

December 10, 2020

Pope Francis has proclaimed the “**Year of St. Joseph**”

With his apostolic letter “*Patris corde*” (With a Father’s heart) Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father has proclaimed a “Year of St. Joseph” from **December 8th, 2020 to December 8, 2021**.

The letter begins: “*With a Father’s Heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as ‘the son of Joseph’*”.

The Pope describes St. Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father, a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows.

Joseph is also a father in obedience to God: with his “fiat” he protects Mary and Jesus and teaches his son “*to do the will of the Father*”. *Called by God to serve the mission of Jesus, he cooperated...in the great mystery of Redemption and is truly a minister of salvation*”.

At the same time Joseph is “*an accepting father*” because he “*accepted Mary unconditionally*” an important gesture even today, “*in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident*”.

Patris corde highlights: “*the creative courage*” of St. Joseph, which “*emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties*”. “*The carpenter of Nazareth was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting in divine providence*”. He had to deal with the concrete problems his family faced, problems faced by other families in the world, and especially those of migrants.

In this sense, St. Joseph is “*the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution, and poverty*”

“*A carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family*”, St. Joseph also teaches us “*the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one’s own labour*”. “*There is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which St. Joseph is an exemplary patron*”.

“*Fathers 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*”.

Unfortunately, in today’s society, children “*often seem orphans, lacking fathers*” who are able to introduce them to life and reality.

Children, the Pope says, need fathers who will not try to dominate them, but instead raise them to be *“capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities”*.

Joseph *“knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus”*.

Being a father, the Pope emphasizes, *“has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a sign pointing to a greater fatherhood: that of the heavenly Father.*

The letter ends with: *“Let us now make our prayer to him:”*

*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*

(we can add: Holy Patron of Canada, protect our nation.)

On December 27th we celebrate the feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Let us pray for blessings on all families: that the love, the unity and the self-donation of the Holy Family will overflow into all aspects of family life.

“The family is the privileged setting where every person learns to give and receive love...The family is an intermediate institution between individuals and society, and nothing can take its place...The family is a necessary good for peoples, an indispensable foundation for society, and a great and lifelong treasure for couples. It is a unique good for children, who are meant to be the fruit of the love, of the total and generous self-giving of their parents...The family is also a school that enables men and women to grow to the full measure of their humanity...O God, who in the Holy Family left us a perfect model of family life lived in faith and obedience to your will, help us to be examples of faith and love to your commandments.”

(Pope Benedict XVI)

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