

O glorious St. Joseph, to you God committed the care of His only begotten Son amid the many dangers of this world. We come to you ...

— From A Parent's Prayer to St. Joseph

Courageous Custodian of Christ



EUGÈNE GIRARDET, THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT, BEF. 1907

Reflections on St. Joseph for the Church Year That Bears His Name

My father was killed when my mother was three months pregnant with me. My only sibling, my brother Fred, carried my father's name. After the suddenness of my father's death, my mother was keenly aware of the fragility of life. She was also aware of the challenges her sons would face growing up without their father.

My mother named me Joseph because St. Joseph was a great foster father for Jesus.

Our Heavenly Father entrusted his only begotten Son to the paternal earthly care of St. Joseph. Mom thought that was a very impressive credential on St. Joseph's résumé, so she entrusted me to him as a spiritual foster father. I am grateful to my mother for giving me from birth a special relationship with St. Joseph.

In my office, I have a large print of a painting of St. Joseph. I imagine that the artist is attempting to capture the expression of St. Joseph when he awoke from one of those life-altering dreams.

Joseph was a dreamer, not in the sense that he was an unrealistic idealist. Three times in the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, Joseph receives instructions from an angel in a dream. Can you imagine trusting that God's will has just been revealed to you in a dream?

That Joseph had such clarity is an indication that he was a profoundly spiritual man. He had the humility and quietude in his heart to discern God's will.

Each of these dreams was disruptive of St. Joseph's plans. Joseph, engaged to Mary, becomes aware of her pregnancy and knows he is not the father of her child. This had to be incredibly disturbing. Joseph is noble in his response to a gut-wrenching circumstance.

He does not want to shame Mary and chooses quietly to separate from her.

The angel in a dream tells Joseph not to be afraid, but, rather, to go forward with his marriage to Mary, because it is through the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child.

Amazingly, Joseph is able to accept what was, humanly speaking, an impossible explanation.

After the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi, Joseph has another dream with the angel, telling him to flee immediately to Egypt in order to protect Jesus from the murderous plans of Herod. Joseph again discerns the message is authentic.

His swift and decisive action saves the Infant Jesus from being killed. The dream again totally disrupts Joseph's life and plans, requiring him to gather up his family and go to a foreign nation.

When Herod died, the angel appeared again in a dream to Joseph, instructing him now to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel. Joseph is once again open and compliant to God's will.

I suspect, at some point, Joseph often must have feared to fall asleep, not knowing what new orders the angel might have for him in his dream. Yet the Gospel reveals Joseph was a man of prayer and action. He didn't hesitate to listen to God. And there is no hint that Joseph ever complained about all of these significant disruptions to his plans.

In his apostolic letter *Patris Corde*, Pope Francis recognizes in Joseph what the Holy Father terms "creative courage." Joseph is presented with a series of disturbing and difficult challenges.

However, not only does he not complain, but he never fails to act decisively. Joseph finds a way to do God's will, no matter how improbable or impossible it might seem. That is why, in the Tradition of the Church, we call upon Joseph for help in temporal affairs.

Pope Francis has helped popularize a devotion to the "Sleeping St. Joseph," a statue of which he keeps on his desk.

The Holy Father has shared that, when he is facing a difficult challenge and he is uncertain of the right solution, he places the problem underneath the image of

the Sleeping Joseph.

I have a couple of these images of the Sleeping Joseph, one on the desk in my office and one on the writing table in my Chapel.

Imitating the Holy Father, I place papers with some vexing issues underneath the statue and ask St. Joseph to help me discern God's will.

Though I have not had any angels giving me orders in my dreams, I sleep better knowing that I can count on St. Joseph's assistance.

I have learned a lot from St. Joseph over the years. I strive to be like him, a man of prayer, seeking first and foremost to know and embrace God's will. I also want, like St. Joseph, to be a man of action. St. Joseph did not utter a single word in the Gospels, but his actions spoke volumes.

I desire to be like St. Joseph by not complaining about challenges and problems, but seeing them as opportunities to be creative and courageous.

St. Joseph is a great role model for fatherhood. Joseph was humble and obedient to God's plan for him. He was strong and fearless in protecting Mary and Jesus. St. Joseph was willing to make any personal sacrifice of his own wants and desires for the good of Mary and Jesus. This is the type of spiritual father that I desire to be for those under my pastoral care.

Unfortunately, many children today, like me in my formative years, are growing up in a home where their father is not present. Strong and loving fathers are a great gift to their children.

It is a blessing to have a father that you can trust and have confidence that he will protect and watch over you.

In my experience, St. Joseph can be that type of spiritual father for all of us, but especially for those whose father is absent.

Most uniquely, St. Joseph teaches us if some problem is worrying us, making us anxious and even disturbing our sleep, we can turn it over to St. Joseph, asking him to help us discover God's will and have the courage to follow wherever it leads.

We probably will not receive any angelic messages like St. Joseph, but I am confident we will sleep better.

Introducing Joseph's Jubilee

This past Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, marked 150 years since Pope Pius IX officially proclaimed St. Joseph patron of the universal Church. To increase the universality of devotion to the foster father of Jesus Christ, Pope Francis declared a "Year of St. Joseph." In his apostolic letter *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart), the Pope stated that God's plan was at work through him. "Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture."

Along with the Holy Father's declaration, the Apostolic Penitentiary issued a plenary indulgence for the Year of St. Joseph. The three conditions for receiving a plenary indulgence are sacramental confession, the reception of Holy Communion and prayer for the Pope's intentions.

The devotional year, and the work of these pages, aims "to perpetuate the entrustment of the whole Church to the powerful patronage of the Custodian of Jesus." It encourages people to commit themselves "with prayer and good works, to obtain, with the help of St. Joseph, head of the heavenly Family of Nazareth, comfort and relief from the serious human and social tribulations that besiege the contemporary world today."

— Patti Armstrong



Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann is the shepherd of Kansas City, Kansas, and chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.



GIROLAMO ROMANINO, THE MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN, C. 1540

What Have the Popes Said About St. Joseph?

The figure of St. Joseph is something of a blank canvas upon which preachers and theologians can paint a wide array of images. As sacred Scripture says so little about St. Joseph, it is left to the Catholic imagination to build up, generation after generation, a fuller picture of the saint granted the supreme mission of caring for Jesus and Mary.

In recent times the papal magisterium has raised up St. Joseph as popular devotion to St. Joseph has increased. And as expected, the various popes have employed St. Joseph as a kind of mirror for their own pastoral priorities.

After Blessed Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph the "Patron of the Universal Church" on Dec. 8, 1870, his successors have turned their attention to St. Joseph in their own particular way.

Pope Leo XIII

"On the subject of this devotion, of which we speak publicly for the first time today," began Leo XIII in his 1889 encyclical on Joseph, *Quamquam Pluries*, indicating that a "Josephite" magisterium was something in its early stages.

At the time, Leo was greatly preoccupied by the new conditions of the Industrial Revolution and its impact on the working classes. Less than two years later would come *Rerum Novarum*, the charter of contemporary Catholic social teaching.

Thus Joseph was depicted as one who "passed his life in labor," demonstrating that "the condition of the lowly has nothing shameful in it, and the work of the laborer is not only not dishonoring, but can, if virtue be joined to it, be singularly ennobled."

Leo then included a warning about the dangers of communist revolution, which he would later call a remedy worse than the disease.

"Recourse to force and struggles by seditious paths to obtain such ends are madnesses which only aggravate the evil which they aim to suppress," Leo wrote. "Let the poor, then, if they would be wise, trust not to the promises of seditious men, but rather to the example and patronage of the Blessed Joseph."

Venerable Pope Pius XII

The link between labor and Joseph was further emphasized in 1955, when Pius XII instituted the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, a second feast of Joseph in addition to his principal feast on March 19.

Pius XII chose May 1 for the new feast precisely to be a rival to the European labor day, or May Day. In the communist countries and for communist parties in Western Europe, May Day parades exalted Marxist ideology and communism.

Pius wanted to present an alternative, Christian vision of human labor, and so chose to lift up Joseph as a model for workers.

Pope St. John Paul II

In 1989, to commemorate the centennial of Leo's encyclical, John Paul issued his apostolic exhortation on Joseph, *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer).

It completed his trilogy of magisterial documents on the Holy Family, which included *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Man) on Jesus Christ, his first encyclical in 1979, and the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer) on Mary in 1987.

John Paul, the pope of human freedom, made *Gaudium et Spes* (24) — which explained that man can only truly find himself through a sincere gift of self — a principal leitmotif for the entire pontificate. He therefore presents Joseph's marriage to Mary as a model of freedom fulfilling itself in a gift.

"At the culmination of the history of salvation, when God reveals his love for humanity through the gift of the Word, it is precisely the marriage of Mary and Joseph that brings to realization in full 'freedom' the 'spousal gift of self' in receiving and expressing such a love," John Paul wrote.

John Paul rooted his teachings on labor (*Laborem*

Exercens, 1981), marriage and family in a profound meditation on Genesis, and so applies it to the Holy Family.

"We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple," John Paul writes.

"But whereas Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Savior began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family — that sanctuary of love and cradle of life."

Finally, John Paul took up the principal theme of the Second Vatican Council, the universal call to holiness:

"What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies. ... He is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things. It is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic."

Pope Francis

In his letter of December 2020, *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart), Pope Francis brings to the fore his special concern for the poor and dispossessed, migrants and refugees, proposing Joseph as a "special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty."

"The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger," the Holy Father writes.

"St. Joseph is invoked as protector of the unfortunate, the needy, exiles, the afflicted, the poor and the dying," Pope Francis adds. "Consequently, the Church cannot fail to show a special love for the least of our brothers and sisters, for Jesus showed a particular concern for them and personally identified with them."

There are also several engaging flourishes which are typical of Pope Francis.

There is the special sensitivity he has to domestic turmoil, writing that "in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man."

For many today, the problem is not men behaving badly as much as it is men being absent altogether. Pope Francis addresses that phenomenon in a beautiful passage where he shows his love for poetry and literature.

"The Polish writer Jan Dobraczynski, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*, tells the story of St. Joseph's life in the form of a novel," Pope Francis writes.

"He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: [H]e watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way."

"Fathers are not born, but made," Francis continues.

"A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person. Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers."

Finally, there is this remarkable thought about one of the Holy Father's favorite fatherly images in the Gospels: "I like to think that it was from St. Joseph that Jesus drew inspiration for the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Merciful Father (Luke 15:11-32)."

That's a fine example of the blank canvas upon which anything can be painted.

It's an attractive idea, to be sure, even if Joseph's family life bears no similarity at all to the family in the parable.

That's a big part of the attraction of St. Joseph for Pope Francis and his predecessors: The great saint can be what we need him to be.

Papal Documents on St. Joseph

Quemadmodem Deus — declaration of St. Joseph as "Patron of the Universal Church" by Pius IX, Dec. 8, 1870.

Inclitum Patriarcham — liturgical norms for the celebration of St. Joseph as "Patron of the Universal Church" by Pope Pius IX, July 7, 1871.

Quamquam Pluries — encyclical on devotion to St. Joseph by Leo XIII, Aug. 15, 1889.

Bonum Sane — *motu proprio* on devotion to St. Joseph by Pope Benedict XV, July 25, 1920.

Divini Redemptoris — encyclical "On Atheistic Communism" by Pius XI, issued on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, 1937.

Le Voci — declaration on St. Joseph being named patron of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, March 19, 1961.

Decree — on including St. Joseph's name in the Canon of the Mass, Nov. 13, 1962.

Homily — on the feast of St. Joseph by Pope Paul VI, March 27, 1969.

Redemptoris Custos — apostolic exhortation on St. Joseph by John Paul II, Aug. 15, 1989.

Angelus address — on St. Joseph by Pope Benedict XVI, delivered on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, 2006.

Paternas Vices — decree on including the name of St. Joseph in Eucharistic Prayers II-IV, by Pope Francis, May 1, 2013.

Patris Corde — apostolic letter on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as the "Patron of the Universal Church" and on proclaiming the Year of St. Joseph by Pope Francis, Dec. 8, 2020.



Father Raymond J. de Souza is the founding editor of *Convivium* magazine.

"Besides trusting in Joseph's sure protection, the Church also trusts in his noble example, which transcends all individual states of life and serves as a model for the entire Christian community, whatever the condition and duties of each of its members may be."

— Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*

THE JUBILEE OF ST. JOSEPH

A True Father of Faith

7 Spiritual Lessons for Mature Manliness



FRANCISCO GOYA, THE DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH, 1787

St. Joseph, Patron ...

- Of the Universal Catholic Church
- Of Unborn Children
- Of Fathers
- Of Immigrants
- Of Workers
- Of Employment
- Of Explorers
- Of Pilgrims
- Of Carpenters
- Of Travelers
- Of Engineers
- Of Realtors
- Of a Happy Death
- Against Doubt and Hesitation

*Remember us,
Custodian of
Christ, and
plead for us to
your foster child.*

In this Year of St. Joseph, there are many ways all the faithful of the Church can learn from St. Joseph how to be just, to obey God, to center one's life on Jesus, to love the Blessed Virgin Mary, to live the gospel of work and to prepare for a holy death.

But there's a particular need for men and boys to learn from this great saint. Western culture is experiencing a crisis of masculinity brought about by several factors: a patriarchy-smashing radical feminism that tries to shame men simply for being men; gender theory, in which masculinity is reduced to a psychological concept; poor role models among celebrities, athletes and even clergy; caricatured depictions in movies, on television and in contemporary literature; and perhaps, most of all, from a crisis in fatherhood, which reduces fatherhood to a biological phenomenon and often leaves children without the human and spiritual dimensions of mature manliness.

What lessons can men and boys learn from St. Joseph during this special holy year and beyond? We can focus on seven.

First, St. Joseph shows us how to be a "just man" (Matthew 1:19) by "ad-justing" his whole life to what God was asking. About King Saul, the prophet Samuel said, "The Lord sought a man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Saul didn't live up to that divine desire. St. Joseph did.

Second, St. Joseph shows us what real faith means. "Throughout all of history," Pope Benedict XVI said in 2009, "Joseph is the man who gives God the greatest display of trust, even in the face of such astonishing news."

He shows us that obedience to God isn't a threat to one's freedom. Four separate times, he obeyed promptly and completely God's commands conveyed to him in dreams, which he refused to deconstruct or dismiss. His whole life, like Mary's, was a fiat. Many saints have compared him to Abraham: Both were willing to leave one's own country at God's command without knowing the future; both trusted that God could give a child outside the laws of nature; and both were willing to allow a chosen and beloved son to be sacrificed, knowing that God had the power to raise him. Like Abraham, St. Joseph is a true "father in faith."

Third, St. Joseph reveals to us the characteristics of authentic fatherhood and the role of the father in the family. "Fathers," Pope Francis writes, "are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child."

Joseph's fatherhood was not grounded in biology but in his marriage to Mary, in his nam-



LUCA GIORDANO, THE HOLY FAMILY WITH ST. JOSEPH AT THE CARPENTER'S BENCH, C. 1696

ing Jesus, and in the faithful and loving spiritual commitment he made with Mary to be at the service of Jesus' life and growth. A true father, he provided for the Holy Family from his hard work as a carpenter. He was also a protector, someone saints have called the "savior of the Savior of the world."

God the Father, to whom Joseph's fatherhood pointed, had such trust in his capacity promptly to defend Jesus and Mary that he waited until the last second, in a dream, to tip him off that Herod's assassins were approaching. It's no wonder why the Church has been similarly entrusted to his paternal care. Regardless of one's state in life, every man can learn this type of spiritual fatherhood from him. Pope Benedict encouraged all dads to "take St. Joseph as their model," since he shows the "deepest meaning of their own fatherhood."

Fourth, St. Joseph shows us how to love chastely. Chastity is a precondition of love, because it keeps eros selfless rather than selfish, loving rather than lustful. Even though Mary was the most sublime creature God ever formed, and even though Joseph lived with her for 12 to 30 years, he protected her vocation to virginal maternity.

Some people like to imagine that Joseph was 250 years old and therefore well beyond the stage of physical attraction, but this just robs him of his virtue, not to mention infelicitously puts him in the category of really old men who marry really young women. St. Joseph lived with the most integrally beautiful woman of all time and loved her, ardently, but chastely, show-

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Father Roger J. Landry is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts.

"It is a silence thanks to which Joseph, in unison with Mary, watches over the Word of God ... a silence woven of constant prayer, a prayer of blessing of the Lord, of the adoration of his holy will and of unreserved entrustment to his providence."

— Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, Dec. 18, 2005

Lasting Testimony of His 'Hidden Life'

Venerable Tomás Morales' Meditation Provides Much Insight

"A life hidden with Mary in Christ for the Father": Venerable Tomás Morales Pérez repeats that phrase over and over again in his meditation on St. Joseph.

The root of the idea comes from St. Paul. Speaking of what it means to follow Christ, St. Paul writes, "for you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

Baptism is a share in the death of Christ in the hope of his resurrection (Romans 6:3). That's why Lent, leading up to Easter, is the time *par excellence* to prepare people for baptism.

Venerable Tomás Morales (1908-1994), a Spanish Jesuit priest, in his 1993 book, *Semblanzas de Testigos de Cristo Para Los Nuevos Tiempos* (Profiles of Witnesses of Christ for the New Times), from which this reflection is heavily drawn, calls St. Joseph "the champion and protector of the baptized, [who] traces with his silent life an example for all." We're used to thinking of Joseph as the champion and protector of Jesus and Mary, which is true. But the Church has also seen him as the champion and protector of Jesus' adopted brothers and sisters, which is what the Church is (Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:4-7). And if Jesus explicitly gave us his mother (John 19:26-27), is it so out of the range of possibility, as Venerable Tomás suggests, that he also gave us his earthly dad?

"A life hidden with Mary in Christ for the Father."

Isn't that exactly what Joseph did? Once upon a time, the epitome of manhood was the "strong and silent type," the man of action, if few words.

The Gospels mention Joseph's name but record not a word of his. They record what



GEORGES DE LA TOUR, ST. JOSEPH THE CARPENTER, C. 1640

he did. The Gospel once tells us what kind of man Joseph was — "just" — but mostly lets us deduce that from his action.

He "took Mary into his home."

He did what he could when she gave birth. He performed his civic duty and took his family for census registration.

He took seriously his religious duty and took his wife to be purified and his Son to be presented in the Temple.

He led them off safely to Egypt. He brought them back to Israel and settled safely in out-of-the-spotlight Nazareth. And there he lived, disappearing into God's eternity.

"A life hidden with Mary in Christ for the Father." Theologians refer to the first

30 years of Jesus' life as "the hidden life." Not being biographies, the Gospels focus on what is essential to our salvation, i.e., what Jesus did and said during the three years of his public ministry, leading up to his passion, death and resurrection.

Traditionally said to have died at age 33, Jesus lived 90% of his life in a way that was "hidden."

That's an important insight for us because so much of the average person's life is "hidden"; so much of it is "ordinary time." Time to get up, go to work, make meals, do the wash, be together as a family, pray and go to church, be happy and be sad, be born and grow up, and live and die.

Jesus' hidden life was just like that.

Other than a few insights — the situation in the days and weeks following his conception and birth, the fact of a childhood partially spent abroad, the circumstances of being in Nazareth, and an adolescent lost in Jerusalem — the Gospels are opaque about Jesus' hidden life.

One thing is clear: Mary and Joseph are part of them.

Catholic Tradition imagines Jesus growing up in a blue-collar worker's house, probably learning his father's carpentry trade. The typical Catholic image of the hidden life is a quiet domestic scene. The only other Catholic image usually associated with the hidden life is the death of Joseph, something unmentioned in the Bible but which we can deduce from his foster father's absence in his adult life and his concern about leaving his mother in another's care.

The hidden life is an enormous testimony to the humble manhood of Joseph: He did what he was supposed to do. It's also an example to us, which is why Venerable

Tomás calls his "silent life an example for all."

As the Spanish priest notes, that's exactly what the Christian life is: The Christian life is the seed that's ready to fall to the ground and die in order to reach its potential (John 12:24). It's the readiness to "take up one's cross daily" (Luke 9:23), to "die with Christ" (Romans 6:3), so that one's life can be hidden with him in the Father (Colossians 3:3).

There's no better model than St. Joseph. Our age is stirred about ensuring everyone's "voice," but St. Joseph gave up his voice. In lieu of his own words, his life spoke through the Word (John 1:1). In terms of his visibility, Joseph was pretty "dead." In terms of his activity, he was quite alive — and, thanks to him, so are Mary and Jesus.

Joseph dies with Mary and Christ for the Father. Out of love of God, he loves what perhaps he does not fully understand.

Out of love of God, he steps into the background.

Out of love of God, he does his best to make a pretty ordinary and normal life for his wife and foster son in what are truly extraordinary circumstances.

And he does it without human words, resounding gongs or clanging cymbals, but with the silent language of love (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Modern Mariology tends to speak of the Blessed Virgin as the "first and most perfect disciple."

Though not quite as perfect — Joseph was, after all, an ordinary man and, therefore, also a sinner — St. Joseph is still an extraordinary example of the disciple whose life is "hidden with Mary and Christ in the Father."



John M. Grondelski, Ph.D., is former associate dean of the School of Theology at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. He is especially interested in moral theology and the thought of John Paul II. All views expressed are exclusively the author's.



HANS THOMA, THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT, 1879

St. Joseph's Angelic Encounters

The difficulty in sketching St. Joseph is that Scripture never shows him speaking. In fact, the Gospels never show a single human being speaking to him!

No humans speak to him; but four times an angel does.

Tradition makes much of Mary's annunciation. But Joseph's "annunciations" are also worthy of scrutiny — certainly for what they reveal about him, but also for what they reveal about angels. The Gospels present almost every episode in Joseph's life as an encounter with an angel.

The first occurs shortly after he discovered Mary was pregnant. He knew that he could not be the baby's father, and he decided to divorce her quietly.

But then an angel gave Joseph information he could not have figured out; and he gave clear instruction about what to do (Matthew 1:20-24). Joseph was to go ahead with the marriage — and stay in it. He was to name the child not according to the custom of his time, but rather for his mission. He would be called Jesus, which means "God is salvation." It was Joseph's right to name the Child, but it was an angel who delivered the right name to Joseph.

The angel made his second appearance to Joseph after the Child was born (Matthew 2:13). This time, the angel again served Joseph as a guide, but also a guardian. Joseph received help in figuring out what to do next, but also a stern warning about what he must flee.

The angel told Joseph that the mad and cruel King Herod was targeting Baby Jesus for destruction. Herod had an army at his disposal. He had absolute authority over every spot where Joseph might try to hide. Massacres were a hallmark of Herod's reign. So this was serious business.

But heaven made sure that Joseph was at no disadvantage. In his second visit from an angel, Joseph was told what to do and where to go: He moved his family to Egypt.

The third angelic visit came after a year or more in that far country (Matthew 2:19). This time, the angel brought the family safely home to the Holy Land, because the Holy Land was waiting for its Messiah.

Memorare to St. Joseph

Remember, O most pure spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, my great protector, St. Joseph, that no one ever had recourse to your protection, or implored your aid without obtaining relief. Confiding therefore in your goodness, I come before you. Do not turn down my petitions, foster father of the Redeemer, but graciously receive them. Amen.

And the task of that third angel visit continued in a fourth (Matthew 2:22), which occurred on the family's return journey. One last time, they eluded danger, thanks to a warning from Joseph's angel — a warning that specified the region that would be safest for their relocation.

Those few scenes tell us almost everything we know about the man whom God chose to watch over his only Son. They tell us almost everything we know about the hero the Gospel praises as a "just man."

What we know about Joseph is that he was devoted to the angels. He listened to them. He followed through on their instructions. By the time he had reached adulthood, he was accustomed to their promptings. He shows none of the fright we see in the stories of prophets like Balaam (Numbers 22:31) and Daniel (Daniel 8:17).

Devotion to the angels was common in his time. St. Luke lets us know that the Sadducees were the only Jews back then who did not believe in angels (Acts 23:8).

Devotion to angels stands in continuity with the Scriptures Joseph heard in the synagogue, for angels are everywhere in the Law, Prophets, Psalms and histories, and they were mentioned in the rituals celebrated on feast days.

Joseph lived, as his forebears had, in a world saturated with angels. Because he was a just man, he followed the traditions of his ancestors. He attended the customary services. He said the prayers. And because of these habits, he was alert to the angels' presence and activity.

Modern readers have a tendency to reduce the

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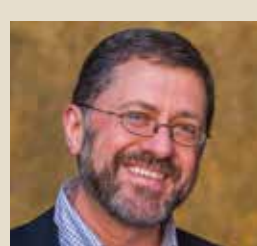
Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy on us.
 Christ, have mercy on us.
 Lord, have mercy on us.
 Jesus, hear us; Jesus, graciously hear us.
 God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
 God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
 Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
 Holy Mary, pray for us.
 St. Joseph, pray for us.
 Renowned offspring of David, pray for us.
 Light of Patriarchs, pray for us.
 Spouse of the Mother of God, pray for us.
 Chaste guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.
 Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us.
 Diligent protector of Christ, pray for us.
 Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.
 Joseph most just, pray for us.
 Joseph most chaste, pray for us.
 Joseph most prudent, pray for us.
 Joseph most strong, pray for us.
 Joseph most obedient, pray for us.
 Joseph most faithful, pray for us.
 Mirror of patience, pray for us.
 Lover of poverty, pray for us.
 Model of artisans, pray for us.
 Glory of home life, pray for us.
 Guardian of virgins, pray for us.
 Pillar of families, pray for us.
 Solace of the wretched, pray for us.
 Hope of the sick, pray for us.
 Patron of the dying, pray for us.
 Terror of demons, pray for us.
 Protector of Holy Church, pray for us.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Jesus.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Jesus.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Jesus.
 He made him the lord of his household,
 And prince over all his possessions.
 Let us pray.
 O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever.
 St. Joseph, pray for us.

Source: EWTN.com

"I do not remember even now that I have ever asked anything of him which he has failed to grant. I am astonished at the great favors which God has bestowed on me through this blessed saint, and at the perils from which He has freed me, both in body and in soul."

— St. Teresa of Avila, doctor of the Church



Mike Aquilina is the author of *St. Joseph and His World (Scepter)* and hosts the *Way of the Fathers* podcast.

A Just Man Is Hard to Find

4 Ways Mary's Husband Is a Role Model for Today's Men

In this Year of St. Joseph, we are granted a model of manhood at a time when manhood itself is in crisis.

Manhood is criticized by some as "toxic masculinity" and poorly lived by many men who are passive and remote husbands and fathers. Others never attain to holy matrimony, and still others indulge sexual promiscuity and recklessly father children outside of marriage. True manhood is harder to find today, and without models to follow, many young men have little on which to build.

Thus we turn to St. Joseph in this reflection. We know so little of Joseph from the Scriptures. He seems to have been the strong silent type. Not a word of his is recorded. But his actions have much to say, especially to men. Let's ponder St. Joseph, then, as a model of manhood for husbands and fathers.

Joseph is a man who obeys God and clings to his wife. Joseph was betrothed to Mary. This is more than being engaged. It means they were actually married. It was the practice at that time for a couple to marry rather young. Once betrothed, they lived an additional year in their parents' household as they became more acquainted and prepared for life together.

At a certain point, it was discovered that Mary was pregnant, though not by Joseph. The Scriptures say that Joseph was a "just man." This does not mean that Joseph was a



COURTESY OF FATHER DONALD CALLOWAY; IMAGE AVAILABLE AT CONSECRATIONTOSTJOSEPH.ORG

fair and nice guy (though I presume he was). What it means was that he was a follower of the Law. He based his life on the Jewish Law that God gave through Moses and as

interpreted by the rabbis.

Now, the Law said that if a man discovered that a woman to whom he was betrothed was not a virgin, he should divorce her and not "sully" his home. Joseph, as a follower of the Law, was prepared to follow its requirements — but he did not wish to expose Mary to the full force of the Law, which permitted the stoning of such women. Hence, he chose to follow the Law through the divorce decree but not through publicly accusing her, which would have brought danger and disgrace upon her.

The text says that Joseph feared to take Mary into his home (Matthew 1:20). Some of the Church Fathers and scholars think this means he believed Mary's explanation and was afraid to take such a holy woman as his spouse. Others doubt this and say that the text roots his actions in following the Law. They cite the angel's reassurance and explanation as evidence that Joseph was not fully aware of the source of Mary's pregnancy.

Indeed, to fail to divorce Mary would expose Joseph to cultural ramifications. "Just men" just didn't marry women guilty of fornication or adultery. To ignore this might have harmed not only Joseph's standing in the community but also that of his family of origin.

Whatever the source of his fear, Joseph is told in a dream not to fear and that Mary has committed no sin. Matthew records (1:24),

"When Joseph awoke, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."

Now, a just man obeys God even if it is not popular, even if he may suffer for it. Joseph is told to cling to his wife. He obeys God rather than men. It takes a strong man to do this, especially when we consider the culture in which Joseph lived — and in a small town, no less.

Joseph models strong manhood and has something to say to the men of our day. In the current wedding vows, a man agrees to cling to his wife — for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or health. This is what a man is to do. Our culture often pressures men to bail out, but when there is trouble, Joseph shows the way by obeying God over the pressures of prevailing culture, even if he might personally suffer for it.

Joseph is a man whose vocation is more important than his career. In Bethlehem, Joseph is warned by an angel in a dream: "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him" (Matthew 2:13). Joseph may well have had much to lose. Back in Nazareth, he had a business — a career, if you will. He had business prospects, business partners and contacts. Fleeing to a distant land might mean hardship for his business.

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Msgr. Charles Pope is a pastor in the Archdiocese of Washington.

THE JUBILEE OF ST. JOSEPH



RICARDO BALACA, ST. JOSEPH WITH THE INFANT JESUS, 1861

Examens for Masculine Virtue

Jesus' Trust in His Earthly Father Speaks Volumes

The Year of St. Joseph invites us into a deeper reflection of and gratitude for the gift of authentic masculine spirituality and fatherhood. In his apostolic exhortation to Catholic men, "Into the Breach," Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmsted directs our attention to Jesus Christ, the "revelation of the mystery of what it means to be man ... the model of masculinity." Like Jesus Christ, all men begin as sons who learn through modeling and imitation how to prepare to give themselves as spouses and fathers. For Jesus, this example came from Joseph.

We know well from sacred Scripture that Joseph's vocation was not an easy one. In fact, one might not blame him if he felt like a failure.

No man would want his wife to give birth in a barn and place her newborn in a trough.

Yet, in his humble trust in God, Joseph fulfilled every aspect of authentic fatherhood, the fullness of masculinity.

If Jesus Christ is "the highest display of masculine virtue and strength," as Bishop Olmsted writes, then we can trust that it was taught to him by a man who displayed those qualities.

As he did for Jesus Christ, so St. Joseph can do for all men: teach, model and provide guidance for masculine virtue and strength. Any man can benefit from the same instruction Our Lord received by praying with the Litany of St. Joseph. Even better would be for a man to use it as a type of examination of conscience. Each petition to Joseph evokes an authentic masculine attribute: Noble son ... Husband ... Head of the Holy Family ... Foster father ... Patriarch ... Guardian of the Virgin ... Faithful guardian of Christ ... Protector ... Pillar ... Prudent and Brave ... Obedient ... Loyal ... Chaste and Just ... Patient ... Comforter ... Example to parents ... Model of Workers ... Patron of the dying ... Hope of the sick ... A lover of poverty ... Terror of Demons.

Each man is called to live these attributes according to different vocations and states in life: son, brother, friend, husband, priest, religious and father. How might this *examen* be done?

Gratitude: Thank God the Father for bestowing the gifts and graces that allow you to exercise these traits. Have gratitude for the men in your life who are responsible for modeling and encouraging you. Have gratitude for those God has entrusted to your care. Have gratitude for the complementary relationship with women that calls

Prayer for the Year of St. Joseph

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our afflictions, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also. Through that charity, which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities. O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness. As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

Source: YearofStJoseph.org

forth these characteristics.

The Litany: Begin slowly, maybe only choosing a few petitions a day, or week. Examine how well you are expressing these attributes in such a manner below:

Guardian — How have I guarded myself and my loved ones in the faith? How have I protected the sanctity of human life? Do I keep guard over what comes into my home through the computer, television and social media? Do I bless my home? Do I bless my children and wife?

Obedient — In order to inherit eternal life, Christ reminds the rich young man to follow the Ten Commandments. Am I obedient to God's commandments? Am I obedient to Catholic Church teachings? How well do I live out my vows or promises in my state of life? Do I strive to live them well, or do I just do the bare minimum? Do I listen for God's voice and obey what he asks?

Model of Workers — Am I a man of integrity at work? Do I model diligence, loyalty and care? Do I strive to do my work for God's glory? Is my identity too dependent on what I do, rather than who I am? Has work and success taken the place of God or my family?

Pillar of families/Head of the Holy Family

— Do I lead my family in prayer? Do I pray for my family? Have I rejected, abandoned or ignored my place as head of the family out of fear? Am I present to my family? Do I give them the attention and listening they need? Do I sacrifice in meaningful ways for my family?

Protector — Do I "stay watchful and alert" for others, leading them away from sin and harm? Am I disciplined in my emotions and habits in order to be ready to protect and provide? Do I listen attentively? Do I withhold personal bias and use sound judgment, offering counsel and support?

Terror of Demons — Satan wants nothing more than for you to fail in being an image and likeness of God. He will use any means to destroy you and turn you from God. Do not be afraid! You are to be a terror to the evil one through the power of Our Lord. How is my relationship with Christ? How often do I go to confession? Am I going to Mass each Sunday and on holy days of obligation? Do I fast and pray? Do I pray the Rosary regularly? Do I strive to grow in the knowledge of my faith?

Commit: Once St. Joseph safely settled the Holy Family in Nazareth, they lived an ordinary life.

Though they were safe, Joseph never ceased to be diligent as a husband and father, offering in self-sacrifice his very life to care for the Blessed Mother and Jesus. Commit to one act, one gift of self-sacrifice you can offer to hone these masculine attributes each day.

Pray: Ask St. Joseph for his intercession, his inspiration and his aid in helping you to continue to embody these characteristics and to grow in the areas you desire to change.

To all women: Pray this Litany of St. Joseph for the men in your life. Pray it in gratitude for the men who have shown masculine virtue and strength that allows you to share your own authentic feminine gifts. Affirm the men in your life and allow them to exercise these masculine traits, avoiding ways that inhibit their expressions of authentic and holy masculinity.

Pray to St. Joseph to be a spiritual father, to help you to heal the wounds caused by men who failed you in authentic masculine love.

As St. Joseph turned to the Blessed Mother for the complementarity of authentic feminine love, so, too, should men turn to her for inspiration and strength. May St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother intercede for us!



Sister Clare Hunter is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist based in Meriden, Connecticut.

"Interior life is nothing but continual and direct conversation with Christ, so as to become one with him. And Joseph can tell us many things about Jesus. Therefore, never neglect devotion to him — Ite ad Ioseph: 'Go to Joseph' — as Christian Tradition puts it in the words of the Old Testament (Genesis 41:55)."

— St. Josemaría Escrivá

5 Books to Read for the Jubilee Year

It's no exaggeration to say that, except for the Blessed Virgin Mary, her blessed spouse St. Joseph is perhaps the most popular saint in the world, which makes sense, given his role as "Patron of the Universal Church."

As a consequence of this popular devotion, the popes began to elevate St. Joseph's role in the Church: Pius IX named him "Patron of the Universal Church" in 1870; Pius XII established May 1 as the feast of St. Joseph the Worker in 1955; Pope John XXIII included his name in the Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) of the Mass in 1962 (followed in 2013 by his inclusion in all of the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass); and, last year, Pope Francis announced 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph.

Yet how many know who St. Joseph is as a historical figure, a source of spiritual benefits, a powerful intercessor and a model of manhood, fatherhood and sanctity?

The following five books represent a good "start" in knowing more about St. Joseph. Although there are countless other fine books, articles and tracts dedicated to the silent saint of the Gospels, these five titles represent a cross section of the literature written about St. Joseph in the last 350 years, a period of time during which devotion to St. Joseph became increasingly more ardent not only in certain regions but throughout the world.

The Divine Favors Granted to St. Joseph by Pere Binet (TAN Books, 1973; 176 pages, \$9.95)

This book was originally published sometime during the author's lifetime. Jesuit Father Etienne Binet (1569-1639) was a prodigious author of works on theology and spirituality — and TAN Books made it available for readers today as one of the earliest books in

Church history devoted to the importance of St. Joseph as intercessor and guardian of the faith. In fact, more than 200 years before Pius IX announced his role as "Patron of the Universal Church," Father Binet had already recognized his powerful intercession for all people at all times, noting that "while God gives to other Saints the power of helping us in certain special necessities, to St. Joseph He gives the privilege of helping us in all circumstances where his protection is needful for us." The book includes chapters on St. Joseph's titles, his natural gifts, his virtues, his specially granted abundance of graces, and individual accounts of his divine assistance granted to those in need.

Month of St. Joseph by St. Peter Julian Eymard (The Sentinel Press, 1948)

This book used to be long out of print; my copy is a handsome slim red hardbound booklet from a multivolume set of Eymard's works. According to the book's preface, *Month of St. Joseph* was available in the original French as early as 1872 and perhaps earlier, during the author's lifetime. This Eucharist-centered devotional booklet has recently been republished and is available along with other Eymard titles at MyCatholicStore.com and Sacramentals.org. My 1948 copy refers to its author as "Blessed" Peter Julian Eymard, but Pope John XXIII canonized this saint on Dec. 9, 1962 (a day after his decree adding St. Joseph to the Canon of the Mass had officially gone into effect). St. Peter Julian (1811-1868) is best known for his work in spreading devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, especially through Eucharistic adoration.

In this book, which provides 31 meditations, one for each day of March, the author shows the important connection between St.

Joseph and the Eucharist through his guardianship of Jesus in Nazareth: "Among the graces which Jesus gave his foster-father — and He flooded him with the graces attached to every one of His mysteries — is that special to an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament," St. Peter Julian writes, encouraging us to take St. Joseph "as the patron and the model of your life of adoration." It is the perfect book to bring along for Eucharistic adoration this year.

Go to Joseph by Father Richard W. Gilsdorf, with a foreword by Bishop David Ricken, Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin (Star of the Bay Press, 2009; 134 pages, \$22)

The manuscript for this book was found among the papers of Father Richard Gilsdorf (1930-2005) of the Green Bay Diocese; with the help of the book's editor, Patrick Beno, it was published five years after Father Gilsdorf's death. Divided into nine chapters with three appendices, *Go to Joseph* seeks to ascertain who Joseph was — and his importance today — as one of the most important figures in Jesus' earthly life and in the life of the Church he founded.

The last chapter, in particular, seeks to better understand why St. Joseph remains silent in the Gospels.

Father Gilsdorf notes that "although Scripture is indeed largely silent about Joseph, this is not something unique. Consider the hidden life of Jesus and Mary. ... We must understand there is a reason the Holy Spirit in His infinite wisdom has told us only so much and no more. One obvious reason is that by limiting the information, all persons of all places and times can apply the basic facts to their own individual lives." In *Go to Joseph*, these basic facts are presented in the full light of the

Catholic faith and loving devotion to St. Joseph.

St. Joseph and His World by Mike Aquilina, with a foreword by Scott Hahn (Scepter Publishers, 2020; 144 pages, \$11.48)

In the prologue to this work, the author mentions to a novelist friend that he is working on a book about St. Joseph, and the friend replies, "St. Joseph is like a black hole at the center of the Gospel galaxy. You know him by his effects more than by seeing the man himself." So the book reads, in large part, like a novel, filling in the character and person of St. Joseph by looking at the things around him. "A man like St. Joseph can become indistinct when we talk too much about him," Aquilina acknowledges.

"In this book, I want to talk about his world: the society and culture of the Judean kingdom, the workplaces where he practiced his craft, the villages that he called home. It was a hot climate, so we will allow him to spend his time in the shade while we contemplate his works."

The author delivers on his promised intentions; the work presents a historical account — based on both theological and archeological evidence — of the earthly father of Jesus, the lowly carpenter of Nazareth who trained God in the family business and, along with Mary, served as his first and greatest disciple.

Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father by Donald Calloway (Marian Press, 2020; 326 pages, \$14.95)

This book, likely to be one of the bestsellers for the Year of St. Joseph, serves as a spiritual retreat in a paperback.

Divided into three parts, the book begins

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Joseph O'Brien writes from Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin.



ANGELO RECCHIA, HOLY FAMILY, C. 1854

Venerable Fulton Sheen on St. Joseph

Was he [St. Joseph] old or young? Most of the statues and pictures we see of Joseph today represent him as an old man with a gray beard, one who took Mary and her vow under his protection with somewhat the same detachment as a doctor would pick up a baby girl in a nursery. We have, of course, no historical evidence whatsoever concerning the age of Joseph. Some apocryphal accounts picture him as an old man; Fathers of the Church, after the fourth century, followed this legend rather rigidly. ...

But when one searches for the reasons why Christian art should have pictured Joseph as aged, we discover that it was in order better to safeguard the virginity of Mary. Somehow, the assumption had crept in that senility was a better protector of virginity than adolescence. Art thus unconsciously made Joseph a spouse chaste and pure by age rather than by virtue. But this is like assuming that the best way to show that a man would never steal is to picture him without hands. ...

But more than that, to make Joseph out as old portrays for us a man who had little vital energy left, rather than one who, having it, kept it in chains for God's sake and for his holy purposes. To make Joseph appear pure only because his flesh had aged is like glorifying a mountain stream that has dried. The Church will not ordain a man to his priesthood who has not his vital powers. She wants men who have something to tame, rather than those who are tame because they have no energy to be wild. It should be no different with God.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to believe that Our Lord would prefer, for a foster father, someone who had made a sacrifice rather than someone who was forced to it. There is the added historical fact that the Jews frowned on a disproportionate marriage between what Shakespeare called "crabbed age and youth"; the Talmud admits a disproportionate marriage only for widows or widowers. Finally, it seems hardly possible that God would have attached a young mother, probably about sixteen or seventeen years of age, to an old man. If he did not disdain to give his mother to a young man, John, at the foot of the Cross, then why should he have given her an old man at the crib? A woman's love always determines the way a man loves: She is the silent educator of his virile powers.

Since Mary is what might be called a "virginizer" of young men as well as women, and the greatest inspiration of Christian purity,

should she not logically have begun by inspiring and virginizing the first youth whom she had probably ever met — Joseph, the Just? It was not by diminishing his power to love but by elevating it that she would have her first conquest, and in her own spouse, the man who was a man, and not a mere senile watchman!

Joseph was probably a young man, strong, virile, athletic, handsome, chaste and disciplined. Instead of being a man incapable of loving, he must have been on fire with love. Just as we would give very little credit to the Blessed Mother if she had taken her vow of virginity after having been an old maid for fifty years, so neither could we give much credit to a Joseph who became her spouse because he was advanced in years. Young girls in those days, like Mary, took vows to love God uniquely, and so did young men, of whom Joseph was one so preeminent as to be called the "just." Instead, then, of being dried fruit to be served on the table of the king, he was rather a blossom filled with promise and power. He was not in the evening of life, but in its morning, bubbling over with energy, strength and controlled passion. Mary and Joseph brought to their espousals not only their vows of virginity but also two hearts with greater torrents of love than had ever before coursed through human breasts. ...

How much more beautiful Mary and Joseph become when we see in their lives what might be called the first Divine Romance! No human heart is moved by the love of the old for the young; but who is not moved by the love of the young for the young? In both Mary and Joseph, there were youth, beauty and promise. God loves cascading cataracts and bellowing waterfalls, but he loves them better, not when they overflow and drown his flowers, but when they are harnessed and bridled to light a city and to slake the thirst of a child. In Joseph and Mary, we do not find one controlled waterfall and one dried-up lake but rather two youths who, before they knew the beauty of the one and the handsome strength of the other, willed to surrender these things for Jesus. Leaning over the manger crib of the Infant Jesus, then, are not age and youth but youth and youth, the consecration of beauty in a maid and the surrender of strong comeliness in a man.

Excerpt from Fulton Sheen's

The World's First Love: Mary, Mother of God

Aquilina

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lives of biblical figures to scenes that are preserved in Scripture.

If we do this with Joseph, however, we might conclude that he was an unusual man, always in the midst of adventure. Those wild episodes were surely important in his life. But they probably occupied just a few days.

Unfortunately, the Gospels don't give close-ups of Joseph's ordinary moments at home. But neither do they leave us in the dark.

What the Evangelists reveal is that Joseph's reputation did not rest on his adventures.

Apparently, he didn't talk about them. When his neighbors thought about him at all, they referred to him as "the carpenter" — not the guy who traveled to Egypt, not the guy who beat Herod; just the carpenter.

Joseph was known for his work. Though God had chosen him for the greatest mission ever, he was an ordinary workingman.

And he was no less ordinary for the fact that he was close to angels.

Why is this important? Because in the midst of every believer's daily work, the angels are there, and God wants everyone to be alert to their promptings. This is not a gift for unusual people.

Joseph's labor was demanding on muscle and mind. His worksites were noisy, with hammers and saws and voices. Yet, even there, he cultivated interior silence and the habit of prayer. Angels can help us do the same.

Theologians in later times have referred to Joseph as "the Angelic Man."

They do this, first of all, because he had at least four vivid encounters with angels — but also because he received in abundance the particular gifts of all the pure spirits in heaven. This argument is developed in the work of Jerónimo Gracián, a 16th-century friar who was spiritual director to St. Teresa of Avila.

In the pages of the Bible, Gracián identifies nine orders of pure spirits: angels, archangels, principalities; virtues, powers, dominions; thrones, cherubim and seraphim.

Each grouping has its particular way of serving God. And yet, Gracián

says, Joseph managed to fulfill the requirements of every group.

Like the angels, Joseph served as messenger between heaven and the Holy Family. Like the archangels, Joseph was given a task of utmost gravity; and his combat required direct engagement with evil.

And so Gracián continues through all the ranks.

As the cherubim flanked the seat of God on the Ark of the Covenant, so Joseph and Mary flanked the earthly throne of the King of Kings.

And like the fiery seraphim in heaven, Joseph burned with ardent love as he lived in the earthly court of Almighty God.

Joseph surpassed all the orders of heaven in excellence.

For this reason, he received close attention from the angels themselves. In heaven he was already seen as a prince.

Yet he was no less ordinary for all that. He was no less — and no more — than "the carpenter."

Gracián's analysis has implications not only for Joseph's life, but also for yours and mine.

Through baptism, we have a place in the divine household (the

Church) and have been called to share a table with Mary and Jesus (the Mass).

Like Joseph, you and I are able to serve Jesus constantly and in close proximity.

Work need not be an interruption to our love.

In Joseph's work he loved his wife and Son, even when his labors took him away from home, even when his work required concentration, even when he was working in Egypt's blistering heat.

Like Joseph, we can be "angelic" as we bear Jesus into the world — a world that still has its Herods who are hostile to the Lord.

God calls us, as he called Joseph, to be his messengers and powers. He calls us to cooperate with his angels in the middle of our neighborhoods and workplaces.

The angels work best with people they know best — people who have a habit of asking their help. That's all the consent they need in order to work in our lives.

St. Joseph was the ordinary man, and yet he was angelic.

Let future generations say the same about you and me.

Landry

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ing us that real spousal love can and ought but does not need to be expressed uniquely in genital relations.

Fifth, St. Joseph shows us how to work hard. He was a tekton ("builder"), a word that sums up his entire life. He built stuff by the sweat of his brow and callouses on his hands. He traveled with tools. St. John Paul II said he was the "very epitome of the Gospel of work," the one who taught Jesus human work. "If the Son of God was willing to learn a human work from a man," John Paul II continued, "this indicates that there is in work a specific moral value with a precise meaning for man and for his self-fulfillment." St. Joseph helps every man find that value and meaning.

Sixth, St. Joseph shows us how to become men of prayer.

He is a contemplative man of eloquent silence, whose only recorded word in Scripture was pronouncing the Savior's name at his circumcision. His life was an extended meditation — like a Rosary — on Jesus: Jesus' life-giving words, example of humility and patience, diligence, charity and other virtues.

Joseph's ruminative silence, St. John Paul II commented, "reveals in a special way the inner portrait of the man. The Gospels ... allow us to discover in his 'actions' — shrouded in silence as they are — an aura of deep contemplation."

Pope Benedict prayed that, in a

world that is often too noisy, we would all be "infected" with St. Joseph's silence.

Finally, St. Joseph shows us how to become men of the Eucharist. It's wonderful that at the beginning of his pontificate Pope Francis decreed that St. Joseph's name be mentioned after the Blessed Virgin's in every Mass because his life was like a Mass, for "the little house at Nazareth was as the outspread square of the white corporal," as Father Frederick Faber commented. The Holy House was a tabernacle where he and Mary lived in the Real Presence with adoration.

Before Jesus ever would say the words of institution, Joseph gave his body, blood, sweat, tears — everything — for Jesus. Pope St. Paul VI said that the secret of St. Joseph's greatness is that he "made his life a service, a sacrifice, to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission that is joined to it." Serving Christ, "with love and for love," was "his life." In an age in which belief in the Real Presence must be strengthened, St. Joseph shows men how to live Eucharistic lives.

Pope Francis says that St. Joseph "reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation." "Great things" are not needed, but ordinary virtues, lived fully and authentically, are.

Joseph shows us those human and manly virtues. The name "Joseph" means "increase," and this holy year is a particularly auspicious time for men and boys to increase in devotion, learning from him how to serve God, their family, the Church and society with similar manly zeal.

Msgr. Pope

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But Joseph was a father and husband before he was a businessman. His child was threatened, and his first obligation was to Jesus and Mary. His vocation outweighed his career.

In a culture like ours, where too many parents make their careers and livelihoods paramount, Joseph displays a different priority. It is true that many parents feel they have no choice but to work. But it is also true that many demand a lifestyle that requires a lot of extra income.

Perhaps a smaller house, less amenities, and so on, would permit a daycare-free childhood for more of our children. Joseph points the way for parents: Vocation has priority over career. For fathers especially, Joseph shows that a man is a husband and father before he is a businessman.

Joseph was a man who protected his family. As we saw, there was a grave threat to Jesus. Joseph also models a protective instinct that too many men lack today. Our children are exposed to many dangers. Physical dangers are less common, but moral dangers surely abound.

Fathers, what are your children watching on TV? What are their internet habits? Who are their friends? What do your children think about important moral issues? Are you preparing them to face the moral challenges and temptations of life? Are you and your wife teaching them the faith and reading Scripture to them? Or are you just a passive father, uninvolved in the raising of your children?

A man protects his children from harm — physical, moral and spiritual. Joseph, as a model of manhood, protected his family.

Joseph was a man of work. The Scriptures (Matthew 13:55) speak of Joseph as a "carpenter." The Greek word, however, is *tektōnos*, which can also refer to a builder or craftsman.

So it may be that Joseph worked with stone as well as wood and other trades in his work. It was through his work that Joseph sup-

ported his family.

It is the call of a man to work diligently and to responsibly and reliably provide for his family. Joseph models this essential aspect of manhood.

Paul felt it necessary to rebuke some of the men of his day for their idleness: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ... For even when we were with you,

JOSEPH WAS A FATHER
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VOCATION OUTWEIGHED
HIS CAREER.

we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.' We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they earn the bread they eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). True men work hard for their families.

Joseph is a model for manhood. Nothing he ever said was recorded, but his life speaks eloquently enough.

He is referred to as the "Guardian" and "Patron of the Universal Church."

He has these titles because he was the guardian, protector and patron (provider) of the Church in the earliest stage, when the Church was just Jesus and Mary. But since the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, in protecting and providing for Jesus, he was doing that for us, for we are in Christ as members of his body.

Men especially do well to imitate St. Joseph and invoke his patronage in all their endeavors as husbands, fathers and providers.

St. Joseph, Terror of Demons and model of manhood, pray for us!

by saints and others, including the author.

As Father Calloway notes, since Mary and Joseph had the perfect marriage, it only makes sense that the faithful would want to consecrate their lives to both.

"God desires that all children be committed to the love and care of a mother and a father," he writes.

"You are not a member of a single-parent spiritual family. Mary is your spiritual mother, and St. Joseph is your spiritual father. The spiritual fatherhood of St. Joseph is extremely important for your spiritual growth."

O'Brien

CONTINUING PAGE B5 STORY

with a 33-day preparation for the Consecration to St. Joseph — based on the purpose and method of the Consecration to Mary by St. Louis de Montfort (1673-1716).

The second part of the book provides the readings that accompany the preparation for the consecration, while the third part presents a selection of prayers to St. Joseph, including the Litany to St. Joseph (in English and Latin) and various prayers of consecration composed