

Go to Joseph!

My mother always said, "God arranges everything. And then He waits for us to do His Will." The older I get, the more I see the great spiritual truth in these words. God does have a plan for us!

When Blessed Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church in 1871, I am sure that he was convinced that a great flood of graces would come from this amazing proclamation. After all, he knew that the Church needed it. He lived in a century of tremendous unrest. The revolutions in the countries of Europe, the budding forth of communism, anti-clericalism, and the attacks on Rome itself by Italian nationalists were just a few of the struggles that Blessed Pius IX faced. The Holy Father knew that these worldly struggles mirrored the spiritual battles that were being fought in the Church and in the lives of people. So he said to the faithful, "Go to Joseph!" (Gen 41:55)

Blessed Pius addressed all of the social, cultural and political issues of his pontificate with zeal and determination. His real legacy, however, is his deep spirituality and his trust in the power of prayer. It is no wonder that he clearly saw St. Joseph, head of the Holy Family of Nazareth, as the Patron of Christ's Body the Church! The Catholic Church certainly needed all the help she could get!

Little did Blessed Pius know that good St. Joseph would be called on for help in another time of struggle and challenge for the Church one hundred and fifty years later in 2021. As we know, the Church of today faces difficulties on every side - attacks on religious freedom, attacks on human life from the very beginning in the womb to its end, attacks on the very nature of family and marriage, banning God from public life, terrorism, war and even a pandemic. We should not fail to recognize that the real battle is a spiritual one - a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. We must never forget that the war has already been won by God the Father through the Blood of His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the battle continues in our daily life and in the lives of people throughout the world.

Providentially, Our Holy Father Pope Francis tells us again in our own time, "Go to Joseph!" by proclaiming the Year of St. Joseph, December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021. Certainly we have taken up this invitation with renewed enthusiasm. We have already begun to do so, but here is another great way. Make a novena in honor of good St. Joseph.

The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 19, is just around the corner. The nine days before his feast are a golden opportunity to "Go to Joseph!" to ask for his help. March 10 through March 18 should become days of powerful prayer for us.

How do we pray this novena? Simple. Take a piece of paper to write down any intention(s) for which you want to ask St. Joseph's intercession. You might have some in mind. *But, before you write a word, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you to know what to pray for during the novena.* It never fails. The Holy Spirit always inspires us and the intentions become clear in our mind and hearts. Some intentions may be for health and welfare of family and friends, for a return to Mass of loved ones, or for the healing of relationships, or for peace of mind and heart. The list goes on. Most importantly, let the Holy Spirit lead you! Go for the gold! Ask and you shall receive!

Another type of intention you may want to offer during this novena to St. Joseph is one for the Church. Ask the Holy Spirit again to show you. With His help, you will know. Some of these intentions for the Church might be vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, the full reopening of church buildings so that Mass and the sacraments are readily available, or religious freedom for the Church to be able to preach the Gospel, or safety for persecuted Christians, or success for the Church's efforts to protect the unborn and all those in danger of losing their life.. After all, St. Joseph is the Patron of the Universal Church, so ask big!

Write your intentions on a piece of paper. Then choose a novena prayer to St. Joseph. You can find many on-line or in practically any prayer book. I am including one at the end of this article. *Here is what is most important - pray from the heart.* Don't rush through the prayer. Pray the words slowly and reflect on what you are praying. It is amazing how consoling and filled with hope this kind of praying can be! I would also include the Litany of St. Joseph. This novena does not take long and it becomes an oasis of grace in our busy life.

Finally, I have found it also helpful to have a heart-to-heart talk with good St. Joseph each day of the novena. In addition to whatever beautiful novena prayer you use, open your heart to St. Joseph and let him know what is going on in your life. Go to him as your loving father. If he was the foster father of Jesus, he is our father, too, since we are members of Christ's Body the Church. So pray with deep faith, trust and love to St. Joseph. *Then get ready for the favors and graces he will obtain for you!*

St. Joseph, like all of the saints, is a real person and fully alive in heaven seeing God face-to-face and adoring him in perfect love. His love for God makes him a powerful intercessor for us. He is a good companion for our journey through life.

St. Teresa of Avila, a great devotee of St. Joseph, used to say, *"To other saints Our Lord seems to have given power to help us in some special necessity, but to this glorious Saint (St. Joseph), I know by experience, He has given the power to help us in all."* (Autobiography VI:9)

St. Teresa knew what Blessed Pope Pius XI knew, what many saints knew, and what Pope Francis knows and what we know - *St. Joseph, because of his closeness to our Lord and Our Lady, can help us in all needs.*

The Carmelite Nuns in the Diocese of Harrisburg whose community I had a humble part in founding always say, "Our Lady is at one door of the monastery and St. Joseph is at the other." What a beautiful image to have for our own homes and our churches as we are beginning to reopen in earnest and to get back to Mass. We should have a talk with Our Lady and St. Joseph and invite them to stand at our doors to protect, guide, guard, and bring us to Jesus in these challenging times.

Go to Joseph and then see that blessings that are in store!

Most Reverend William J. Waltersheid

Novena Prayer to St. Joseph

**O Glorious St. Joseph,
Faithful follower of Jesus Christ,
to thee do we raise our hearts and hands,
to implore thy powerful intercession
in obtaining from the benign Heart of Jesus
all the helps and graces necessary for
our spiritual and temporal welfare,
particularly the grace of a happy death,
and the special favors we now implore**
(State your intentions)
**O Guardian of the Word Incarnate,
we have confidence that thy prayers on our behalf
will be graciously heard before the throne of God. Amen.**

O Glorious St Joseph!
through thy love for Jesus Christ
and for the glory of His Name,
hear our prayers and obtain our petitions!

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist us!