The earth's greatest treasures are known to be diamonds. These are hidden in the deepest depths of the earth. One should go down at least 150 – 250 kms. below the earth’s surface and sometimes 800 Kms below the earth’s surface to mine diamonds. St. Joseph's richness is also like this. It's a multi-dimensional treasure hidden so deeply and available only to those who are willing to dig deeply with patience.

The bible tells us very little about St. Joseph. However, it is intriguing that the Catholic Church has bestowed so many great titles on this little-known man. He is generally portrayed as the patron saint for peaceful death, workers, fathers, and most importantly, the Universal Church. In the Apostolic Letter "Patris Corde," Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father proclaimed a "Year of St. Joseph" from 8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021.

Even though St. Joseph never speaks in the Scriptures, many well-known saints, including St. John Chrysostom, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. John Paul II, have recognized St. Joseph's faithfulness in his sacred silence. These saints encouraged devotion to him and considered him as a role model to everyone's spiritual life. Uncovering some of St. Joseph's mysteries will enable us to identify qualities that we can emulate in him as a husband and father.

**St Joseph: A loyal husband**

When Joseph took Mary as his wife, as per God's instruction, he was in effect consenting to God's salvific plan. This event was indeed of great significance, for without Joseph's consent, Jesus would not have been born from the lineage of David or have been accepted as the Messiah. Though his initial decision was to end his betrothal to Mary, he responded with a "yes" to God by acting upon his dream in obedience and steadfastness. Because of this, the Holy Spirit sanctified Joseph, the "just man" (Mt 1:19), and made him the ideal spouse for Mary.

During the Nativity of Jesus (Lk 2:1-7), Joseph needed to make the difficult journey to Bethlehem with pregnant Mary, as guided by the Holy Spirit in his dream. Without Joseph's support, Mary would not have been able to
complete her journey. As a result, it was clear that God had ordained Joseph to accompany Mary on this journey to fulfill the Scriptures (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:4-6).

Through his obedience to God's commands, Joseph completely allowed himself to be moulded in a unique way. His gift of self to Mary reflects the marital covenant between spouses, an authentic communion that models the Blessed Trinity.

Perhaps today's husbands can take a moment to consider the state of their marriages in light of St. Joseph's life. This will allow them to see how they are carrying out their marital vocation as per God's will. They can reconsider whether they are making decisions for their family in a just and devout manner, as St Joseph did, even in times of uncertainty and tribulation.

**St Joseph: A loyal father**

According to the law of Moses in the Old Testament, newborns should be circumcised before they are given a name. It was the religious obligation of a Jewish father to exercise his rights as the head of the household for this ceremony. By circumcising Jesus, Joseph fulfilled not only his role as Jesus's earthly father but also the Mosaic law. Furthermore, by bestowing the name "Jesus" on the infant Lord, Joseph fulfilled the Divine law (Mt 1:21; Lk 1:31). This conferral of name acknowledges Joseph's fatherhood over Jesus and proclaims the child's mission as the Saviour.

Another Mosaic law was fulfilled when Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus to God in the Temple (Lk 2:22). The Gospel states that "And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him" (Lk 2:33) after Simeon proclaimed his canticle to God. At this point, Joseph was most likely making sense of all that had happened from Jesus's birth to His Presentation in the Temple – that his position as Jesus's father was something uniquely ordained by God. In these events, we see Joseph fulfilling both the human and divine laws by practicing his fatherly rights.

The life of St. Joseph should encourage and enable fathers today to privately reflect on how they live out their roles as fathers. This will help them get an insight into whether the vocation of their fatherhood is something uniquely ordained by God.
When the angel of the Lord prompted Joseph to escape to Egypt, he did so dutifully and relentlessly (Mt 2:13). They quickly left for Egypt in the middle of the night (Mt 2:14). The flight to Egypt was an incident in which divine providence had recourse to Joseph. Joseph needed to lead both Mary and the infant Jesus through unknown territory; they endured all the discomfort and uncertainties – no maps, no guide, no food or shelter, and completely surrendered themselves to divine providence. This journey into Egypt and back fulfilled the Lord's promise made through the prophet Hosea: "Out of Egypt I have called my son" (Mt 2:14-15; Hos 11:1). In the same way, as Moses was instrumental in leading the Israelites out of Egypt in the Old Covenant, St Joseph – the guardian and protector of Mary and Jesus – collaborated with God's mystery to bring about the New Covenant.

Today's men should reflect in their role as a husband and father, if they renounce themselves to divine providence and cooperate with His plans for their family. In obedience, St Joseph made sacrifices and set out on a journey into the unknown. Hence, as the head of the household, every father and husband must ask himself, "Am I willing to make sacrifices to keep my family safe?"

We can see another expression of Joseph's fatherly love in how he educated the young Jesus in the faith. It is evident in the Gospels that he brought up Jesus well, teaching Him the Jewish prayers that every male over twelve years ought to know. Along with the most widely read Psalms and prophetic preaching, Joseph taught Jesus unique passages of Scripture related to the salvation history of the chosen people. This was evident when the scripture mentions, "after three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." [Lk 2: 46-47]. At this point, one may ponder whether I am passing on the faith to my child as a father? Am I taking the necessary steps to help my child experience God and learn about the Church's teachings?

In conclusion, Joseph was chosen by God to be the spouse of Mary and the earthly father of Jesus. He was appointed to live with them while protecting and providing for them. Joseph did this faithfully to the very end of his earthly life, and as tradition has it, he eventually died in Jesus's arms while Mary was beside him. Joseph's calling was one worthy of the admiration of heaven and earth. Let us emulate his loyalty and obedience to encounter God in our marriages and families.