



YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

The Sheaf



ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY



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SPRING 2021

It was in Lent 2020 that our entire world and Church experienced the sad outbreak of COVID-19 which disease still exists all around us. As a result many things have changed, even life as we knew it and now know it. We are indeed different because of this global pandemic, and hopefully many people will have had time to pause and reflect and have grown into a deeper union and communion with the Lord.

It is therefore as we begin to see a resemblance of normality, that we are so happy to have received Pope Francis' Apostolic Blessing for the members of the Society. All one has to do to support the Society's work and enjoy it's privileges as a member is to contact the president of any branch, who on your confirming your request to join by praying for vocations and offering a modest donation periodically, will provide you with an illustrated membership certificate A5 size, suitable for framing if you are inspired to do so.

This issue of The Sheaf is dedicated to our patron Saint Joseph. On page 3 is the story of Pope Francis' first homily in St Peter's Square Rome in the presence of so many dignitaries from all over the world as well as the ordinary well-wishers who assembled on the historic occasion of a new Pope's first day in office as Bishop of Rome. Can you recall what Francis spoke to the world about and concluded by asking all who would listen to pray for him and his ministry?

How inspiring it is to read the Pope's new Apostolic Letter **Patris Corde** proclaiming the year commencing 8 December 2020 a jubilee year dedicated to Saint Joseph marking the 150th anniversary of the proclamation Saint Joseph as patron of the Universal Church. In the letter Pope Francis in a series of personal reflections, presents St Joseph as an example of the type of tender, loving and courageous father so very sorely needed in the world and in the Church today.

The aim of the letter is to increase our love for this great saint the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and zeal. Set in seven easily read paragraphs, it is ideal for discussion and meditation at any meeting of the Society.

Co-published with **Patris Corde** are details of the particular jubilee indulgence that may be gained during this year of St Joseph. Among the many suggestions for the gaining the indulgence is the recitation of the prayer 'To you, O Blessed Joseph' which may be downloaded from the Society's website www.sjyps.ie The prayer is also available in prayer card form by contacting the General Secretary at 23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.




*His Holiness
Pope Francis
imparts
the Apostolic Blessing*

*on the President, Committees and Members of
St. Joseph's Young Priests Society
as they celebrate the 125th Anniversary
of the Foundation of the Association,
and he commends them to the protection and guidance of
the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.*

*The Holy Father prays that this Year,
dedicated to St. Joseph,
may also bring abundant graces and blessings upon
the priestly vocations they generously serve
through their work and prayer.*

25 December 2020




† Archbishop Jude Thaddeus OKOLO
Apostolic Nuncio

BLESSED BE SAINT JOSEPH, HER MOST CHASTE SPOUSE

SAINT JOSEPH

One of the intriguing things about the way Saint Joseph is represented in this statue is the way artist has refrained from portraying Joseph as an old man, more like the father of Our Lady than like her husband as so often has happened in art in the past. Joseph comes across to us as a young manly person. It is hard to visualise the flight into Egypt taking place if Joseph were in his last years!

THE STATUE

The statue, in St Patrick's church Dundalk, is the traditional representation with which most Christians are familiar. It pictures both Joseph and the Child spotlessly clean in their best clothes, maybe out for a stroll showing the Child around Nazareth while Mary is likely at home at the hearth preparing something for the table on their return. It is a legitimate representation of Mary's husband and Child in those early days in the life of the Holy Family. And the location of the statue is entirely appropriate to its surroundings in Dundalk's magnificent "cathedral" which is unquestionably one of the most perfect and beautiful modern churches of its style in Ireland. Thomas Duff, the Newry architect, designed the building, inspired by King's College, Cambridge.

ABOUT SAINT JOSEPH

It is frequently said that we know so little about Saint Joseph, because not one word he spoke is recorded in scripture; yet, at the same time, scripture indirectly does tell us a lot. What we do know comes from the New Testament, in particular from the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

- We know he was a carpenter, a **working man**, for the people of Nazareth ask about Jesus, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (MATTHEW 13:55).
- **He wasn't rich** for when he took Jesus to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord, his offering was two doves or a pair of pigeons, which was customary for those who could not afford the offering of a lamb (LUKE 2:24).
- Despite his humble work and means, Joseph came from a **royal lineage**. Luke and Matthew both mark his descent from King David, the greatest king of Israel (MATTHEW 1:1-16 AND LUKE 3:23-38). Indeed the angel who first tells Joseph about Jesus greets him as "Son of David," a royal title used also for Jesus.
- We know Joseph was a **compassionate, caring man**. When he discovered Mary was pregnant after they had been betrothed, he knew the child was not his but was as yet unaware that she was carrying the Son of God. He planned to divorce Mary according to the law but he was concerned for her suffering and



safety. He knew that women accused of adultery could be stoned to death, so he decided to divorce her quietly and not expose her to shame or cruelty (MATTHEW 1:19-25).

- We know Joseph was a **man of faith**, obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome. When the angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him the truth about the child Mary was carrying, Joseph immediately and without question or concern for gossip, took Mary as his wife. When the angel came again to tell him that his family was in danger, he immediately left everything he owned, all his family and friends, and fled to a strange country with his young wife and the baby. He waited in Egypt without question until the angel told him it was safe to go back (MATTHEW 2:13-23).
- We know Joseph **loved Jesus**. His one concern was for the safety of this child entrusted to him. Not only did he leave his home to protect Jesus, but upon his return settled in the obscure town of Nazareth out of fear for his life. When Jesus remained in the Temple we are told Joseph along with Mary, searched with great anxiety for three days for him (LUKE 2:48).
- We also know that Joseph **treated Jesus** as his own son for the people of Nazareth said of Jesus, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" (LUKE 4:22).
- We know Joseph **respected God**. He followed the Law of Moses 'each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord' in going to the Temple with Mary and her Son. (LUKE 2:23).

- We know that he was a **religious man**. We are told that he took his family to Jerusalem every year for Passover, something that could not have been easy for a workingman. (LUKE 2:41).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Since Joseph does not appear in Jesus' public life, at his death, or at his resurrection, Joseph probably died before Jesus entered his public ministry. Joseph is the patron of the dying because, assuming he died before Jesus' public life, he died with Jesus and Mary close to him, the way we all would like to leave this earth.

There is much more we wish we could know about Joseph - where and when he was born, how he spent his days, when and how he died. But Scripture has left us with the most important knowledge of all: who he was - "a just man" (MATTHEW 1:18).

PATRON OF A HAPPY DEATH

It is probably as patron of the dying that Saint Joseph is most frequently invoked, particularly by those who are involved in caring for someone who is terminally ill, either at home or in hospices or homes for the dying.

The late Mgr Seán Leonard PP Swinford Co Mayo, speaking of Saint Joseph at a meeting of this Society in St. Patrick's College Dublin on 21st April 1990, told the assembly: *I have stood by the bedside of many people about to die and have seen the wonder of their faith in Saint Joseph. I have seen Saint Joseph give countless happy deaths and have come away always strengthened in my belief. I cannot weigh or assess the value of that faith, nor can I in any way transmit it to others; I can only tell them about it. ... I've often attended a funeral of an old man or an old woman who was closer to God through goodness of life than many of those whose exclusive vocation it is to be holy. There wouldn't be twelve priests concelebrating the funeral Mass, and the area around the coffin wouldn't be like the Botanic Gardens. There would be very few Mass cards on the coffin. Still, I've often felt that the person being prayed for had retained the innocence of baptism and would easily settle into the exalted company of some of the glamorous saints we know so well I like to think that one of the first saints of the Church was an ordinary manual worker, and that the galleries of saints in heaven aren't full of nuns, popes, bishops and people who had public acclaim during their time on earth.*

The graceful plaster statue of Saint Joseph in Dundalk is delightful. It gives beauty to our understanding of the Holy Family.

Saint Joseph, the Protector

Pope Francis' homily at his inaugural Mass Tuesday 19 March 2013 in St Peter's Square on the first day of his Papal Ministry and Bishop of Rome

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank the Lord that I can celebrate this Holy Mass for the inauguration of my Petrine ministry on the solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the patron of the universal Church. It is a significant coincidence, and it is also the name-day of my venerable predecessor: we are close to him with our prayers, full of affection and gratitude.

I offer a warm greeting to my brother cardinals and bishops, the priests, deacons, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful. I thank the representatives of the other Churches and ecclesial Communities, as well as the representatives of the Jewish community and the other religious communities, for their presence. My cordial greetings go to the Heads of State and Government, the members of the official Delegations from many countries throughout the world, and the Diplomatic Corps.

In the Gospel we heard that “Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife” (Mt 1:24). These words already point to the mission that God entrusts to Joseph: he is to be the *custos*, the protector. The protector of whom? Of Mary and Jesus; but this protection is then extended to the Church, as Blessed John Paul II pointed out: “Just as Saint Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ’s upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model” (REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS, 1).

How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unflinching presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus.

How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans, and not simply to his own. This is what God asked of David, as we heard in the first reading. God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from

living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a “protector” because he is able to hear God’s voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God’s call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!

The vocation of being a “protector”, however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts!

Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are “Herods” who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women.

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be “protectors” of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world! But to be “protectors”, we also have to keep watch over ourselves! Let us not forget that hatred, envy and pride defile our lives! Being protectors, then, also means keeping watch over our emotions, over our hearts, because they are the seat of good and evil intentions: intentions that build up and tear down! We must not be afraid of goodness or even tenderness!

Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

Today, together with the feast of Saint Joseph, we are celebrating the beginning of the ministry of the new Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power. Certainly, Jesus Christ conferred power upon Peter, but what sort of power was it? Jesus’ three questions to Peter about love are followed by three commands: feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God’s people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Only those who serve with love are able to protect!

In the second reading, Saint Paul speaks of Abraham, who, “hoping against hope, believed” (Rom 4:18). Hoping against hope! Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope! For believers, for us Christians, like Abraham, like Saint Joseph, the hope that we bring is set against the horizon of God, which has opened up before us in Christ. It is a hope built on the rock which is God.

To protect Jesus with Mary, to protect the whole of creation, to protect each person, especially the poorest, to protect ourselves: this is a service that the Bishop of Rome is called to carry out, yet one to which all of us are called, so that the star of hope will shine brightly. Let us protect with love all that God has given us!

I implore the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Francis, that the Holy Spirit may accompany my ministry, and I ask all of you to pray for me! Amen.

Prayer of Pope Francis

“Every day, for over forty years, following Lauds I have recited a prayer to Saint Joseph taken from a nineteenth-century French prayer book of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary. It expresses devotion and trust, and even poses a certain challenge to Saint Joseph.

“Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen.”

(Among the notations to the Pope’s Apostolic Letter)

Dear Members of St Joseph’s Young Priests Society,

It’s really a great joy that Pope Francis has announced a Year of St Joseph in honour of the 150th anniversary of the Saint’s proclamation as patron of the Universal Church. The year began on December 8th 2020, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and concludes on December 8th 2021.

This has even greater significance for us as members because St Joseph is also patron of our Society. In establishing this special year of St Joseph, in a decree entitled **Patris Corde** (“With a father’s heart”), Pope Francis wanted that “every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfilment of God’s will.” Pope Francis has also granted special indulgences to mark the year with the three conditions of receiving sacramental confession, the reception of Holy Communion and prayer for the Pope’s intentions.

As members of SJYPS, I think Pope Francis’ words speak directly to us and encourage us when he said that, “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. St Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.” I think this describes the important work of our Society. It goes on unnoticed and is hidden in the background yet it is essential because it supports hundreds of seminarians studying for the priesthood each year in Ireland and around the world.

In relation to vocations to the priesthood, Pope Francis also said that Jesus found in St Joseph, his foster father, a great icon of his heavenly Father. He said, “In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go on his own way.” Just as St Joseph modelled virtues of what it means to be a caring, protective and self-sacrificing father to Jesus, so he can be a great role model for those considering a vocation to priesthood and religious life today. Pope Francis said that, “Our world needs fathers... every

true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity.”

We thank Pope Francis for this year dedicated to St Joseph and we look to the opportunities and graces it will bring to us individually and as a Society. We pray that by following St Joseph’s example, we as members will be encouraged to renew our fidelity to prayer and be faithful and loyal in carrying out all we do as we continue to discern God’s will in our lives. Just as St Joseph cared for and provided for the needs of Jesus during his earthly life, may he continue to intercede and provide for the needs of his Mystical Body, the Church, by sending more labourers into the harvest.

With every blessing,
Fr Séamus McEntee
Chief Chaplain SJYPS

You can view Pope Francis proclaims “Year of St Joseph”
<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-12/pope-francis-proclaims-year-of-st-joseph.html>

Recently Deceased

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

VOCATIONAL BRANCHES

Insurance Sean Doyle

LOCAL BRANCHES

Armagh Maura Murphy

Ballymena Connie Niblock, Patricia McCormack

Ballypnehane Elizabeth Chute, Anne Soden,

Eily Foley, Kathleen Murphy

Blackpool, Cork Kitty Geaney

Cappawhite Marie Buckley

Dundalk Sr M Cecelia Donnellan, Peggy Monahan,

Eileen Dullaghan, Sr Monica Loughran

Douglas, Cork Antoinette Coleman

Enniskillen Sr Gertrude Murphy, Kathleen Morris,

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Portadown Josie Headley, Jackie Quinn

St John Vianney, Ardlea Eugene McGuinness,
May Byrne

St John the Baptist, Clontarf Breege O’Reilly

St John’s, Granaghan Josie McFlynn

St Kevin’s, Harrington Street Mary Boland

St Patrick’s, Limerick Bridie O’Brien

Templeogue John Farrell

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