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# Go to Joseph!



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A PASTORAL LETTER BY THE MOST REVEREND JOHN O. BARRES  
ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF  
ST. JOSEPH AS PATRON OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## Introduction

One hundred and fifty years ago, Pope Blessed Pius IX solemnly declared St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the “foster” father of Our Savior, to be the Patron of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the Pope raised the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 to that of a Solemnity.<sup>2</sup> Why did the Holy Father choose precisely that moment in the Church’s history to make such a declaration? And why, a century and a half later, should this title given to St. Joseph be important for all of us?

This anniversary grants us the opportunity to look at the life of this great saint with new eyes and from a fresh perspective. Although saints live in a particular time and place, their holiness and example transcend those limits, and make them truly examples for every age. In a very particular way, this carpenter from First-Century Galilee has much to teach us about how to live our Catholic Faith in the troubled 21st Century.

## St. Joseph in Sacred Scripture

It may come as a surprise to even the most faithful Catholics that St. Joseph makes only a few appearances in Sacred Scripture. He appears a number of times in St. Luke’s Gospel; is mentioned only twice in passing in St. John’s Gospel; and is not referred to at all by St. Mark. It is, however, in the Gospel of St. Matthew where we get the most information about St. Joseph.

St. Matthew begins his account with Jesus’s genealogy, showing him to be a descendent of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, as well as of King David, for it was always said that the Messiah would come from David’s line. The genealogy winds its way through 42 generations in total, concluding with: “and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ”.<sup>3</sup> This is the first appearance of St. Joseph in the Bible.

The Gospel of Matthew then relates to us the story of the Annunciation of the conception and birth of Jesus from St. Joseph’s perspective, just as St. Luke relates the same from the Blessed Mother’s perspective. We are told that both Mary and Joseph need to have their parts in salvation history explained to them.

Mary is told by the Archangel Gabriel that God has chosen her to be the mother of His Son, and Joseph is later told that he has an important role to play in this Divine plan as well. Joseph will be the spouse of Mary, who will remain a virgin, and he will be a true father (though not a biological one) to Jesus. “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>4</sup>

St. Matthew describes Joseph as a “just” or “righteous” man which, in the Jewish religion, referred to one who faithfully lived up to God’s law and the covenant He made with His people. It means much more than merely being a good person; a righteous man was exceptionally

faithful to God and was therefore also a great rarity in Sacred Scripture.

But it makes sense that the Lord would need the most righteous person and a man of great faith to care for Mary and Jesus. While the Archangel appears to a wakeful Mary, Joseph receives all of his angelic appearances while he is asleep. This required an extraordinary faith to believe that these apparitions were real, and to discern what God wanted of him through them.

Like his namesake Joseph in the Book of Genesis, St. Joseph is able to interpret God's will through dreams.<sup>5</sup> Each time St. Joseph was told what to do by the angel, he immediately set about putting God's plan into action.

We know, through both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, that Joseph accompanied Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. The census demanded that they travel to Bethlehem, which had been prophesied as the birthplace of the Messiah. It was Joseph's ancestral city, since he was a remote descendant of King David.<sup>6</sup>

He was a witness to all the events surrounding the birth of the Lord. Eight days later he accepted his father's duty of naming the boy when He was presented in the Temple. At that time, he heard the old man Simeon prophecy that a sword would pierce Mary's heart (and how those words must have pierced the heart of Joseph, as well). We also learn that Joseph was of modest means because at that time he offered the sacrifice of two turtledoves, which was of the offering of the poor.<sup>7</sup>

Matthew is the only evangelist who gives us the story of the Magi and their ominous warning about the murderous intent of King Herod, which prompted Joseph to shepherd the Holy Family to temporary safety in Egypt. Instructed again by the angel in a dream, Joseph returned only when he was told it was safe and he settled his family in Nazareth. Throughout, St. Joseph is seen in his dual role as protector and provider for Jesus and Mary.

There is only one more story of St. Joseph in Scripture. St. Luke relates the famous incident that occurred when Our Lord was twelve years old and he became separated from His parents on the return journey from the Passover

pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After three days, the boy was found in the Temple sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions.

*His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them ... [Lk 2:48-51]*

With this text, St. Joseph fades from the pages of the Bible, never having spoken a word. The only other times he is mentioned in the Gospels are in passing, when Jesus is described as "the son of Joseph", or as "the carpenter's son".<sup>8</sup>

But this passage is revealing. Mary herself gives to Joseph the title "father," and Jesus, though God, gives his earthly father the love, respect and obedience that all children owe to their parents. And, even though we have no recorded word of St. Joseph preserved for us in the Bible, this saint speaks to us loudly by his actions, always listening attentively and prayerfully for God's instructions, and then immediately carrying them out.

## The Hidden Life of the Holy Family

Saints, theologians and spiritual writers for the last 2,000 years have speculated on what we call the "hidden life" of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. From the return of the family from Egypt and their settling in Nazareth, aside from the incident at the age of 12, nothing is known of the life of the Holy Family for a period of some three decades, until the adult Jesus begins his public ministry.<sup>9</sup>

We can only speculate what life in these years must have been like. It is most likely that it was completely ordinary, a life very much like that of any other family in the village. It would have been a life centered on God and family, on work and community.

Suffice to say that Our Lord's hidden life was a time of 30 years of human preparation for the work He would accomplish in the last three. But we cannot underestimate the importance of Jesus experiencing everything about human life that we experience, except for sin.

And it is precisely in these years, that St. Joseph would have played a very large role in the life of his son. It is by the word and the lived example of St. Joseph that Jesus in his humanity learned what it meant to be a man, a member of a family, a member of a community, and a worker.

Joseph must also have been a living icon of the Fatherhood of God to his Son, who was God Himself. The Father of Jesus, and the Father of us all, is our

Childhood of Christ - artist Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656). This is a faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art. The work of art and this photograph is in the public domain. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerrit\\_van\\_Honthorst\\_-\\_Childhood\\_of\\_Christ\\_-\\_WGA11656.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerrit_van_Honthorst_-_Childhood_of_Christ_-_WGA11656.jpg)





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how to earn a living through hard work, in order to be able to help to support his family, especially when Joseph was no longer able to.

The Church has traditionally believed that the absence of St. Joseph during the public ministry of Our Lord meant that he must have died some time before Jesus began preaching when he was about the age of 30. If St. Joseph were alive then, we would expect him to have been present, as Mary was, at different times during Jesus' ministry.

We certainly would have seen him standing at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday, in support of his Son and offering comfort to his wife. The fact that from the Cross Jesus gave the Blessed Mother into the care of His beloved Apostle John, indicates that St. Joseph was already deceased.<sup>10</sup>

Although the death of St. Joseph is not recorded for us in Sacred Scripture, we assume that Our Lord and Our Lady would have been present at his death. To have the Savior of the World and the Blessed Virgin Mary accompany one's soul at the moment of death is the desire of every believer. And that is how

Father in Heaven.

And when God the Father had to choose a man, a human being, to represent His Fatherhood to His Son here on earth, he chose Joseph, the son of Jacob. Long before Jesus ever taught His apostles to pray using the word "Abba," meaning "Father," He addressed that title as a little boy to his own "Abba," the carpenter of Nazareth. Jesus discovered human fatherhood through His life with St. Joseph. For our Blessed Lord, St. Joseph was truly the human face of the Eternal Father. This was one of St. Joseph's most important vocations, to faithfully mirror the loving Fatherhood of God, and so to bring that Fatherhood down from heaven to earth and make it visible.

In these years St. Joseph, as head of the household, would have been responsible for leading the family in daily prayers. Along with Mary, he was the first teacher of their Son in so many things. He would have taught Jesus the manual trade he himself had been taught, perhaps by his own father.

He would have guided the small hands of his Son in learning to fashion things out of wood and stone, though that Son was also God who had created the universe. From St. Joseph, Jesus would have learned

St. Joseph comes to be known as the patron saint of a "happy death."

It is also good for us to remember that for every year He spent in His public ministry, Jesus chose to spend 10 years with Mary and Joseph. What He received from them in those "hidden" years was clearly of very great importance to the Son of God.

## St. Joseph and the Family

Even though there was not very much detail to draw from, the Evangelists made sure that we knew the name of the man chosen by God for this enormous task, to care for the Lord's two greatest possessions on earth: His Divine Son; and His Immaculate Mother. St. Joseph was chosen by God for this unique purpose, and so he became the spouse of the Blessed Virgin and the earthly father of the Son of God. He was the head of the little household that we call the Holy Family.

Christ, being God, could have chosen any number of ways to come to us. But when He came, Christ chose to come to earth *through the human family*. As Catholics, we do not believe that the family is merely an accidental byproduct of anthropology, as if human

beings created the family because it was convenient, or practical, or was suited to the culture in which they happened to live.

As Catholics, we believe that the human family was created by God as one of His first gifts to us. In the Book of Genesis, when God creates the Man and the Woman, He then gives them to each other in marriage. And so, as the crowning part of His creation, God creates the first human family:

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it ..."<sup>11</sup>*

In our secular times, societies around the world (and even our own) have sought to redefine marriage, and therefore to redefine the family. Humanity may change what it has itself created, even if that change is a mistake. But humanity may not change what God has created, even if it seems like a good idea.

God has created marriage to be between one man and one woman; and He has created the norm for the family to be that of a husband and wife, who then become a father and mother, with their children. Even though our modern families may infrequently look like this, that does not change that this is the norm, and that this is what God desires.

Therefore, this is what all families, with God's help, should strive to attain. One of the main reasons for the breakdown in the life of the family over these last few decades is that men and women have denied the truth that marriage and the family have been created by God expressly for us. This is a foundational part of God's plan for us. God chose to come to us through the human family, and He desires that we come back to him in the same way.

Marriage and the family even predate humanity's Original Sin. So, it should come as no wonder that sin is at the root of the breakdown of the family. And, since the family is the foundation of society, the crisis in the family imperils not only all individuals, but all of society as well.

Pope St. John Paul II wrote: "The future of humanity passes by way of the family."<sup>12</sup> The many, varied crises facing the world today all derive from the one, great, foundational crisis that is the collapse of the modern



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

family. This concern that Pope St. John Paul II preached about for the 26 years of his papacy, Pope Francis has continued to warn us about today. In a Mass for families in Manila on January 16, 2015, Pope Francis spoke eloquently and with great conviction:

*The pressures on family life today are many ... The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. While all too many people live in dire poverty, others are caught up in materialism and lifestyles which are destructive of family life and the most basic demands of Christian morality ... The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life ...*

*Our world needs good and strong families to overcome these threats! ... [The world] needs holy and loving families to protect the beauty and truth of the family in God's plan and to be a support and example for other families. Every threat to the family is a threat to society itself ... The future passes through the family. So protect*



## Devotion to St. Joseph

It may come as a surprise that there was not really very much popular spiritual devotion to St. Joseph for the first 1,500 years of the Church's history. The Church Fathers mention St. Joseph in their homilies in the early centuries of the Church, and St. Joseph was always depicted in Christian art, especially in scenes of the Nativity of the Lord. However, there actually was no Feast of St. Joseph in the Church's calendar until Pope Sixtus IV introduced it locally in Rome in the year 1479, which was then extended to the Universal Church in the next century.<sup>14</sup>

However, the modern, popular devotion to St. Joseph that we know really dates to the time of St. Teresa of Avila. The great Carmelite reformer and later Doctor of the Church, St. Teresa had a great love for and devotion to St. Joseph. She named the first convent she founded in Avila in the year 1562, San José, in honor of this great saint.

Photographic reproduction of Teresa of Avila by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). Photo by David Monniaux. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNU\\_Free\\_Documentation\\_License](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNU_Free_Documentation_License)

*your families! Protect your families! See in them your country's greatest treasure and nourish them always by prayer and the grace of the sacraments. Families will always have their trials, but may you never add to them! Instead, be living examples of love, forgiveness and care. Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death. What a gift this would be to society, if every Christian family lived fully its noble vocation!*<sup>13</sup>

At a time of worldwide crisis in the family, a return to devotion to this great saint can be the first step in healing and restoring our families. Families are essential to the good of society and to the good of the Church. When parents live the vows they make at the baptisms of their children they create a domestic church, a church of the home, where children are first formed in the faith and taught to love God and neighbor.

Let us look to the example of this exemplary husband and father to see how we can make our families look like his. Devotion to St. Joseph through prayer, study and emulation can help to bring this about.

*I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph and earnestly recommended myself to him ... I don't recall up to this day ever having petitioned him for anything that he failed to grant ... For with other saints it seems the Lord has given them grace to be of help in one need, whereas with this glorious saint I have experience that he helps in all our needs ... I have not known anyone truly devoted to him ... who has not advanced more in virtue ... I only ask for the love of God anyone who does not believe me to try, and he will see through experience the great good that comes from recommending oneself to this glorious patriarch and being devoted to him ... Those who cannot find a master to teach them prayer should take this glorious saint for their master, and they will not go astray.*<sup>15</sup>

Other saints known for their devotion to St. Joseph include St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Peter Julian Eymard, St. Mary MacKillop, St. André Bessette, St. Josemaría Escrivá, and Bl. William Joseph Chaminade.<sup>16</sup> Popes devoted to St. Joseph include Pope Bl. Pius IX, Pope Leo XIII,



Pope Benedict XV, Pope Ven. Pius XII, Pope St. John XXIII, Pope St. John Paul II, and Pope Francis. Over the years modern devotion to him has become second nature. It is difficult to find a Catholic Church that does not have a shrine to the Blessed Mother on one side of the altar and a shrine to St. Joseph on the other.

In the last century and a half, there has been an increase in devotion to St. Joseph. In that time, beginning in the 1860s, a number of religious congregations of men and women have been founded under his patronage. St. Joseph appeared in the approved Marian apparition at Knock, Ireland, in 1879.

Pope Leo XIII wrote an Encyclical Letter on devotion to St. Joseph, *Quamquam Pluries*,<sup>17</sup> and declared March to be the month of St. Joseph. A great shrine to St. Joseph was built in Barcelona in 1901 by Bl. Petra of St. Joseph, and three years later the great St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal was begun by St. André Bessette. In 1905, Pope St. Pius X approved the prayers of the Litany of St. Joseph. St. Joseph also appeared in the approved Marian apparition at Fatima, Portugal, on October 13, 1917.

On July 25, 1920, Pope Benedict XV issued the *motu proprio*, *Bonum Sane*, in which he promoted devotion to St. Joseph in order to combat Marxist revolutions spreading throughout the world, as well as the crisis in the family in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>18</sup> Pope Benedict XV also inserted St. Joseph's name into the prayer the Divine Praises, he decreed Wednesdays to be the day of St. Joseph, and also asked that he be invoked as the patron of a holy death.

In 1937, Pope Pius XI invoked St. Joseph as a special protector of the Church against Communism in his Encyclical Letter, *Divini Redemptoris*, issued on March 19, 1937:

*We place the vast campaign of the Church against world Communism under the standard of St. Joseph, her mighty Protector. He belongs to the working-class, and he bore the burdens of poverty for himself and the Holy Family, whose tender and vigilant head he was. To him was entrusted the Divine Child when Herod loosed his assassins against Him. In a life of faithful performance of everyday duties, he left an example for all those who must gain their bread by the toil of their hands. He won for himself the title of "The Just", serving thus as a living model of that Christian justice which should reign in social life.*<sup>19</sup>

In 1955, Pope Ven. Pius XII established the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker to be observed on May 1 each year. This was meant to honor St. Joseph as the patron of workers and to highlight the dignity of work, as well as to be a response to the "May Day" Communist celebrations of International Workers' Day.

In 1961, at the beginning of the Second Vatican



Pope Pius IX.  
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<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b21214/>

Council, Pope St. John XXIII named St. Joseph the patron of the Council<sup>20</sup> and, the following year, inserted St. Joseph's name into the Canon of the Mass (the First Eucharistic Prayer). Pope St. John Paul II wrote an Apostolic Exhortation in 1989 entitled, *Redemptoris Custos*, "On the Person and Mission of St. Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church."<sup>21</sup>

Pope Francis has spoken of his own devotion to St. Joseph:

*I would also like to tell you something very personal. I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church! Yes! We know that he can do that. So when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: pray for this problem!*<sup>22</sup>

Since St. Joseph was a man willing to sacrifice himself completely for his family, out of love for God and for them, Pope Francis judged it right that his name should be added to the three other Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass. This was done in the year 2013, at the very beginning of his pontificate.

St. Joseph's name is now invoked immediately after that of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "with blessed Joseph, her spouse." The Mass is, after all, a sacrifice, and so it is proper to invoke in the Mass' most important prayer the name of him whose entire life embodies a perfect sacrifice of love of God and love of family. Later that same year,

Vitrail Florac - Death of St. Joseph by Vassil. This work is in the public domain.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vitrail\\_Florac\\_010609\\_02\\_Mort\\_de\\_Joseph.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vitrail_Florac_010609_02_Mort_de_Joseph.jpg)

Pope Francis also consecrated the Vatican City State to St. Joseph.<sup>23</sup>

This great increase in devotion to St. Joseph all seems to stem from the action that Pope Bl. Pius IX took 150 years ago, in the year 1870.

## St. Joseph as Patron of the Catholic Church

The story of how St. Joseph came to be declared the Patron of the Catholic Church is an unusual one and requires an understanding of the difficult and complex times in which it occurred.

On December 8, 1869, Pope Pius IX formally opened the 20th Ecumenical Council of the Church, known as the First Vatican Council. More than four years in preparation, the Pope called the Council because of the terrible forces that had been unleashed on the world in those times: philosophical doctrines like rationalism, liberalism and materialism; as well as political and economic movements such as communism, anarchism and socialism.

The Council began its work in Rome in the Fall of 1869, continued through the Spring of 1870, and then adjourned for the summer. However, in July of 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and France had to withdraw troops that had been stationed in Rome to protect the Pope and the Vatican. On September 20, Italian forces under King Victor Emmanuel II invaded Rome which, up until then, had been part of the Papal States and had been governed by the Pope as head of the Church.

On October 20, 1870, the Pope had to suspend the Council indefinitely, and it never resumed. Pius IX would refer to himself ever afterwards as a “prisoner of the Vatican,” never leaving its precincts until his death eight years later. A wave of anti-Catholic persecution began in Italy and spread throughout western Europe along with these new philosophical and political movements.

It was a time of political, social and economic chaos, which also served to produce a crisis in faith. It was in this context that the Holy Father came to see that the most practical solution was first of all a spiritual one. He resolved that the Church which was in such peril from all sides needed protection. And who better to protect the Church of Christ than the man chosen by God to protect Christ Our Lord during His life here on earth. And so, on December 8, 1870, the Feast of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father declared:

*Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble.*

*And now therefore, when in these most troublesome times the Church is beset by enemies on every side, and is weighed down by calamities so heavy that ungodly men assert that the gates of hell have at length prevailed against her, the venerable*

*prelates of the whole Catholic world have presented to the Sovereign Pontiff their own petitions and those of the faithful committed to their charge ... Pope Pius IX, in order to entrust himself and all the faithful to the Patriarch St. Joseph’s most powerful patronage, has chosen to comply with the prelates’ desire and has solemnly declared him Patron of the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup>*

So often, when the troubles of life arise, we think that we must do all in our human power to change things and, if that does not work, then we may turn to God for help. But that is not how our Lord wants us to confront the challenges of our lives.

He wants to be invited to be a daily part of our everyday life, and not just summoned in times of trouble. Our Lord lived a normal, everyday family life with Mary and Joseph for many years. What made their family Holy was that it was a community of persons united by love with Christ at the center.

The Holy Father realized that the problems of the world, just as the problems of an individual person, always have a spiritual origin. And so, the Pope decided on making a spiritual response. St. Joseph was then, as he remains today, a most excellent spiritual guide through difficult times. And the turbulent times of the 1870s look remarkably similar to our troubled times today.

## Conclusion: St. Joseph for Today

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as the Patron of the Catholic Church, we find ourselves once again terribly worried about the world in which we live. In this last year, we have come through a global pandemic resulting in the deaths of many, the sickness of many more, an economic crisis, and worldwide self-isolation.

We have seen civil unrest, racial tensions, and rioting and violence in the streets of our country and around the world. We have experienced a contentious national election that seems to forecast a continued divided government and divided citizenry. There remain many international concerns, and terrorism continues to be a grave problem.

In the midst of all these difficulties, the Church herself has been weakened by scandals that have produced a feeling of hurt and betrayal on the part of the Catholic faithful and has placed useful weapons in the hands of her enemies. This has resulted in a spiritual crisis which has seen many people of all different faiths around the world abandon the practice of religion.

And we still find ourselves in a time of crisis and confusion about the plan of God for men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, children and families. In short, our times look remarkably similar to the times of a century and a half ago, when a holy Pope reminded his people that the solution to the world’s problems must begin with a spiritual response. Then as

now, the Church says: "Go to Joseph!"

On this anniversary and in these extraordinary times, let us turn in prayer to the humble workingman from that obscure village in Galilee. Joseph was a man who never did anything the world counted as great. But as a man, a husband, a father, and a worker, he loved God and his family to an extraordinary degree. Because of this, the most important task in salvation history, after that of Jesus and Mary, was assigned to St. Joseph.

The greatest husband and father in the history of the world did not shower his family with material things. He gave them something of much greater value: he gave them himself. Every moment of every day, through his love, his sacrifice, his labor, he gave them himself. They knew that they always came first in his mind and in his heart, never second. Today, the world needs an increase in devotion to St. Joseph, because we need more men like St. Joseph in the world.

And so, we come to see the importance of this great saint to each one of us, to the Church and to the world. Let us ask St. Joseph to be our teacher in prayer and in faith. Let us ask for his guidance to show us how to lead by example rather than words. Ask him to lead us through these dangerous times, as he once led the Holy Family to safety in Egypt.

Go to Joseph! Pray to him, and ask for his guidance and protection for yourselves, your families and for the Church. Imitate St. Joseph in his virtues: his fidelity, his

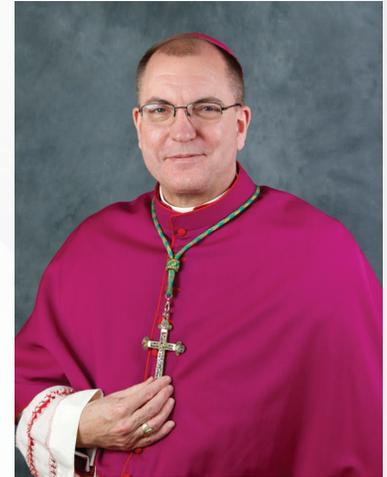
constancy, his love, his gentleness, his strength, his courage and his faith.

St. Joseph, patron of men, of husbands and fathers, pray for us! St. Joseph, patron of workers, pray for us! St. Joseph, protector and guardian of families, pray for us! St. Joseph, patron and defender of the Universal Catholic Church, pray for us! †

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre



<sup>1</sup> The Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Quemadmodum Deus*, 8 December 1870. [Online.] Available: [www.stjsa.org/pope-pius-ix-and-st-joseph](http://www.stjsa.org/pope-pius-ix-and-st-joseph). [Accessed 30 September 2020.]

<sup>2</sup> From 1870 to 1970, that meant a rank of "double of the first class"; and a "Solemnity" from 1970 on.

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Biblical Association (Great Britain). (1994). *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (Mt 1:16). New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All Scriptural citations in this letter will be taken from this version of Scripture.

<sup>4</sup> Mt 1:20-21.

<sup>5</sup> The story of the patriarch Joseph is told in Gn 37:1-50:26. The title of this Pastoral Letter, Go to Joseph!, is the traditional Catholic invocation to St. Joseph, taken from the story of Joseph of the Old Testament: "When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do.'" Gn 41:55.

<sup>6</sup> Lk 2:1-5.

<sup>7</sup> Lk 2:22-24.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 1:45 & 6:42; Mt 13:55; Lk 3:23 & 4:22.

<sup>9</sup> Lk 3:23: "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph."

<sup>10</sup> Jn 19:26-27.

<sup>11</sup> Gn 1:27-28.

<sup>12</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981. §86.2 [Online]. Available: [www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html). [Accessed 20 September 2020].

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<sup>15</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, The Book of Her Life, in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1*, Kieran Kavanagh. O.C.D. & Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., transl., (Washington, D.C., ICS Publications, 1987), 79-81.

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<sup>17</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, 15 August 1889. [Online]. Available: [www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15081889\\_quamquam-pluries.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15081889_quamquam-pluries.html). [Accessed 8 November 2020].

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<sup>23</sup> Calloway, 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> *The Sacred Congregation of Rites, Quemadmodum Deus*.