he was twelve years old, after going up to Jerusalem, as the custom was at the time of the feast, and completing the days of its observance, they set about their return home. But the boy Jesus, unknown to his parents, continued his stay in Jerusalem. And they, thinking that he was among their travelling companions, had gone a whole day's journey before they made enquiry for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances.

When they could not find him, they made their way back to Jerusalem in search of him, and it was only after three days that they found him. He was sitting in the temple, in the midst of those who taught there, listening to them and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were in amazement at his quick understanding and at the answers he gave. **(Luke 2; 41-47)**

We can easily understand Mary's and Joseph's sorrow on realizing that Jesus had disappeared. They were filled with apprehension as they searched for their son. Those sorrowful days were a premonition of the time that would intervene between Calvary and the Resurrection. Suddenly, they hear his dear voice. There he is! They are greatly comforted, and their pent-up emotions overflow with great joy. In this scene, St. Luke uses the word "parents" a number of times to designate the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. But this word has its deepest meaning when Mary tells her Son: "Behold, your father and I have been seeking you in sorrow." "Father." That was the word St. Joseph would love to hear most. He would smile and gaze fondly at Jesus when he called him "Father." As St. Josemaria wrote: "Joseph loved Jesus as a father loves his son and showed his love by giving him the best he had. Joseph, caring for the child as he had been commanded, made Jesus a craftsman, transmitting his own professional skill to him. So the neighbors of Nazareth will call Jesus both *faber* and *fabri filius*, the craftsman and the son of the crafts- man." Jesus worked in Joseph's workshop and by Joseph's side. Grace must have worked through Joseph, so that he was able to fulfill this task of the human upbringing of the Son of God!

"For Jesus must have resembled Joseph: in his way of working, in the features of his character, in his way of speaking. Jesus' realism, his eye for detail, the way he sat at table and broke bread, his preference for using everyday situations to give doctrine—all this reflects his childhood and the influence of Joseph."

Afterwards, the Gospel says that Jesus "went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart."

**Prayer:** Pattern of holiness, glorious St. Joseph, when you lost the Child Jesus through no fault of your own, with great sorrow you sought him for three days, until you rejoiced exceedingly in finding him in the temple among the doctors. By this sorrow and this joy, we earnestly ask you to prevent us from ever losing Jesus by mortal sin; but if through supreme misfortune we lose him, grant that we seek him with untiring sorrow, until we find him again and can live in friendship with him. Let us enjoy his presence in Heaven, and there with you to sing his divine mercies.

## Litany of St. Joseph

<p>Lord, have mercy on us.          Christ, have mercy on us.          Lord, have mercy on us.          Christ, hear us.          Christ, graciously hear us.          God the Father of heaven,  <b>have mercy on us.</b>          God the Son, Redeemer of the world,          God the Holy Spirit,          Holy Trinity, one God.</p> <p>Holy Mary,  <b>Pray for us.</b></p> <p>St. Joseph,          Illustrious son of David,          Splendor of Patriarchs,          Spouse of the Mother of God,          Chaste guardian of the Virgin,          Foster father of the Son of God,          Watchful defender of Christ,          Head of the Holy Family,          Joseph most just,          Joseph most chaste,          Joseph most prudent,          Joseph most courageous,          Joseph most obedient,          Joseph most faithful,          Mirror of patience,          Lover of poverty,</p>	<p>Model of all who work,          Glory of family life,          Guardian of virgins,          Mainstay of families,          Consolation of the afflicted,          Terror of demons,          Protector of holy Church,</p> <p>Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,  <b>Spare us, o Lord.</b>          Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,  <b>Graciously hear us, o Lord.</b>          Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,  <b>Have mercy on us.</b></p> <p><b>Let us pray.</b> oh God, who in your ineffable providence deigned to choose blessed Joseph as the spouse of your most holy Mother, grant, we pray, that we have him for our intercessor in Heaven, whom on Earth we venerate as our protector; Who live and reign forever and ever. Amen</p>
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## Patris Corde

*Apostolic letter of the Holy Father Pope Francis. On the 150<sup>th</sup> 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*".[1]

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 (cf. *Mt* 13:55), betrothed to Mary (cf. *Mt* 1:18; *Lk* 1:27). He was a "just man" (*Mt* 1:19), ever ready to carry out God's will as revealed to him in the Law (cf. *Lk* 2:22.27.39) and through four dreams (cf. *Mt* 1:20; 2:13.19.22). 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 (cf. *Lk* 2:8-20) and the Magi (cf. *Mt* 2:1-12), 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 (cf. 2:19-20), 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 (cf. *Lk* 2:22-35). To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt (cf. *Mt* 2:13-18). 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" (cf. *Jn* 7:52) 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 (cf. *Lk* 2:41-50).

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",[2] Venerable **Pius XII** proposed him as "Patron of Workers"[3] and **Saint John Paul II** as "Guardian of the Redeemer".[4] Saint Joseph is universally invoked as the "patron of a happy death".[5]

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. For, as Jesus says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (*Mt* 12:34). 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".[6] 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.

### 1. *A beloved father*

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”.[7]

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”.[8]

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 honour. Innumerable holy men and women were passionately devoted to him. Among them was Teresa of Avila, who chose him as her advocate and intercessor, had frequent recourse to him and received whatever graces she asked of him. Encouraged by her own experience, Teresa persuaded others to cultivate devotion to Joseph.[9]

Every prayer book contains prayers to Saint Joseph. Special prayers are offered to him each Wednesday and especially during the month of March, which is traditionally dedicated to him.[10]

Popular trust in Saint Joseph is seen in the expression “*Go to Joseph*”, which evokes the famine in Egypt, when the Egyptians begged Pharaoh for bread. He in turn replied: “Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do” (*Gen 41:55*). Pharaoh was referring to Joseph the son of Jacob, who was sold into slavery because of the jealousy of his brothers (cf. *Gen 37:11-28*) and who – according to the biblical account – subsequently became viceroy of Egypt (cf. *Gen 41:41-44*).

As a descendant of David (cf. *Mt 1:16-20*), from whose stock Jesus was to spring according to the promise made to David by the prophet Nathan (cf. *2 Sam 7*), and as the spouse of Mary of Nazareth, Saint Joseph stands at the crossroads between the Old and New Testaments.

### 2. *A tender and loving father*

Joseph saw Jesus grow daily “in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour” (*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,[11] 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. Thus Saint Paul could say: “To keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness’” (*2 Cor 12:7-9*).

Since this is part of the entire economy of salvation, we must learn to look upon our weaknesses with tender mercy.<sup>[12]</sup>

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.

### 3. An obedient father

As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples, were considered a way for him to make his will known.<sup>[13]</sup>

Joseph was deeply troubled by Mary’s mysterious pregnancy. He did not want to “expose her to public disgrace”,<sup>[14]</sup> so he decided to “dismiss her quietly” (*Mt 1:19*).

In the first dream, an angel helps him resolve his grave dilemma: “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (*Mt 1:20-21*). Joseph’s response was immediate: “When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him” (*Mt 1:24*). Obedience made it possible for him to surmount his difficulties and spare Mary.

In the second dream, the angel tells Joseph: “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him” (*Mt 2:13*). Joseph did not hesitate to obey, regardless of the hardship involved: “He got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod” (*Mt 2:14-15*).

In Egypt, Joseph awaited with patient trust the angel’s notice that he could safely return home. In a third dream, the angel told him that those who sought to kill the child were dead and ordered him to rise, take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel (cf. *Mt 2:19-20*). Once again, Joseph promptly obeyed. “He got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel” (*Mt 2:21*).

During the return journey, “when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream” – now for the fourth time – “he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth” (*Mt 2:22-23*).

The evangelist Luke, for his part, tells us that Joseph undertook the long and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered in his family's town of origin in the census of the Emperor Caesar Augustus. There Jesus was born (cf. *Lk* 2:7) and his birth, like that of every other child, was recorded in the registry of the Empire. Saint Luke is especially concerned to tell us that Jesus' parents observed all the prescriptions of the Law: the rites of the circumcision of Jesus, the purification of Mary after childbirth, the offering of the firstborn to God (cf. 2:21-24).<sup>[15]</sup>

In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

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,<sup>[16]</sup> 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."<sup>[17]</sup>

#### 4. *An accepting father*

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".<sup>[18]</sup>

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.

The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that *explains*, but *accepts*. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning. We can almost hear an echo of the impassioned reply of Job to his wife, who had urged him to rebel against the evil he endured: "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" (*Job* 2:10).

Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.

Jesus' appearance in our midst is a gift from the Father, which makes it possible for each of us to be reconciled to the flesh of our own history, even when we fail to understand it completely.

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 (*etiam illud quod malum dicitur*)”.[19] 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.[20] 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).

### 5. A creatively courageous father

If the first stage of all true interior healing is to accept our personal history and embrace even the things in life that we did not choose, we must now add another important element: creative courage. This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties. In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had.

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 (cf. Lk 2:6-7). 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 (cf. Mt 2:13-14).

A superficial reading of these stories can often give the impression that the world is at the mercy of the strong and mighty, but the “good news” of the Gospel consists in showing that, for all the arrogance and violence of worldly powers, God always finds a way to carry out his saving plan. So too, our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence.

If at times God seems not to help us, surely this does not mean that we have been abandoned, but instead are being trusted to plan, to be creative, and to find solutions ourselves.

That kind of creative courage was shown by the friends of the paralytic, who lowered him from the roof in order to bring him to Jesus (cf. Lk 5:17-26). Difficulties did not stand in the way of those friends’ boldness and persistence. They were convinced that Jesus could heal the man, and “finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you’” (vv. 19-20). Jesus recognized the creative faith with which they sought to bring their sick friend to him.



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.

At the end of every account in which Joseph plays a role, the Gospel tells us that he gets up, takes the child and his mother, and does what God commanded him (cf. *Mt* 1:24; 2:14.21). Indeed, Jesus and Mary his Mother are the most precious treasure of our faith.<sup>[21]</sup>

In the divine plan of salvation, the Son is inseparable from his Mother, from Mary, who “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son until she stood at the cross”.<sup>[22]</sup>

We should always consider whether we ourselves are protecting Jesus and Mary, for they are also mysteriously entrusted to our own responsibility, care and safekeeping. 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 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. In this sense, Saint Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history, even as Mary’s motherhood is reflected in the motherhood of the Church.<sup>[23]</sup> 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. Consequently, the Church cannot fail to show a special love for the least of our brothers and sisters, for Jesus showed a particular concern for them and personally identified with them. From Saint Joseph, we must learn that same care and responsibility. We must learn to love the child and his mother, to love the sacraments and charity, to love the Church and the poor. Each of these realities is always *the child and his mother*.

#### 6. A working father

An aspect of Saint Joseph that has been emphasized from the time of the first social Encyclical, [Pope Leo XIII’s \*Rerum Novarum\*](#), is his relation to work. 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 labour.

In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue, and unemployment at times reaches record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which Saint Joseph is an exemplary patron.

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!

### 7. *A father in the shadows*

The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*,<sup>[24]</sup> tells the story of Saint Joseph's life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses' words to Israel: "In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled" (*Deut 1:31*). In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life.<sup>[25]</sup>

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 centre 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.

When fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, new and unexpected vistas open up. 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*).

In every exercise of our fatherhood, we should always keep in mind that it has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a "sign" pointing to a greater fatherhood. In a way, we are all like Joseph: a shadow of the heavenly

Father, who “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt 5:45). And a shadow that follows his Son.

\* \* \*

“Get up, take the child and his mother” (Mt 2:13), God told Saint Joseph.

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<sup>[26]</sup> and Moses<sup>[27]</sup>, 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”.<sup>[28]</sup> 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).<sup>[29]</sup> 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!”<sup>[30]</sup>

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.

Franciscus

[1] *Lk* 4:22; *Jn* 6:42; cf. *Mt* 13:55; *Mk* 6:3.

[2] S. RITUUM CONGREGATIO, *Quemadmodum Deus* (8 December 1870): ASS 6 (1870-71), 194.

[3] Cf. *Address to ACLI on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Worker* (1 May 1955): AAS 47 (1955), 406.

[4] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (15 August 1989): AAS 82 (1990), 5-34.

[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1014.

[6] *Meditation in the Time of Pandemic* (27 March 2020): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 March 2020, p. 10.

[7] *In Matthaenum Homiliae*, V, 3: PG 57, 58.

[8] *Homily* (19 March 1966): *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, IV (1966), 110.

[9] Cf. *Autobiography*, 6, 6-8.

[10] Every day, for over forty years, following Lauds I have recited a prayer to Saint Joseph taken from a nineteenth-century French prayer book of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary. It expresses devotion and trust, and even poses a certain challenge to Saint Joseph: "Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. 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. Amen."

[11] Cf. *Deut* 4:31; *Ps* 69:16; 78:38; 86:5; 111:4; 116:5; *Jer* 31:20.

[12] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), **88**, **288**: AAS 105 (2013), 1057, 1136-1137.

[13] Cf. *Gen* 20:3; 28:12; 31:11.24; 40:8; 41:1-32; *Num* 12:6; *1 Sam* 3:3-10; *Dan* 2, 4; *Job* 33:15.

[14] In such cases, provisions were made even for stoning (cf. *Deut* 22:20-21).

[15] Cf. *Lev* 12:1-8; *Ex* 13:2.

[16] Cf. *Mt* 26:39; *Mk* 14:36; *Lk* 22:42.

[17] SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (15 August 1989), 8: AAS 82 (1990), 14.

[18] *Homily at Mass and Beatifications, Villavicencio, Colombia* (8 September 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1061.

[19] *Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate*, 3.11: PL 40, 236.

[20] Cf. *Deut* 10:19; *Ex* 22:20-22; *Lk* 10:29-37.

[21] Cf. S. RITUUM CONGREGATIO, *Quemadmodum Deus* (8 December 1870): ASS 6 (1870-1871), 193; BLESSED PIUS IX, Apostolic Letter *Inclytum Patriarcham* (7 July 1871): l.c., 324-327.

[22] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

[23] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 963-970.

[24] Original edition: *Cień Ojca*, Warsaw, 1977.

[25] Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 7-8: AAS 82 (1990), 12-16.

[26] Cf. *Gen* 18:23-32.

[27] Cf. *Ex* 17:8-13; 32:30-35.

[28] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 42.

[29] Cf. *1 Cor* 11:1; *Phil* 3:17; *1 Thess* 1:6.

[30] *Confessions*, VIII, 11, 27: PL 32, 761; X, 27, 38: PL 32, 795.

## Quamquam Pluries

*Encyclical letter of His Holiness Leo XIII on the Holy Rosary and the Patronage of St. Joseph, August 15, 1889.*

Although we have already ordered on several occasions that special prayers be offered throughout the world and that Catholic interests be recommended to God in a more earnest manner, let it not seem surprising to anyone if at this time we judge that this duty again be called to mind. In difficult times, particularly when it seems that the powers of darkness are able to make daring attempts to ruin Christianity, the Church has always been accustomed to call humbly on God, her founder and champion, with greater earnestness and perseverance. In such times she also has sought help from the saints who dwell in Heaven, and principally from the august virgin Mother of God, by whose patronage she knows that support in her trials chiefly will be afforded: for the fruit of such pious prayers and of hope in divine bounty will sooner or later become manifest. Now, venerable brethren, you have learned to understand the present age, hardly less calamitous to the Christian commonwealth than the very worst the world has hitherto experienced. Around us we behold faith, the foundation of all Christian virtues, perishing almost everywhere; charity growing cold; youth growing up corrupted in morals and in doctrine; the Church of Jesus Christ attacked on every side with violence and rage; and a vicious war waged against the papacy. We behold, in fact, the very groundwork of religion overthrown by assaults that increase in violence from day to day. As for the depths of this catastrophe of our age and the ulterior schemes of agitators, you yourselves know more than it behooves us to put into words.

Amid such difficult and lamentable conditions, the evils of our day have grown too great for human remedies. The only course left is to seek a cure through divine power.

### The rosary in the month of October

Because of this, therefore, we consider it advisable to call on the piety of the faithful that they implore the help of Almighty God with greater earnestness and perseverance. But particularly, with the month of October now approaching—which elsewhere we have decreed should be dedicated to the virgin Mary of the rosary—we urgently exhort that during the present year the entire month be spent in the greatest possible devotion and piety. We know that a refuge is ever ready for us in the maternal bounty of the Virgin; and with no less certainty we know that our hopes in her are not in vain. Since she has come a hundred times to help the Christian commonwealth in times of need, why should we doubt that she will give new examples of her power and favor provided that humble and continued public prayers be offered? Assuredly, we believe that she will help us all the more wonderfully the longer the period is during which she desires us to implore her.

### Special recourse to St. Joseph

But still another proposal remains to be made, venerable brethren, well aware as we are that you will diligently cooperate with us here as you have always done in the past. In order, then, that God show himself more willing to grant our petitions and that he help his Church more promptly and bountifully in proportion as more numerous voices are raised to him, we have deemed it highly expedient that the faithful become accustomed to implore with special piety and trust the help of the virgin Mother of God, associating with this devotion their supplication for the help of Blessed Joseph, her most chaste spouse. Indubitable evidence exists for us to conclude that such an approach will be desirable and pleasing to the Virgin herself.

## **Devotion to St. Joseph**

In this connection, concerning which we are about to make our first public pronouncement, we are aware that the piety of the people is not only favorably inclined but is advancing, as it were, along a course already entered on. For in times past, the endeavor of Roman Pontiffs has been to extend the veneration of Joseph gradually further and further, and to propagate it widely. In these latter days moreover, we have seen that same veneration taking on everywhere unquestionably new stature, particularly after our predecessor, Pius IX of happy memory, in conformity with the requests of numerous bishops, had declared this holy patriarch the patron of the universal Church. But precisely because it is highly advantageous that veneration for him be deeply rooted in Catholic morals and practices, we desire that the faithful be moved thereto no less by our own voice and authority.

### **Reasons for his patronage**

There are special reasons why Blessed Joseph should be explicitly named the patron of the Church and why the Church in turn should expect much from his patronage and guardianship. For he, indeed, was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ. >From this arises all his dignity, grace, holiness, and glory.

The dignity of the Mother of God is certainly so sublime that nothing can surpass it; but nonetheless, since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures.

For marriage is the closest possible union and relationship, whereby each spouse mutually participates in the goods of the other. Consequently, since God gave Joseph as a spouse to the Virgin, he assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself.

Likewise, Joseph alone stands out in august dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by divine appointment, and in the opinion of men was his father. As a consequence, the Word of God was modestly obedient to Joseph, was attentive to his commands, and paid to him every honor that children should render their parents.

### **St. Joseph's duties**

From this double dignity, moreover (of husband and father), such duties arose as are prescribed by nature for the head of a household, so that Joseph was at once the legitimate and the natural guardian, preserver, and defender of the divine household over which he presided. These duties he fulfilled as long as he lived. Zealously he watched over his spouse and her divine offspring with the most ardent love and constant solicitude. By his labor he regularly provided for both of them such necessities of life as food and clothing. In seeking a place of refuge he warded off the danger to their lives which had been engendered by the jealousy of a king. Amid the inconveniences of the journey and the bitterness of exile he continually showed himself the companion, the helper, the consoler of the Virgin and of Jesus.

Moreover, the divine household, which Joseph governed as with paternal authority, contained the beginnings of the new Church. The Virgin most holy is the mother of all Christians since she is the mother of Jesus and since she gave birth to them on the mount of Calvary amid the unspeakable sufferings of the redeemer. Jesus is, as it were, the firstborn of all Christians, who are his brothers by adoption and redemption. >From these considerations we conclude that the blessed patriarch must regard all the multitude of Christians who constitute the Church as confided to his care in a certain special manner.

This is his numberless family, scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority because he is the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ. Thus it is conformable to reason and in every way becoming to Blessed Joseph that, as once it was his sacred trust to guard with watchful care the family of Nazareth no matter what befell, so now by virtue of his heavenly patronage he is in turn to protect and defend the Church of Christ.

### **The ancient Joseph and the new**

The statements made here, as you will readily perceive, are confirmed by what we shall further set forth. Conformably, namely, with the Church's sacred liturgy, the opinion has been held by not a few Fathers of the Church that the ancient Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, foreshadowed both in person and in office our own St. Joseph.

By his glory he was a prototype of the grandeur of the future guardian of the Holy Family. In addition to the circumstances that both men bore the same name—a name by no means devoid of significance—it is well known to you that they resembled each other closely in other ways. Notable in this regard are the facts that the earlier Joseph received special favor and benevolence from his lord and that, when placed by him as ruler over his household, fortune and prosperity accrued abundantly to the master's house because of Joseph.

There was even a more evident similarity when by the king's order he was given supreme power over the entire kingdom. When calamity brought a deficient harvest and a scarcity of grain, he exercised such excellent foresight in behalf of the Egyptians and their neighbors that the king decreed he should be styled "savior of the world." Thus in that ancient patriarch we may recognize the distinct image of St. Joseph. As the one was prosperous and successful in the domestic concerns of his lord and in an exceptional manner was set over the whole kingdom, so the other, destined to guard the name of Christ, could well be chosen to defend and protect the Church, which is truly the house of God and the kingdom of God on Earth.

### **St. Joseph, our model**

This is the reason (namely, Joseph's position as head of the Holy Family) why all the faithful of all places and ranks commend and confide themselves to the guardianship of Blessed Joseph. In Joseph fathers of families have an eminent model of paternal care and providence. Married couples find in him the perfect image of love, harmony, and conjugal loyalty. Virgins can look to him for their pattern and as the guardian of virginal integrity. With the picture of Joseph set before them, those of noble lineage can learn to preserve their dignity even under adverse circumstances. Let the wealthy understand what goods they should chiefly seek and earnestly amass, while with no less special right the needy, the laborers, and all possessed of modest means should fly to his protection and learn to imitate him. Joseph was of royal blood; he was espoused to the greatest and the holiest of all women; he was the father, as was supposed, of the Son of God. Nevertheless he devoted



his life to labor, and by his hands and skill produced whatever was necessary for those dependent on him.

Therefore, if truth be sought, the condition of those reduced to slender means is not disgraceful. The labor of craftsmen, far from being dishonorable, can by virtue be greatly ennobled. Joseph, content with what was his own, bore with calm and dignified spirit the circumstances necessarily connected with his means of livelihood. This was conformable to the example of his son who, having accepted the form of a servant while being Lord of all, willingly subjected himself to the utmost indigence and poverty.

Considerations such as these will serve to encourage and give peace of mind to the poor and all those who live by the labor of their hands. Nevertheless, although it is permitted them to rise from a condition of want to one of well-being, provided violation of justice is excluded, yet both justice and reason forbid the destruction of that order which divine providence has ordained. On the contrary, it is foolish to have recourse to violence, and to seek to better existing conditions by sedition and revolt. In most cases these produce only greater evils than those which they were meant to cure. If the poor wish to act wisely, let them not believe the promises of seditious men, but let them trust in the example and patronage of St. Joseph, and in the maternal care of the Church, which is most solicitous for their welfare.



**We want to help you become a saint every day, from right where you are and share Christ with others.**

Have you ever tasted the beauty of God’s presence? It’s natural to want to experience his closeness more often—as often as you can! As St. Josemaría Escrivá said: *“Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we never find Him.”*

We can help you discover and grow closer to God every day in your work, family life, and other ordinary activities. We want you to become a saint and everything we publish and do is directed towards that goal.

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