



Thy Kingdom Come!

The Way of Saint Joseph

These stations invite you into the life of St. Joseph, experiencing more deeply what he did, and drawing lessons for your own life. Each station is rooted in scripture and Christian tradition. The spiritual reflections and prayer can help us to know Jesus Christ from a fresh perspective, and lead us to appreciate and honor this man that God chose to be his own foster father, and who continues to watch over each follower of Christ and the universal Church.

Station	Scripture	Question	Reaction (fears)	Action (righteous)
A Just Jew	Gen 15:1-6; Gen 41:55; Mt 1:16, 19	Am I good?	Self-worth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rooted relationship 2. Receptivity 3. Determined action
The Betrothal	Mt 1:18; Lk 1:26-38	Am I good enough for her?	Comparative worth	
Life surprises	Mt 1:19-23	Have I been betrayed?	Betrayed	
The Home builder	Mt 1:24-25	Can I stick with this?	Commitment	
The Census	Lk 2:1-7	What can I do?	The unknown; useless	
The Lowly	Lk 2:8-20	Will they demean me?	Association	
The Mighty	Mt 2:1-12	Will they shame me?	Insufficiency	
Predictions	Lk 2:21-38	Will I be prepared?	Preparation	
The Protector	Mt 2:13-18	Will I prevail?	Failure to protect	
Immigrant in Egypt	Mt 2:15	Will I provide?	Failure to provide	
Returning Failure	Mt 2:19-23	Will I rebuild?	Failure to build	
Power of Pilgrimage	Lk 2:39-52	Will I know?	Failure to notice	
Ending the Journey	None	Will they be OK without me?	Failure to be there	
Legacy	Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Lk 3:23; Lk 4:14-30; Jn 1:45; Jn 6:42	Will I be remembered?	Failure of purpose	



OUR LADY of BETHESDA
RETREAT CENTER

Virtual
A Place to Encounter Christ



1. A Just Jew

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, light of the patriarchs,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"Courage is knowing what not to fear."¹ "Fear is a reaction; courage is a decision."²

Scripture

“Abram put his faith in the LORD, who attributed it to him as an act of righteousness.” Genesis 15:1-6

“Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians: ‘Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.’” Genesis 41:55

“Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.” Matthew 1:19

Reflection

Righteousness is the primary trait of Joseph noted in Scripture. Just as in Abraham, this justice comes from his FAITH in the Lord’s promises. The same path is trod down the centuries by all the Jewish patriarchs who followed in his footsteps, including the 12th son of Jacob, Joseph, who rose to power and prominence in Egypt not by cutting corners, but by repaying the betrayal of his brothers with forgiveness and fidelity, countering lust with purity, and fighting famine with generosity. The patriarchs are the pattern for the foster father of Jesus. God could choose any man with any traits to be his foster father, and he chose the humble and just man, Joseph, whose identity is deeply rooted in God’s love for him. That is the type of man we can rely on; that is the type of person God calls me to become. Our goodness, our righteousness, stems from rootedness in God who is love.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, the perfection to which you call us (cf. Mt 5:48) is exemplified in the faith of our fathers, including Joseph. Open my heart to the heroic challenge of becoming a just man like him, living a faith that becomes action. Through Christ our Lord.

℟ *Amen.*

¹ Plato

² Winston Churchill



2. The Betrothal

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, noble son of the House of David and husband of the Mother of God,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"Courage is the middle point between fear and over-confidence."³

Scripture

"Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit." Matthew 1:18

"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary." Luke 1:26-27

Reflection

Joseph knew his roots. He took pride in his Jewish lineage from the house of David. He worked hard at his profession. He observed the Law, studied the stories of his people's past, and prayed for the fulfillment of the promises. He prepared for betrothal to his future bride, and looked forward to the day of their wedding with a blend of thrill and trepidation. Mary's acceptance of him as her spouse was a relief, a rush, a sense of his own worth. The lifelong commitment and responsibility of providing for a wife and family was intimidating, but love led beyond the fear, because "perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18).

Prayer

God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and the prophets, you prepared and called Saint Joseph for a mission that arose from his heritage. Open my eyes to value my own birthright and never abandon the faith of our fathers. May love be perfected within my heart, so that fear never keeps me from commitment and carrying out your will. Through Christ our Lord.

℟ *Amen.*

³ Aristotle



3. Life surprises

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, guardian of the Virgin,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."⁴

Scripture

“Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’” Matthew 1: 19-23

Reflection

Shock is all Joseph could have felt at first news of Mary’s pregnant state. He was no fool. He knew how that happens, and he knew he wasn’t involved. Anger⁵ and repugnance likely followed the initial jolt. He would not be cuckold. He was a righteous man, and what she must have done or allowed was not right,⁶ and he had every right under the Law to have her stoned, or at the least repudiated. Yet Scripture recounts a different reaction, a nobler response. He would not exercise his rights; he would divorce her quietly, a move that would make him look like a scumbag who got his girl pregnant and then didn’t want to go through with marital commitment. He was willing to sacrifice his own reputation to preserve hers. Yet God has something even nobler in mind. For the first time, Joseph is drawn into the secret of God’s messianic plan, that this child who was not his, would be a son who is God, and by saving this boy from bastardization, his adopted son would save him and all the “people from their sins.” Mind boggling. God’s ways so surpass our thoughts.

⁴ Nelson Mandela

⁵ Understand anger in the classic sense of St. Thomas Aquinas as a passion, and morally neutral. Anger is a spontaneous response to a provocation of perceived wrong or injustice; channeled by virtue it can make the arduous good easier to accomplish. It can also become a sin or vice if driven by selfishness.

⁶ Three legitimate theories exist in Catholic tradition for Joseph’s response to the news of Mary’s pregnancy.



Prayer

Heavenly Father and Son, from whom all fatherhood and sonship flow, open our hearts as you did with Saint Joseph to accept the difficult mission of parenting and of honoring my father and mother. Just as Saint Joseph was so attentive to God's will that he recognized it in a dream, help me hear your voice through the messengers you send to me, whether the events of life, Scripture, the magisterium of the Church, or those around me who love me enough to challenge me toward greater love. Through Christ our Lord.

✠ Amen.



4. The Home builder

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, chaste and just, faithful guardian of Christ,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

“Whatever we learn to do, we learn by actually doing it; men come to be builders, for instance, by building, and harp players by playing the harp. In the same way, by doing just acts we come to be just; by doing self-controlled acts, we come to be self-controlled; and by doing brave acts, we become brave.”⁷

Scripture

“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.” Matthew 1:24-25

Reflection

Joseph “took [Mary] into his home”. How much time and energy had he invested in preparing that house for his bride? As a carpenter, no doubt he took special pride investing his best work there, in materials, craftsmanship, inventive features, and attention to detail. Yet Joseph’s home was not simply for personal benefit; it was a place to welcome strangers, orphans, widows, and anyone in need (cf. Lev 27:19; Mt 25:35); it was the place where he welcomed the pregnant Virgin. The addition of the feminine genius to his masculine provision paves the way for expansion, for family. Now, with a wife and child on the way, the house becomes a home. Home should be a haven from noise, a refuge from the destruction of the world, a safe space to be oneself and rejuvenate, and a launching pad for greatness. The Holy Family is a model for every Christian family, and it is Joseph who initiates the family by committing to Mary and giving her his all.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you learned so much from your foster father, including the love that prepares a home for the beloved. You, too, told us that you would go to prepare a place for us in heaven, our eternal home (cf. Jn 14:3). May the handiwork, sacrifice, and labor invested in my home always be an offering of love for my family and dependents, and not simply for selfish gratification or self-aggrandizement. Keep me attentive to the needs of my neighbors, and open to any indigent. Grant me grace to build up a home for my family, and to care for our common home in all of creation, for this and for future generations. Through Christ our Lord.

℟ *Amen.*

⁷ Aristotle



5. The Census

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, head of the Holy Family,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has courage to lose sight of the shore."⁸

Scripture

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:1-7

Reflection

Life is messy. We cannot foresee or control every event, and we need flexibility and trust in God's plan to avoid debilitating fear or self-induced stress. The government's decree threw Joseph for a loop, but he adjusted, made the trip to Bethlehem with his bride, and adapted to the circumstances. Could he have foreseen all those situations? Of course not. Could he control them? Very little. One thing Joseph did have clear: He trusted in God (cf. Ps 22:8), because he was a righteous man. Joseph knew that the Lord would lead them, and he utilized his intelligence and God-given talents to adjust, pivot, and provide through each shifting circumstance. Not even overflowing inns or untimely birth pangs could fluster him, because he trusted in God and in his own ability to work with the gifts given. He was neither proudly self-reliant nor passively waiting for all to work out without his working. He planned, he worked, he sought, he provided... but above all he trusted. This gave him peace in the midst of any uncertainty that life could throw at them, in Bethlehem and beyond.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, I get so easily flustered with changing circumstances or frustrated with things I cannot control. Teach me to trust in the Lord, "pray[ing] as if everything depended on God and work[ing] as if everything depended on [me]".⁹ Through Christ our Lord. **℟** *Amen.*

⁸ Andre Gide

⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2834.



6. The Lowly

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, lover of poverty and model of workers,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

“Don’t be ashamed to need help. Like a soldier storming a wall, you have a mission to accomplish. And if you’ve been wounded and you need a comrade to pull you up? So what?”¹⁰

Scripture

“Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.” Luke 2:8-20

Reflection

Social acceptance drives human behavior. We do not want to be excluded, and we naturally desire the esteem of others. This can lead us to shun those we consider beneath us, or curry favor with those above. The passage with the shepherds shows us that God does neither, nor does the righteous man St. Joseph. Indeed, throughout salvation history God favors the weak and lowly. Shepherds were considered outcasts and ritually impure by many Jews because they didn’t keep the Sabbath laws, violated rules, and lived like beasts... and yet God sends the angels to them, not to the royal or religious leaders. Later in life, Jesus himself would say that he “did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mark 2:17). “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly...” (I Cor 1:27-28) With his choice of the shepherds and all the lowly throughout history, God elevates in dignity, displays his power, and shows me how to treat others, as “you would have them do to you” (Mt. 7:12).

Prayer

Blessed Virgin Mary, you kept all these things in your heart. Give me a contemplative heart to recognize the patterns of God’s action in the world and in my own life. St. Joseph, just as you welcomed the lowly shepherds to approach the manger, help me to welcome the poor and despised into my circles, not fearing debasement, but elevating others through the grace of God. Through Christ our Lord. **℟** *Amen.*

¹⁰ Marcus Aurelius



7. The Mighty

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, obedient and loyal,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

“Stand for something or you will fall for anything. Today’s mighty oak is yesterday’s nut that held its ground.”¹¹

Scripture

“When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.’ After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.” (Matthew 2:1-12)

Reflection

King Herod, the magi, and the religious leaders represent the mighty of this world. We like to be considered among the powerful and elite, and we enjoy hobnobbing with them. Yet “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Mt 19:24) and in light of eternity, wealth is no advantage, but rather an encumbrance. King Herod’s power led him to fearful grasping. The religious leaders became attached to the comfortable status quo. Alone among the mighty did the magi recognize and seek out the savior. What about them was different? How were they able to pass through the eye of the needle? Was it their detachment from home, possessions, and prestige? Was it not their eager search for the truth? Was it their willingness to risk status to gain everything, like the merchant of fine pearls who “found one of great value, [then] went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Mt 13:46)?

Prayer

St. Joseph, you risked everything to care for Mary and Jesus. You welcomed the mighty magi who were wise like you, who “accepted the loss of all things and... consider them so much rubbish, that [you might] gain Christ...” (Phil 3:8). Turn my heart and mind to “seek what is above” (Col 3:1) so that I can shed the encumbrances of wealth, put on the saving wisdom of God, and pass through the eye of the needle into my heavenly home. Through Christ our Lord. **℟** *Amen.*

¹¹ Rosa Parks



8. Predictions

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, prudent and brave,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."¹²

Scripture

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem." Luke 2:21-38

Reflection

The righteous Simeon and prophetess Anna represent the best of Judaism. Their life and words point toward the Messiah. Like John the Baptist, they speak out boldly and prepare the way of the Lord. Like Mary, they ruminated on God's word and action. Like Joseph, they fulfill the Law and Prophets.

¹² Mark Twain



Prayer

Saint Joseph, you did not allow fear of the future to paralyze your action. The prophecy of Simeon may have alarmed lesser men, but dutiful focus on your mission led you beyond fear. Grant that we may exercise the same prudence and bravery in carrying out our responsibilities in life, through Christ our Lord.

℟ Amen.



9. The Protector

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, pillar of family life and guardian of virgins,
℟ And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.

Quote

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.”¹³

Scripture

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: “A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.” Matthew 2:13-18

Reflection

Why did God warn Joseph in a dream? Undoubtedly, the threat from King Herod was sinister and imminent, so wouldn't direct communication through undeniable channels have been more effective? We all have odd dreams, though we rarely remember them and even less often do we act upon them. Joseph is a singular man to be so attuned to God that he perceives his voice and will even through dreams. God the Father knew this about the man he had chosen to be Jesus' guardian on earth, and for this reason such a subtle channel could work. Would that work with me? Am I keyed into God's voice, or am I distracted by the world's noise? Joseph's attentiveness and swift action is what saves Jesus. Attentiveness to Jesus and acting upon his word (cf. Mt 7:21, Jn 14:23) is what saves us.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, make me more attuned to the quiet ways God speaks to me every day, whether in Scripture, the magisterium of the Church, those around me, or through life events. Help me respond with swift action to what I perceive as God's will so as to protect my family and others under my care from physical and spiritual dangers. Strengthen my resolve to be a man of prayer. Through Christ our Lord. **℟ Amen.**

¹³ Franklin D. Roosevelt



10. Immigrant in Egypt

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, pattern of patience and comfort of the troubled,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"The principal act of courage is not to attack dangers, but to stand firm in their presence."¹⁴

Scripture

"[Joseph] stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" (Mt 2:15)

Reflection

This brief passage shrouds months of mystery. What happened during those years in Egypt? What was their hurried flight from Bethlehem like? What fears did Joseph and Mary face as they fled? Weeks of travel across the desert, following a trail beset by bandits, obscured by sandstorms, and beleaguered by harsh climate, only to arrive in a cosmopolitan country that wanted no more immigrant Jews and made the life of refugees miserable. There was no warm welcome from the locals. Just cold stares, harsh comments, and closed doors.

As protector and provider for his family, Joseph felt the keen pinch of responsibility. In these tenuous circumstances, the gold of the magi was a godsend, paying for lodging until Joseph could gain employment and stable income. Only the lowest jobs that Egyptians didn't want were available, and not knowing the language, local customs, or currency made him an easy target for exploitation by swindlers of all types. Noble Joseph was the butt of jokes and the target for insults. The life of an immigrant is never easy, and Saint Joseph experienced this fully, which is why we can pray in the Litany of St. Joseph that he is the "pattern of patience, the comfort of the troubled".

Strangely, this was all part of God's plan for his Son. May we never see life's difficulties as the end of the road, but always look with hope to the promises that will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, by exercising patience and enduring mistreatment, you modeled for the child Jesus and for every Christian the virtue of fortitude. Just as you did not lash out at those who did you wrong in Egypt, grant me patience and forbearance to respond to each antagonist by loving them, praying for them, and forgiving them (cf. Mt 5:43-48), overcoming evil through good (cf. Rom 12:17-21), through Christ our Lord. **℟** *Amen.*

¹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 123, a.6.



11. Returning Failure

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, example to parents,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

“Anxiety is the greatest evil that can befall a soul except sin. God commands you to pray, but He forbids you to worry.”¹⁵

Scripture

“When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazorean.” Matthew 2:19-23

Reflection

When we are in the midst of suffering, it seems like it will never end. Life seems unfair, because the enemy and the power brokers of the world seem to hold all the cards. Yet death comes for King Herod, as it will for all. Death is the great equalizer. Wisdom is not beholden to knowledge and power of the world, but looks to what lies beyond.

Joseph again is attentive to wisdom and to God’s voice in a dream. Again, he acts decisively, returning to Nazareth. They had left town for a few weeks, but now after the space of several years, his home is a shambles, his business gone, and the only thing to greet the Holy Family is the gossip of the townspeople about the circumstances of Mary’s pregnancy, Joseph’s agency, and irresponsibility of young people these days. Yet Joseph doesn’t base his decisions on the shame of the crowds, but upon God’s word that has guided him so faithfully until now.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, by listening to God’s word and drowning out the world’s criticism, you were righteous and courageous in your life mission. In the eyes of the world, you returned in shame to the backwater village of Nazareth, but in the eyes of God you were fulfilling eternal designs announced through the prophets. Help me to listen for God’s voice and always act upon it, through Christ our Lord. **℟** *Amen.*

¹⁵ Saint Francis de Sales



12. Power of Pilgrimage

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, pillar of family life,

℟ *And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.*

Quote

"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened."¹⁶

Scripture

“When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.’ And he said to them, ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.” Lk 2:39-52

Reflection

Pilgrimage was an important part of the Holy Family’s life, an expression of their faith and fidelity to God’s law. It was also a catalyst for strengthening it. Faith is not a gift we can take for granted. Each child, each new generation must discover God, experience his love, and opt for his Way. Parents cannot abdicate from the sacred responsibility to introduce their children to the Lord; Catholic schools or a catechism program can support, but never replace their responsibility. There is no task more important for parents than bringing their children to Jesus (cf. Mt 19:14), and family pilgrimage to Sunday Mass, regular confession, holy sites, and pilgrimage destinations around the world can strengthen faith significantly.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, you were not a man of words, but of action. Your example of religious practice, synagogue attendance, and regular pilgrimage to Jerusalem spoke more eloquently than words ever could. When

¹⁶ Billy Graham



words fail me, strengthen my actions to lead those entrusted to me to experience God's power and love in holy places. Through Christ our Lord. **℟ Amen.**

13. Ending the Journey

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, terror of evil spirits and patron of the dying,

℟ And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.

Quote

"Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die."¹⁷

Scripture

"The righteous one, though he die early, shall be at rest. For the age that is honorable comes not with the passing of time, nor can it be measured in terms of years. Rather, understanding passes for gray hair, and an unsullied life is the attainment of old age. The one who pleased God was loved, living among sinners, was transported — snatched away, lest wickedness pervert his mind or deceit beguile his soul; for the witchery of paltry things obscures what is right and the whirl of desire transforms the innocent mind. Having become perfect in a short while, he reached the fullness of a long career; for his soul was pleasing to the LORD, therefore he sped him out of the midst of wickedness." Wisdom 4:7-14

Reflection

There is no scripture passage that relates the end of Joseph's life. He simply slips from the scene after Jesus comes of age in the Temple at twelve. Did he die soon after that, or years further along? Did an accident, disease, or natural causes take him? No extant sources exist to answer these questions, but undoubtedly he was gone before the end of Jesus' life, because our Lord entrusted Mary to John at the foot of the Cross. Though there are many unknowns, we can postulate the question heavy on Joseph's heart as he neared the end: How will they do without me? This thought crosses the mind of nearly every man who leaves behind dependents. What impact will his failure to be there for them have? Yet somehow life moves on. The world finds a way to proceed without us. Joseph's goodbyes to Mary and Jesus meet with a reassuring squeeze of the hand. And "Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me...'" (Jn 17:24)

Prayer

Saint Joseph, you accomplished your mission on earth, forming the Holy Family, protecting and providing for Mary and Jesus, and raising a young man to wisdom and readiness for his life's work. You did not hold onto this life, but embraced the reward waiting for you after life. Patron of a holy death, bring fortitude to

¹⁷ G.K. Chesterton



my heart so that fear of the end does not overtake me, but rather, I look forward courageously to what lies ahead, in Christ Jesus my Lord. ***℟ Amen.***

14. Legacy

Invocation

We honor you, Joseph, foster father of the Son of God and protector of the Church,

℟ And we ask God for fortitude to act uprightly.

Quote

“Every man dies. Not every man truly lives.”¹⁸ “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”¹⁹

Scripture

“Is he not the carpenter’s son?” (Mt 13:55; see also Mk 6:3; Lk 3:23; Lk 4:14-30; Jn 1:45; Jn 6:42)

Reflection

Every human life comes to an end, but our soul and our legacy live on after death. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus was referred to as “the carpenter’s son” or the “son of Joseph”. Joseph, the righteous man, lives on in his foster son. Even more, he lives through the son to become the father of the universal Church and its protector. Salvation history is not advanced by power, politics, leadership, or money. It is righteous men and women, the saints, who leave a legacy that changes the world and move history towards its fulfillment.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus told parables and used powerful images to convey the Good News. How many of those did he pick up from Joseph? Was the father in the parable of the prodigal son modelled after the good Joseph? Jesus spoke with firm authority, not like the scribes and Pharisees. Did he not gain some of that confidence from his foster father? Jesus introduced a new respect for women and their role in God’s plan. Joseph must have conveyed that to him through his treatment of Mary. Every attitude and action of Jesus reflects something of Saint Joseph, and the foster son is Joseph’s greatest legacy.

Prayer

Saint Joseph, your legacy carries on in the Church, the Body of Christ in this world. It continues in every man and woman who exhibits the fortitude to resist fear, overcome evil with good, and carry out their responsibilities with love. Grant that at the end of my life, I may leave a legacy of life, love, faith, and righteousness, so that I may enter into eternal life with Jesus Christ, our Lord. ***℟ Amen.***

¹⁸ William Wallace

¹⁹ Martin Luther King Jr