**Patris Corde:**


**Patris Corde Summary and Reflection Questions**

**Reflection on the Introduction**

Pope Francis’s apostolic letter, *Patris Corde* or (“with a father's heart”), refers to the deep love that God the Father has for us, exemplified through St. Joseph. On this, the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis expresses how St. Joseph knows the love that God the Father has for him. This knowledge of God’s love then calls St. Joseph to share God’s love with his family and his neighbors. We are all called to know the love God has for us by cultivating a deeper relationship with God through prayer. With this understanding, we are called to reflect this love through our charitable works to our family and neighbors. In this reflection on the apostolic letter, we will dive deeper into St. Joseph’s fatherly heart and reflect on how it applies to our life.

- What does Joseph’s relationship with Jesus reveal about our relationship with God the Father?
- Have you thought of St. Joseph having a prominent role in the history of salvation? Why or why not?
- Read the Finding of Jesus in the Temple (LK 2:41-52). How do you think Joseph felt when he realized Jesus was missing? How do you think God feels when we are “found in the temple” after confession?
1. Reflection: A beloved father

St. Joseph was the foster father of Jesus and husband of Mary. His spousal relationship and fatherhood were unique and special in all human history because, by fulfilling these roles, St. Joseph participated in a very special way in the salvific work of God. St. Joseph, aware of his unworthiness, tried his best to lead a life of humility and of love of Jesus and Mary. They must have been delighted to have had such a caring and gentle protector. St. Joseph took his vocation very seriously, which allowed him to turn “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.” St. Joseph’s intercession is powerful, and devotion to him are wide-spread and familiar to many Christians. St. Joseph was given the opportunity to humbly witness how both the Old and New Testament came together in the person of Jesus, his God and his son.

- St. Joseph placed himself at the service of the entire plan of salvation. How are we called to the service of the entire plan of salvation?
- How can we cultivate a devotion to St. Joseph?
- What does “go to Joseph” mean in our life?

2. Reflection: A tender and loving father

As a man of great faith, St. Joseph must have learned how to be a good father from God through his Jewish tradition. Jesus must have experienced God’s tender love radiating to Him from St. Joseph. The world today may see tenderness as something that is not desirable because it may appear to imply weakness and frailty. However, in the genuine tender love of St. Joseph
for Mary and Jesus, we see a humble man who knew himself. He had fears and confusions, but he chose to keep loving Jesus and Mary because he knew only God could know the full picture of everything and what was best for him. St. Joseph always chose to love rather than to judge and accuse. We should learn from him to treat others and ourselves with tender love and mercy.

- How are we being called to reflect the tender love of God in our life?
- When we see the weaknesses of others how do we respond? Is this an area for growth for us?
- Where in our life are we afraid of letting God work? Why?

3. Reflection: An obedient father

God revealed His plan to St. Joseph through dreams, and even when he didn’t understand them clearly, St. Joseph obeyed and did the hard work, such as bringing his family to Egypt to protect Jesus. The Scriptures record angels of God meeting Joseph in four dreams to guide him on how best to serve the Holy Family when it was in danger. St. Joseph immediately followed the instructions to go to Egypt and later to return in order to keep Jesus safe. St. Joseph must have had a deep and intimate relationship with God, which made him never hesitate to obey God's will. Jesus in his humanity must have learned a lot from St. Joseph, especially to be obedient to the Father, which led Him to Calvary.

- Are we fully obedient to the Catholic Church’s teachings? If not, what are the areas we need to pray and learn more about?
- How does humility help us be more obedient to God?
- How does obedience help us surmount the difficulties of our life?
4. **Reflection: An accepting father**

St. Joseph was able to accept other people for who they were, especially in his acceptance of Mary, even though he was not able to comprehend the whole situation of her pregnancy. St. Joseph teaches us to hold on to God’s promise to His people and entrust everything into God’s hands, because he knew God can even make good out of evil. St. Joseph also teaches us how to accept reality with all its hardships and difficulties, and then act and take responsibility. We learn from St. Joseph to not rely on ourselves but instead to ask for God’s strength to transform every moment of our life.

- Where in our life are we called to reconcile with our own history and ask for God’s healing touch?
- How can we accept and welcome others as they are and help bring them closer to Jesus Christ?
- What are some realizations about ourselves, our relationships with God and with others that we have had during difficult times, such as this time of the pandemic?

5. **Reflection: A creatively courageous father**

God’s ways are not our ways. Cooperating with divine providence, especially in dealing with difficulties, requires creative courage. When difficulties arise, we can either give up or somehow engage the difficulty. St. Joseph embodies this when he has to be creative to keep Jesus and Mary safe from Herod. God comes to St. Joseph in dreams warning of dangers, but then trusts in St. Joseph’s ability to keep Jesus and Mary safe. At times we may feel that God is not helping us, but this does not mean that we have been abandoned by God. God is instead trusting us to plan,
to be creative and to find solutions ourselves. St. Joseph was always charged with protecting Jesus and Mary. Following his example, we too are charged to protect them through our outreach to those who are poor, needy, suffering and dying.

- Where in our life do we need to trust in God’s divine providence to turn a problem into a possibility?
- Read the healing of a paralytic (LK 5:17-26). How can we have a creative faith and bring those who are sick to Jesus Christ?
- How can we show a special love of, a particular concern for, and personally identify with the least of our brothers and sisters?

6. **Reflection: A working father**

Working with St. Joseph as a carpenter would have been a tangible witness to Jesus of the dignity and joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one’s own labor. Work allows one to use one’s talents and abilities in the service of others. It can also bring fulfilment in one’s life as well as in the life of one’s family. In our work, we cooperate with God and become creators of the world around us. This time of pandemic has shown the need to rediscover the value of work, not only the economic value of work, but also the social, cultural and spiritual value of work. Jesus working alongside St. Joseph reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. We should look at this time of crisis as an opportunity to review our priorities and see that each person has work to sustain themselves.

- What does it mean to learn the value, dignity, and joy of eating bread that is the fruit of one’s own labor?
• Why is St. Joseph the patron of workers? What can we learn from him about our own work?

• How do we balance the dignity of work and the importance of loving our family? Do we do both equally or one more than the other?

7. Reflection: A father in the shadows

A father is so much more than just bringing a child into the world. It is also about taking responsibility for that child. A father introduces children to the reality of life by helping them decide for themselves and explore new things through freedom. True love is a chaste love which is free from possessiveness. St. Joseph knew that the child Jesus was only entrusted to his care and would one day need to walk on His own. The world needs fathers who are faithful educators, knowing that one day their children will need to practice independence. St. Joseph models a fatherhood that is centered on self-sacrifice and trust.

• How can we accept responsibility for the life of another and become a biological or spiritual parent to them?

• How are we called to live without possessiveness?

• How can we help children walk the path of life independently?

Reflection on the Conclusion

The goal of *Patris Corde* is to help us develop a deeper relationship with St. Joseph and thereby a deeper relationship with God. St. Joseph shows us that everyone is called to holiness. He also demonstrates that it is possible to live a life of holiness. St. Joseph exemplifies what it
means to have a fatherly heart by knowing God’s love and reflecting it to others. As we continue to configure ourselves to Jesus Christ, we go to St. Joseph to teach us how to reveal to others a fatherly heart.

- How can we increase our love of St. Joseph?
- What can we learn from the eloquent silence of St. Joseph?
- Where in our life do we need to ask St. Joseph to intercede for conversion?