

Mysteries of Saint Joseph



On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, 2020, Pope Francis proclaimed a ‘Year of St Joseph.’ The Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (‘With a Father’s Heart’) provides a beautiful meditation on the place of St Joseph in the life of the Holy Family and in the Church. The mysteries in this booklet were proposed by Fr Richard Peers, SMMS, and are designed to be used with the traditional prayers of the rosary – though others may also be used.

“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...

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.

(Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*)

Cover image: *San Jose en el Rio Grande*

William Hart McNichols

A Traditional Novena Prayer to Saint Joseph

O Saint Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interests and desires.

O Saint Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your Divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ our Lord, so that, having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most Loving of Fathers.

O Saint Joseph, I never weary contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms; I dare not approach while He reposes near your heart. Press Him in my name and kiss his fine head for me and ask him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.

Saint Joseph, – pray for me. [*Mention your intention*] Amen.

I. Joseph descended from David

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham... So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

(Mt 1. 1, 16-17)

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"

(Ps. 89. 3-4)

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

(Is. 11. 1-4)

When the soil was bare and barren
and the hard ground unforgiving,
the root drank deep and dreamed of light.
Hidden, silent, ceaselessly wending
to silver dew and morning sun,
the root made its persistent path.

Joseph was the child of the root,
heir of fallen kings, wayward sons
and foreign women who refused
to hide their faith or lose their name.
He took the tangled growth of time
and cleared a way for hope to bloom.

(Fr Steven Shakespeare, SMMS)

II. Joseph the Just Man

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

(Mt. 1. 18-19)

Do good, O Lord, to those who are good,
and to those who are upright in their hearts.

(Ps. 125. 4)

Saint Joseph was an ordinary sort of man on whom God relied to do great things. He did exactly what the Lord wanted him to do, in each and every event that went to make up his life. That is why Scripture praises Joseph as “a just man.” In Hebrew a just man means a good and faithful servant of God, someone who fulfils the divine will, or who is honourable and charitable toward his neighbour. So a just man is someone who loves God and proves his love by keeping God’s commandments and directing his whole life towards the service of his brothers, his fellow men.

(St Josemaría Escrivá)

It would have been easy
to pick up the stone,
to feel its weight,
to let it fly.

Joseph did not condemn,
or follow the script
of wounded pride
and shaming lie.

He was just to his love,
who one day would sing
of fallen thrones,
the poor raised high.

(Fr Steven Shakespeare, SMMS)

III. Joseph following a dream takes Mary as his wife

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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

(Mt. 1. 20-24)

Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made. You will save her, and she will go with you. I presume that you will have children by her, and they will be as brothers to you. Now say no more!’ When Tobias heard the words of Raphael and learned that she was his kinswoman, related through his father’s lineage, he loved her very much, and his heart was drawn to her.

(Tobit 6. 18)

Joseph gave himself to sleep,
gave himself to angel-sight.
The veil of this world was rent
and God whispered in the night.

He dreamed of the Spirit's shade,
of his Mary's hidden life.
He looked at her with fearless eyes
and thanked God for such a wife.

(Fr Steven Shakespeare, SMMS)

IV. Joseph warned in a dream takes Mary and Jesus into Egypt

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “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.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

(Mt. 2.13-15)

Think also of that great patriarch sold in Egypt, and know that he had not only the name, but also chastity, innocence and grace. That Joseph, sold and led into Egypt due to the envy of his brothers, was a figure of Christ Who was sold; this Joseph, fleeing from the hatred of Herod, brought Christ into Egypt. The first was sold by his brethren, out of envy, and was led into Egypt, thus prefiguring our Saviour’s being sold; the second Joseph, that he might avoid Herod’s envy, led Jesus into Egypt. The first was faithful to his master, and treated his wife with honour; the second, too, was the most chaste guardian of his bride, the Virgin Mother of his Lord. To the first was given the understanding and interpretation of dreams; to the second, the knowledge of, and participation in, the heavenly mysteries. The first laid up stores of corn, not for himself, but for all the people; the

second received the living Bread that came down from Heaven, and kept It both for himself and for the whole world.

(Bernard of Clairvaux, *Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 2)

How happy and blessed are they whom you [St Joseph] love and whom you take under your protection!

(Bl. William Joseph Chaminade)

Wherever exiles flee in fear,
with men of violence at their heels
and only uncertainty ahead:
look to the side of the road.

There, walking with them, you may see
a man driven by dreams and hope,
holding the hand of his pregnant wife,
sheltering his displaced God.

(Fr Steven Shakespeare, SMMS)

V. Joseph the Carpenter

He came to his home town and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter's son?

(Mt. 13. 54-55)

Truly, I doubt not that the angels, wondering and adoring, came thronging in countless multitudes to that poor workshop to admire the humility of him who guarded that dear and divine child, and laboured at his carpenter's trade to support the son and the mother who were committed to his care.

(St Francis de Sales)

Work is, as has been said, an obligation, that is to say, a duty, on the part of man... Man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society he belongs to, the country of which he is a child, and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him in the succession of history.

(St. John Paul II, *On Human Work*, 16)

He feels close to God
in this work of making,
of crafting true
the mortise and tenon of the world
He makes things of use,
carves stone of home and hearth.
His hands think deep,
follow the hidden grain of the world.

Beside him, a child
gathers fallen pieces,
holds in his palm
broken fragments of an untold world.

Joseph works and dreams
of roots that lie hidden,
ready to grow
into trees of healing for the world.

(Fr Steven Shakespeare, SMMS)

Pope Francis' Prayer for the Year of Saint Joseph

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.

Hymn to Saint Joseph

Joseph true servant, trusted by the Father,
from whom Christ learnt a human Father's kindness,
pray we may know and reverence God at all times
in the defenceless.

Joseph, true workman, teaching Word incarnate
patience and pride in honest labour finished,
show us who work, God's plan for skill and service
in every calling.

Joseph true saint, your Sanctity unsought for
won in you doubt and suffering and struggle,
pray we keep faith in every tribulation
till God shines clearly.

V. This is a wise and faithful servant.

R. Whom the master placed in charge of his household.

God our Father,
you willed that your Son,
under Joseph's authority,
should experience daily life and human work.
By the prayers of Saint Joseph,
help us to sanctify the present moment,
to be concerned for our neighbour
and be faithful to the tasks of every day.
Hear us, through Christ our Lord.

Saint Joseph, husband of Mary: **Pray for us.**

Saint Joseph, patron of workers: **Pray for us.**

Saint Joseph, the craftsman: **Pray for us.**

