

(319) SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

(MARCH 19TH, 2021)

Readings: 2 Samuel 7:4,5,12 – 14,16; Ps. 88(89):1 – 4,27,29; Romans 4: 13,16 – 18, 22;
Either Matthew 1: 16, 18 – 24; **Or** Luke 2: 41 – 51.

Today the Church celebrates Joseph, husband of Mary, guardian of her divine son, and patron of the Universal Church. In an Apostolic Letter (*Patris Corde*) Pope Francis has declared this year (8th December 2020 to 8th December 2021) a *Year of Saint Joseph*.

The Apostolic Letter begins: 'With a father's heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as 'the son of Joseph'. In his letter the Holy Father draws on the Gospel references to Joseph to set out the example of a holy life, which can inspire us in our discipleship. Here are some ideas prompted by the Apostolic Letter.

Joseph is a tender and loving father: he loved Jesus in the same way that God loved Israel: *He taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him* (Hosea 11:3&4). We too must be tender towards those who fail – including ourselves.

Joseph is an obedient father: he obeyed the commands of the angel who appeared to him, and the commands of the Jewish Law. Like Joseph, we are called to share in God's saving work by obediently following his commands.

Joseph is an accepting father: although he was faced with situations he did not understand, Joseph set himself to do without fear what he believed to be right. Like him we are called to accept the circumstances in which we find ourselves, and in them find God's will for us.

Joseph is a creatively courageous father: he faced the problems of his family – including the need to escape from Herod – with courage. In the incidents in Matthew in which Joseph figures *he took the child and his mother*, and found a way to protect them. We, too, need the gift of courage to be faithful disciples of *Jesus the son of Joseph*.

We might use this prayer which ends the Holy Father's letter:

*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.*