



Year of St. Joseph

Dear brothers and sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, May the Lord give you peace!

Pope Francis has proclaimed a special “Year of St Joseph,” beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2020 and extending to the same feast in 2021. In a new Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris Corde* (With a Father’s Heart), Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows. He says “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.”

We have St. Joseph before us as the model to follow and fall in love with. St. Joseph as the just man, loved God and neighbour. He kept his faith in God and cooperated with God’s plan of salvation. “The Son of the Almighty came into our world in a state of great vulnerability. He needed to be defended, protected, cared for and raised by Joseph. God trusted Joseph, as did Mary, who found in him someone who would not only save her life, but would always provide for her and her child. In this sense, St. Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history, even as Mary’s motherhood is reflected in the motherhood of the Church. In his continued protection of the Church, Joseph continues to protect the child and his mother, and we too, by our love for the Church, continue to love the child and his mother” (*Patris Corde*). Pope Francis encourages the entire Church to reflect on the personality and character of St. Joseph as we go through this hard time together and never give up our trust and faith in God.

The Gospels are pretty much silent and do not record any words of St. Joseph but his silent yes and actions speak louder than the words. In his silent character, we can see how righteous, obedient and humble a person he was. He was the breadwinner of the family; he did whatever he could to provide for Mary and Jesus. He showed his love for Mary and Jesus. He worked on his trade as carpenter and taught Jesus his trade. He did even in his sleep, in dream the will of God. Even in his sleep, he continued to listen to God's plan of salvation for which he was chosen to be an instrument. In every encounter with the angel, without question he acted promptly on the will of God. He also kept the Sabbath and went to the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover. He did everything for the love of God as a just man. He experienced the same difficulties and challenges in life that we all of us do and yet he remained faithful to God, Mary and Jesus.

I come from a village which is dedicated to St. Joseph. St. Joseph is the patron saint for Canada; my first missionary country. The first parish that I served in Canada is named after St. Joseph (St. Joseph Basilica, Edmonton) and now at present I also serve in a parish dedicated to St. Joseph the Worker (Richmond). From my childhood I have seen on 19th of March; the feast of St. Joseph (the husband of Mary) the entire village gathered at the Mother Mary's grotto to celebrate a solemn Mass. The villagers joyfully honored the saint with thanksgiving Mass, cultural activities and festive meal. For sure, most people know that he was a carpenter (Worker) and villagers predominantly being farmers have taken this quality of St. Joseph to work hard and provide for their families. Feel blessed and at the same time challenged. I have lived, served and continue to serve a parish that is dedicated to St. Joseph, but pose a question to myself; am I in any way living by his examples? It's our human tendency that when things become too familiar to us, we never think of reflecting and asking further questions. St. Joseph and St. Francis of Assisi did everything for the love of God and did nothing to get any attention from others. They never made themselves the center of attraction; they denied themselves, took up their daily cross and followed the way shown by God, thus remained focused on the plan of God for them. They did everything to serve the creator and not their own whims and fancies. They never worked for self-promotion but for promotion of God in their entire life.

In the words of St. Francis of Assisi "Let us begin again, brothers, for up until now, we have done little or nothing," this is my encouragement for all of us brothers and sisters, let us begin again for it's never too late to begin anew. In this year 2021, let us be passionate in living our Human, Christian and Franciscan vocation, and fall in love with St. Joseph to live by his example.

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