

NOVENA IN HONOR OF SAINT JOSEPH
on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation
of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church

First Day | March 10

SIGN OF THE CROSS

PRAYER

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.

REFLECTION

From the apostolic letter *Patris corde* of the Holy Father, Francis:

WITH A FATHER'S HEART: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as "*the son of Joseph*".

Matthew and Luke, the two Evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little, yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was, and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter, betrothed to Mary. He was a "just man", ever ready to carry out God's will as revealed to him in the Law and through four dreams. After a long and tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he beheld the birth of the Messiah in a stable, since "there was no place for them" elsewhere. He witnessed the adoration of the shepherds and the Magi, who represented respectively the people of Israel and the pagan peoples.

Joseph had the courage to become the legal father of Jesus, to whom he gave the name revealed by the angel: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins". As we know, for ancient peoples, to give a name to a person or to a thing, as Adam did in the account in the Book of Genesis, was to establish a relationship.

In the Temple, forty days after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary offered their child to the Lord and listened with amazement to Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus and his Mother. To protect Jesus from Herod, Joseph dwelt as a foreigner in Egypt. After returning to his own country, he led a hidden life in the tiny and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, far from Bethlehem, his ancestral town, and from Jerusalem and the Temple. Of Nazareth it was said, "No prophet is to rise" and indeed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?". When, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary lost track of the twelve-year-old Jesus, they anxiously sought him out and they found him in the Temple, in discussion with the doctors of the Law.

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, 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". 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.

NOVENA PRAYER

Saint Joseph, you are the faithful protector and intercessor of all who love and venerate you. You know that I have confidence in you and that, after Jesus and Mary, I come to you as an example for holiness, for you are especially close with God. Therefore, I humbly commend myself, with all who are dear to me and all that belong to me, to your intercession. I beg of you, by your love for Jesus and Mary, not to abandon me during life and to assist me at the hour of my death.

Glorious Saint Joseph, spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, pray for me to have a pure, humble, charitable mind, and perfect resignation to the divine Will. Be my guide, my father, and my model through life that I may die as you did in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Loving Saint Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, I raise my heart to you to implore your powerful intercession in obtaining from the Divine Heart of Jesus all the graces necessary for my spiritual and temporal welfare, particularly the grace of a happy death, and the special grace I now implore: *time for silent prayer*

Guardian of the Word Incarnate, I feel confident that your prayers on my behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God. St. Joseph Most Just, Pray for us! Amen.

SIGN OF THE CROSS