

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt1:20-21). With our Gospel reading from Matthew focusing on Saint Joseph for the second day in a row, let us continue to “Go for Joseph!” as we dig a little further into Pope Francis’s Proclamation on the Year of Saint Joseph titled “With a Father’s Heart.”

When Jesus tells the story of the prodigal son and the merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32), we instantly think of God the Father ... but should we not also look to Saint Joseph who welcomed Mary and Jesus into his life with love and mercy.ⁱ In his foster father Joseph, Jesus had a prime example of a man of faith. In the ministry of Jesus, we see how this has been internalized. Jesus always responds to the faith of people when they asked for miracles.

Joseph was certainly shocked by the message of the Angel of the Lord. But clearly understanding the will of God, Joseph set aside his own misgivings and gave his full ascent to God’s plan. With open eyes, he accepted his responsibility as a father to love Jesus as his own. “Joseph’s attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak.”ⁱⁱ

“If at times God seems not to help us, surely this does not mean that we have been abandoned, but instead are being trusted to plan, to be creative, and to find solutions ourselves.” Joseph found no room at the inn in Bethlehem, but still exercised “creative courage” in finding a humble manger to usher in the King of Kings. I am reminded of a woman from Haiti who had to give birth to her son on the floor. She reasoned, if it was good enough for Mary and Jesus, it is good enough for me and my son.ⁱⁱⁱ

Joseph also displayed courage in the face of the death wish of Herod for his son. Joseph protected Jesus and Mary by rising in the middle of the night and taking flight to Egypt. Despite the sheer evil of Herod and his own violent exercise of worldly power, God relied on Joseph to carry out his saving plan. “So too, our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence.” In a world at war with itself, many migrants flee the land of their birth for the simple right to live in safety on foreign shores. “Saint Joseph [is] the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty.”^{iv}

Joseph always provided for and protected Mary and Jesus. “In this sense, Saint Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history.” By our love for the Virgin and the infant Jesus, we too are guardians as we reach out to love both God and neighbor. From Saint Joseph, we draw strength to exercise care and responsibility for the poor looking beyond the exterior to see the heart of Jesus in each of the vulnerable.^v We should follow Joseph’s example by defending, protecting, and caring for the vulnerable. By supporting woman’s shelters, food banks, and reaching out to the homeless, we can help those in need to feel that they are part of our holy family.

ⁱ Patris Corde #4.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid #5.

^{iv} Ibid #5.

^v Ibid.