

YEAR OF ST JOSEPH – SEPTEMBER ST JOSEPH: “THE SUBLIME SPOUSE”

In the 26 years of Pope John Paul’s pontificate, there were an infinite number of occasions on which he spoke of St Joseph to whom he said he prayed intensely every day. He summarized this devotion in the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, published on 15 August 1989, written 100 years after Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries*. In that document, Pope John Paul explores every aspect of St Joseph’s life. Sensitive as he was to the vocation of Christian marriage, he offered it as a way of profoundly interpreting the relationship between the couple from Nazareth – “the grace of living together the charism of virginity and the gift of matrimony” – a theme he would pick up in a general audience in 1996, deconstructing a false myth:

The difficulty of approaching the sublime mystery of their spousal communion has led some, since the second century, to attribute an advanced age to Joseph and to consider him as a guardian, instead of as Mary’s husband. Rather, it is appropriate to suppose that he was not an elderly man, but that his interior perfection, a consequence of grace, led him to live his spousal relationship with Mary with virginal affection.

“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.”