
Rejoice in the Lord



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Pope Francis proclaims the Year of Saint Joseph

December 8, 2020, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, was the 150th anniversary of Pope Pius IX's designation of St. Joseph as "Patron of the Catholic Church." In recognition of this anniversary, Pope Francis has proclaimed 2021 as the Year of Saint Joseph.

There are many reasons why this new year warrants the special patronage of Joseph, the righteous man who quietly obeyed the instructions given to him by God's messenger on at least four occasions. By reading carefully the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart), we can see the wisdom of this decision. St. Joseph is a man for all seasons, but his intercession and example are especially needed in troubled times like these.

The full text of *Patris Corde* is available below. I urge you to read it. It is a very beautiful letter written by the pope "with a father's heart" to all of us, his daughters and sons in Christ.

Using our Holy Father's seven descriptions of the fatherhood of St. Joseph, I would like to offer some of my own reflections on why I think the pope's proclamation of the Year of St. Joseph is an especially appropriate, and powerful, response to the opportunities and challenges of our time.

1. **A beloved father.** "The greatness of St. Joseph is that he was the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus." We know that Joseph was a good carpenter, a responsible citizen and a righteous man. But his greatness is found in his relationships not in his ambition or

achievements. Joseph is a witness to the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and courage. He shows us how we should live in a world that too often encourages us to live only for ourselves often at the expense of those who are weaker and more vulnerable than we are.

St. Joseph, teach us to care for those we love as you cared deeply for Mary and Jesus, and for your friends, neighbors and all members of God's family.

2. **A tender and loving father.** "In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God." Tenderness is a concept that Pope Francis uses frequently to describe God's merciful love for all of us, His children. St. Joseph reflects the fatherhood of God—just as Mary represents the fullest possible expression of God's maternal care for His creation. There is nothing harsh or indifferent in the portrait of St. Joseph we have been given by the evangelists, especially Matthew and Luke. At the same time, there is nothing inappropriately "soft" or weak in Joseph's character.

St. Joseph, we pray, help us to be tender, loving and strong as we face the difficult situations and challenging circumstances of today.

3. **An obedient father.** "In every situation, Joseph declared his own 'fiat,' like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane." In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray "Thy will be done," to be obedient to our Father in heaven and, by extension, to all who have legitimate authority over us. St. Joseph always said 'yes' to God's will no matter how confusing or unreasonable it seemed at the time.

St. Joseph, show us the way to be the obedient sons and daughters of God our Father. Encourage us to say 'yes' as you did and to act without hesitation or fear in carrying out God's commands.

4. **An accepting father.** "Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence toward women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man." Joseph's acceptance of Mary, and of his supportive role in the history of our salvation, has much to say to us today. Acceptance doesn't come easily to us who are often "set in our ways." Joseph shows us how to respect, and care for, those who are different from us in any way.

St. Joseph, you learned to accept God's will even when you didn't understand it. Teach us to be women and men who respect one another, accepting our differences while always seeking to be united with each other and with God.

5. **A creatively courageous father.** "Joseph was the true 'miracle' by which God saved the child and his mother. God acted by trusting in Joseph's creative courage." Joseph's courage in the face of scandal, murderous threats and the displacement of his family is a sign of his



*(Catholic Cemeteries photo/
St. Joseph stained glass
window at St. Gertrude
Cemetery and Mausoleum
in Colonia, NJ.)*

confidence in God and his determination to protect his family come what may. Pope Francis writes about the “creative courage” of St. Joseph because in every threatening circumstance he was required to improvise and to make the best of the situation he found himself in.

St. Joseph, inspire us to be creatively courageous in dealing with the devastating and unprecedented consequences of the pandemic we are experiencing now. Help us to find creative solutions to the baffling problems of our time—confident that God’s grace is always sufficient.

6. **A working father.** “St. Joseph was a carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family. From him, Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one’s own labor.” Given the difficulties we face today with joblessness and a severely challenged economy, St. Joseph “the worker” is an important reminder that work is essentially connected to human dignity.

St. Joseph, we implore your intercession for every individual and family who is suffering today because of unemployment and our struggling economy. Help us to find new ways to give every worker the chance to help make a productive contribution to his or her family and community.

7. **A father in the shadows.** “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.” Joseph was not an “absent father,” but he was also not controlling or overprotective. Today we need St. Joseph’s example more than ever as fathers struggle to overcome stereotypes and establish themselves as strong but sensitive models for their children.

The Year of Saint Joseph is a time to heal the deep wounds in our society by calling attention to the dignity and human rights of every man, woman and child. It’s a time to rebuild our economy according to principles and policies that truly serve our people. Finally, this year is a time for building bridges and reconciling our differences as individuals, families and communities who have too long been divided—politically, economically and socially.

May this great saint, the Patron of the Catholic Church, be close to us this year and always as we work to imitate his virtues and incorporate into our lives his tender, obedient and creatively courageous spirituality. St. Joseph, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Statement of Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, on violence in U.S. Capitol

January 7, 2021

As I watched the appalling chaos in the U.S. Capitol yesterday, I witnessed an icon of democracy occupied and hostage to mob rule. The procession of violent images was deeply troubling. Particularly disheartening is that this event unfolded amid a deadly pandemic, a terrible plague that our troubled nation should face in solidarity.

The events of yesterday are a graphic exposure of the deep and advancing polarization in American society that has festered for years. This divisiveness disregards faith, justice and the rule of law. As shocking as it may be to glimpse how disordered our nation has become, the terrible truth is that we are not immune from further moral and social decay.

If we wish to claim it, Catholics have a legacy that is crucial to the healing of the nation. Our faith includes a commitment to mutual respect, dialogue, and the principles on which our democracy is based. We must come together as one nation under God, who loves and bestows dignity on all. The person with whom you may vehemently disagree is also a beloved child of God. For two millennia, our community has tried to live the teachings of Jesus. We are at our best when we put others first, with the common good as our guiding star.

Let us join with all people of good will in a choice for peace during this arduous time. We pray for our Savior's protection and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, Prince of Peace, teach us the way forward. Our Lady of the Americas, pray for us.

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Selections from the Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart)



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

Now, one hundred and fifty years after his proclamation as Patron of the Catholic Church by Blessed Pius IX (8 December 1870), I would like to share some personal reflections on this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience. 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..."

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...

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....

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

We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion.

For the complete text of the Holy Father's Apostolic letter, visit
www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html

My Prayer for You

Let us now make our prayer to St. Joseph in the words of Pope Francis:

*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.*



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

