

## Reflection Friday Lent 4 St Joseph 2021

Nothing is known of St Joseph except for what is written of him in the Gospels. He was a carpenter; he accepted the will of God; and he supported Mary and brought up Jesus. From the human character of his son, we can see that he was a good and responsible father. He is widely venerated as a patron of artisans who honourably do good work with the gifts God has given them, and of workers in general. To those who exercise the role of an adoptive parent, whether formally or informally, whether over one child or as the support of a whole family, he is a source of inspiration.

Pope Francis dedicated the year from 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to St Joseph to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of St Joseph as patron of the Universal Church. He writes in *Patris Corde (With a father's heart)*

“Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking on the responsibility of caring for that child. Unfortunately, today, children often seem orphans, lacking fathers able to introduce them to life and reality. Children 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. Happiness for Joseph involved a true gift of self. In him, we never see frustration, only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Joseph stands out as an exemplary figure for our time, in a world that “needs fathers,” and not “tyrants”; a society that “rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction.

True fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, and instead respect their freedom. A father realizes that he is most a father and an educator at the point when he becomes ‘useless,’ when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. Being a father has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a ‘sign’ pointing to a greater fatherhood: that of the “heavenly Father”.

He commends this prayer to us:

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