

ABOUT ST. JOSEPH



GO TO JOSEPH!

"Of old it was said to the needy and suffering people in the kingdom of Egypt: 'Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you.' (Gen. 41:55)

"The same is now said by the Sovereign Pontiff to all needy and suffering people in the kingdom of the Church: Go to Joseph...

"What was truly said of the first Joseph, as to his future, and as to his goodness, his chastity, his patience, his wisdom, his influence with the king, his power over the people, and his love for his brethren, is verified much more perfectly, even to this day, in the second Joseph."

-Herbet Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster

A 16th CENTURY PROPHECY

Isadore of Isolani, a pious Dominican of the 16th century, prophesied that "the sound of victory" will be heard in the Church Militant "when the faithful recognize the sanctity of St. Joseph." He continues: "The Lord will let His light shine, He will lift the veil, and great men will search out the interior gifts of God that are hidden in St. Joseph; they will find in him a priceless treasure, the like of which they had never found in other saints of the Old Testament. We are inclined to believe that toward the end of time, God will overwhelm St. Joseph with glorious honor.

If in the past ages during the storms of persecution, these honors could not be shown to St. Joseph, we must conclude that they have been reserved for later times. At some future time, the feast of St. Joseph will be celebrated as one of the greatest feasts. The Vicar of Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will order this feast to be celebrated in the Universal Church."

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FEASTS OF ST. JOSEPH

THE PRIMARY FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH IS MARCH 19. It is believed - his death occurred on that day. This feast was fixed in the 15th century and was extended to the whole Church by Pope Gregory XV in 1621. On December 8 1870, Pope Pius IX ordered that this feast be celebrated throughout the Church as a double of the first class. Holy Church also dedicates to St. Joseph the entire month of March. In addition, pious custom dedicates Wednesday of each week to the honor of St. Joseph.

May 1 was established as the feast of St. Joseph the Workman by Pope Pius XII in 1955. The date was chosen to coincide with the date on which Labor Day is observed in many countries, thus to elevate and sanctify the observance. Formerly there was a solemnity of the Patronage of St. Joseph which was celebrated each year on the third Sunday after Easter, then changed to the Wednesday following the Second Sunday after Easter, with an octave following. On that day St. Joseph was honored especially as the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and as Patron of the Universal Church. Formerly, there was also a feast of the Espousal of St. Joseph on January 23.

ST. JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF MARY

"There is a general rule concerning all special graces granted to any human being. Whenever the divine favor chooses someone to receive a special grace, or to accept a lofty vocation, God adorns the person chosen with all the gifts of the spirit needed to fulfill the task at hand."

"This general rule is especially verified in the case of St. Joseph...He was chosen by the eternal Father as the trustworthy guardian and protector of his greatest treasures, namely, his divine Son and Mary, Joseph's wife." (St. Bernardine of Siena, Sermon 2 on St. Joseph; Cf. 2nd Reading, Liturgy of the Hours).

The gospel passage for this solemnity is St. Matthew's account of the announcement to Joseph of the coming birth of Jesus. It makes St. Joseph the central and active figure - Joseph is the recipient of a revelation and God communicates his will to him. The evangelist suggests that Joseph understood what was asked of him and without further questioning or doubt accepted the call of God. "When Joseph awoke he id as the angel of the Lord had directed him" (Matthew 1:24). Joseph was a man of faith.

Earlier in the history of God's people, Abraham took God at his word and believed. His faith was an act of confidence in God and an act of hope in a promise that only God could guarantee. Joseph, like Abraham, had only the barest knowledge about his vocation. Yet he accepted it with the same unquestioning faith, absolutely trusting God.

King David had intended to build a glorious temple to the Lord, but the prophet Nathan bore a message from God not to build a temple. Rather, God will build up for him a house, an everlasting dynasty, a throne firm forever. Prophetically we understand his words as a reference to Jesus Christ ad his kingdom. The place of this reading in our celebration today serves also a historical point of reference. Joseph was a descendant of David and a foster father of Jesus, and therefore has a significant role in the establishment of His kingdom.

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Our scripture lessons today teach us about faith and trust in God. Three figures are presented to us, each one an example of faith -David, Abraham and Joseph. Each one of them committed himself to an unknown without hesitation. The silence of the Scriptures regarding St. Joseph speaks eloquently of his faith. The few passages in which he is mentioned show him as a man going about the business of what God asked of him.

The short reading at evening prayer on this solemnity speaks to us of St. Joseph:

"Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being. Do it for the Lord rather than for men, since you know full well that you will receive an inheritance from him as your reward," (Colossians 3:23-24).

Generally, we have some notion of what God wants of us after seeking guidance and advice. It may be clear to us how we are to go about doing his will, yet we need still faith and trust in God's Providence as we face the future. In any adventure with God difficulties may be encountered, challenges will have to be met.

The events of sacred history are a source of encouragement, as we give ourselves unreservedly to God, and his purpose and will for us.

Our prayer today honors St. Joseph, "that just man, that wise and loyal servant whom [God] placed at the head of his family," (Preface of the Mass), to cherish Mary and to watch over Jesus. We ask for Joseph's watchfulness over the Church with the same care and unselfish love he gave to Mary and Jesus.

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