



SAINT JOSEPH: THE FATHER OF JESUS

Sometimes it seems as if Joseph is little more than a figurine to be placed annually in the Nativity scene and then packed away for the rest of the year. Mary, rightfully so, gets credit for being the Mother of God (*Mater Dei*) while Joseph is the hidden, silent, and often overlooked figure in the Holy Family.

It's important to remember that all four Gospels refer to Jesus as "the son of Joseph." While the Gospels don't tell us much about Joseph, calling Jesus his "son" means that the early Church considered him an essential part of the family, not merely a bit player in the great story of salvation.

What does it mean that Joseph was the father of Jesus? It means that he provided the physical and material goods Jesus would have needed to live—food, shelter, and clothing. It also means he would have been responsible for Jesus' education, both in religious and secular. He would have taught Jesus how to be an observant Jew, celebrate the festivals, read the Torah, and pray to Yahweh.

Joseph also would have taught Jesus how to be a working person—including how to deal with clients and co-workers, how to source material, and how to manage a business. Finally, Joseph would have taught Jesus what it meant to be part of an extended family with all the ups and downs of family life. In short, Joseph taught Jesus what it was like to be a man in first-century Israel. Without him, Jesus would not have been able to be the fully realized human being that he was.

QUOTATION

"The Lord wants us to understand that just as he was subject to St. Joseph on earth—for since bearing the title of father, being the Lord's tutor, Joseph could give the child commands—so in heaven God does whatever he commands." —Saint Teresa of Jesus (Ávila)

PRAYER

Saint Joseph, by following your example, may I show what it means to be a loving part of my family. Amen.

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