



In addition to his patronage of the Church and a happy death, St. Joseph is patron of nearly a dozen countries. He also is patron of the sick, fathers and husbands, and workers, among others.

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on the life and witness of Joseph, we can learn a fundamental truth described by St. Paul: “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

A Special Patron

As St. Joseph looked after, formed, guided, and protected Jesus; he also watches over the Church, which is Christ’s own body. The events of his life were those same familiar events that we celebrate when we think of the life of



Prayer

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

Christ: his birth, his circumcision, his presentation in the Temple, the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, when he was found in the Temple. Under St. Joseph’s watchful eye, Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom” (Lk 2:40).

Joseph’s life, then, can be best understood when considered in light of his relationship with Christ. Quietly, he stays in the background, in service to Christ and a conduit of God’s grace. The same should be said of us as well. As universal patron of the Church, St. Joseph — by his virtue and character — gives us a sure model to follow as we respond to God’s call to be saints. He has been commended to the faithful by saints and popes throughout the ages. In 2020, Pope Francis wrote:

Jesus told us: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29). The lives of the saints too are examples to be imitated. St. Paul explicitly says this: “Be imitators of me!” (1 Cor 4:16). By his eloquent silence, St. Joseph says the same. (*Patris Corde*)

Still in silence Joseph slips away from the Scriptures sometime between the Holy Family’s return to Nazareth and the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Although called in his litany the “light of patriarchs,” unlike the great patriarchs of old Joseph’s own burial place is unknown — a reminder of his poverty and obscurity. It is presumed that he died with Mary and Jesus alongside him. For this reason, the Church has encouraged us to pray to him so that we, too, can die in their company. St. Joseph has long been invoked as patron of a happy death.

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ST. JOSEPH

A Patron for Us All



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St. Joseph is one of the Church’s most popular saints. No other figure in history has more places named after him in the world. His significance in the Church is understood by his veneration throughout the centuries and his designation as its universal patron in 1870. The Church wishes for the faithful to be like St. Joseph, whose entire life was lived in service to God. He was God’s wise and faithful servant — a man who loved, protected, and provided for Jesus and the Blessed Mother. And yet we do not know that much about him. Or do we?

A Man of Action

While Scripture might be limited in the words it provides about St. Joseph, it is not short on content. Topping the list of what we know about St. Joseph is that Scripture describes him as a righteous, or just, man (see Mt 1:19). This is no small detail, however, especially given about a man from Nazareth — a place Scripture indicates was looked down upon.

It is in St. Joseph’s response to difficult situations that we can see his character most clearly. This is the case from the beginning, as he discovers God’s place for him in the salvation of the world. When we meet him in Scripture, he is confronted with the reality that his betrothed was pregnant, without his involvement.

The laws of his day and culture meant that he should abandon Mary, even though such an abandonment would have mandated her death. While it is clear that Joseph wrestled about what to do, his final decision was



The solemnity of St. Joseph is celebrated on **March 19** and is often observed with many local customs and traditions. The feast of St. Joseph the Worker has been observed on **May 1** since 1955.

Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph ‘did.’ Still, they allow us to discover in his ‘actions’ — shrouded in silence as they are — an aura of deep contemplation.”

This reflection leads us to wonder: Could Joseph have heard God — and respond in the manner that he did, without reticence — if silence was not a part of his life?

In silence, St. Joseph could hear God speak — especially through dreams, like the Joseph in the Old Testament. And because he was a man of prayer, reflection, and virtue, he was prepared to act on God’s word. Joseph’s actions in Scripture demonstrate how he allowed God’s word to be planted in the world, to bear fruit that would last. His obedience to God, by his action, helped set the stage for the Word to become flesh so that the world might have life.

Sacrificial and Selfless

The Gospel shows that Joseph does not question God’s plan. Nor does he waste time or exhibit concern for himself. Instead, he is a man who lives for others, one who doesn’t count the cost of what doing God’s will might entail. Amid the unique and often difficult circumstances of his life with Mary and Jesus, Joseph does not give in to any fear or temptation to doubt. When God’s angel commands him to bring the Holy Family to Egypt in order to spare Christ from Herod’s



persecution, or to return to their home in Nazareth, he responds in faith. One can only imagine the disruption to his life — to his livelihood, his profession, his family, and more — but, silently and selflessly, he obeys. Joseph lays down his life for his beloved wife and her holy Son.

Because of his deep faith, Joseph trusted that God would provide for him because he was doing what was right — what was truly just. He obeyed God knowing that the associated costs could be great, and for all we know they might have been. Consider what ramifications could flow from this small-town carpenter’s acceptance and protection of a woman most believed was an adulterer. That would only make sense according to the Christian logic of obedience and sacrifice. In this context, Jesus was formed in a family and school of love that prepared him to one day, in love and obedience, lay down his life for our salvation.

St. Joseph loved God above all and desired to accept his role in God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. In love, he laid down his life for his beloved Mary and the divine Son she bore. And it was this heart full of love that enabled him to endure whatever difficulty came his way. The Communion Antiphon for the feast of St. Joseph the Worker takes a line from St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians that very fittingly sums up St. Joseph:

“Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord” (3:17). Scripture tells us that St. Joseph worked as a carpenter (see Mt 13:55). But perhaps it was love more than carpentry that we should understand as St. Joseph’s real labor.

His love was also worship, for he knew that in offering his life for the good of Mary’s child, he was serving God. Even though the Holy Family found no welcome in Bethlehem, Joseph’s faith moved to hope when he

saw the shepherds and kings come to adore the little one God gave him to nurture. Relying on this faith, Joseph helped to instruct Jesus in the Jewish faith, which prepared him for his own sacrifice of love on Calvary. In meditating

definitive. In silence, he moved forward with his plans to welcome Mary into his home, risking that he might be driven from his hometown or stripped of his carpentry business.

In all circumstances, Joseph responds in faith, hope, and love, as a man of righteousness. His responses come in actions, however, and not words. In fact, no dialogue comes from the mouth of St. Joseph anywhere in Scripture. As Pope St. John Paul II once wrote: “The

Year of St. Joseph

On Dec. 8, 2020 — the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being named universal patron of the Church — Pope Francis decreed a special Year of St. Joseph so that “every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfillment of God’s will.” Special opportunities have been granted for plenary indulgences to be obtained during the year in his honor. On the same date, Pope Francis also released an apostolic letter, *Patris Corde* (“With a Father’s Heart”), in which he wrote, “Each of us can discover in Joseph — the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence — an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble.”

