

*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.*

This prayer is the concluding statement of the newest letter from Pope Francis as he inaugurated the “Year of St. Joseph.” With the Apostolic Letter “*Patris corde*” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father has proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from, 8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021.

Considering global concerns, including the pandemic the Holy Father demonstrates that St. Joseph helps us see the importance of ordinary people, who may not have a spotlight on them. These people exercise patience and hope every day. They resemble St. Joseph, the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence,” who nonetheless played “an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”

Pope Francis writes about St. Joseph as 1) A beloved, tender, obedient father, 2) Welcoming the will of God 3) A creatively courageous father, example of love, 4) A father who teaches the value, dignity and joy of work.

Most importantly he addresses St. Joseph as a father who is Centered on Mary and Jesus.

“Fathers are not born, but made,” says Pope Francis. “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.”

This is the sense in which St Joseph is described as a “most chaste” father, which is the opposite of domineering possessiveness. Joseph, says Pope Francis, “knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the center 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, but only trust,” writes Pope Francis. “His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust.” Joseph stands out, therefore, 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.”

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” ...”

St. Joseph Protector of the Holy Church, Guardian of the Holy Family, Terror of Demons, Patron of the Dying, Most Faithful, Most Chaste, Most Obedient, Most Strong, Pray for Us...