

The Gift of Saint Joseph

A remedy for our time

I have found a gift in the Catholic Faith that has been a bit overlooked. I don't mean to sound presumptuous at all. Many people, I am sure, will readily admit that they already know about this gift. But do we really? When you bring up the name Saint Joseph almost every Catholic, *particularly over the age of 70*, will say very adamantly that they have 'great devotion' to him. But has it really been clear to us as Catholics what a gift Saint Joseph is? Who is he and what is his role in salvation history?

Recently, I was invited by Donna Crean, Assistant Director of the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics to join in with a group getting ready for consecration to Saint Joseph with Father Donald Calloway, MIC. Since the entire country was in shut down, he had the unusual opportunity to lead a worldwide group via Livestream every night at 7:30 pm. Normally a heavy travel schedule would not permit him to do such a thing. But he was home, like all of us, and so Father Calloway put the word out that he would lead a group in 33 days of preparation. It was just about to begin and I agreed to join. We were meeting from May 20th to June 21st – Father's Day – and would be offering the consecration on Father's Day. Great timing! Great idea! I was in.

For the past several weeks we listened to the author of the book share about "the book" that is written for the purpose of understanding and entrusting ourselves to Saint Joseph. I can't believe how privileged I feel to be a part of this group. Father Calloway has been quite a mentor for us. A few friends have felt the same way and have formed a virtual prayer/share group that meets almost every day after the Livestream presentation. Father Calloway talks and it is captivating. Then we talk and discuss, for a long time, just how captivating it is. **It is like we have discovered something so precious that has been waiting just for this moment to arrive.**

One of the titles of Saint Joseph is Mirror of Patience. Therefore, it is not really all that surprising that his patience would allow 2000 years to pass before we even realize the value of who he is and what he has to offer. So, who is he and what does he have to offer? We can start with the basics...

Saint Joseph, like Our Lady, was actually created to be the way that God, the Father chose to send His Son into the world. It's not like they were really nice people sitting around Nazareth at that time and the Father said, "There! They look good enough. Let's take them to be the parents of the Incarnation. Get them ready to be the parents of God, the Son." Of course, we know Our Lady was uniquely prepared to be the mother of Our Savior. She is the Immaculate Conception and the only one to experience Preservative Redemption, perfectly created to be the most pure Mother of God. But what about Saint Joseph? Is he just a regular Joe? Not really. Of course, he is not immaculately conceived. He is not God. He is fully human like all of us. But does it make any sense at all that he would not be created for his role in Salvation History? Let's take a look at the facts...

It is through Mary and Joseph that God, the Father sent His Son into the world for the sake of our salvation. **Jesus came into the world in a family.** It didn't have to be this way. God could have chosen another way but this was His will. So, point number one, **family is important.** Joseph is the father in this family. Growing up in this family, **Jesus looked on Joseph as His father, like an icon of the Heavenly Father.** Of course, Joseph is not the biological Father of Jesus, but he was His dad on this earth. Joseph

had all the benefit (and responsibilities) of being the dad to Our Savior. So, point number two, **dad is important.**

Furthermore, **Joseph did a great job with his natural role in this family.** He was committed to purity and with Mary they lived a chaste and holy married life. They loved each other like any other married couple. He protected his family and provided for them. He had a job. He made a home for them. He made sure they were safe. He prayed for them. God spoke to Joseph and told him what to do for his family. In sum, **he loved them.** Sometimes, we think of Saint Joseph as just part of the furniture in the Holy Family. Like he was there so the family didn't seem odd without a father in it. But the point is, **Saint Joseph was a real person in the Holy Family. He was a saint.** He was the dad to Jesus. He was the husband to Mary. He lived the part. If you want to know what it is like to be really, really close to Jesus and Mary then you have to go to Joseph and ask him. He is the one that did it first and best. In a way, he spent his whole life in adoration of Christ. As if we had the benefit of carrying around the Holy Eucharist at every moment, we could say that we spent our whole life in adoration. But Joseph had the benefit of carrying around the actual Person of Jesus as his child and living with Him in his home. So, point number three, **Joseph was created and prepared for his role in the Holy Family. Then Joseph was further sanctified through his constant connection with Christ in the home.**

Why is Saint Joseph a gift? Why is he a remedy for our time? When you think about it, most of the problems that have come into the world have gotten in because of the lack of a strong father. Sorry to say it this way, especially not wanting to offend those good fathers out there. But take it for what it is. A strong and virtuous father will protect his family. In a world of saintly fathers, the following things would be evident: Families would be safe and secure. Women would feel safe and secure. Children would be lovingly welcomed into the world. People would know Jesus and the way to heaven. Is this the world right now? Not to get into statistics, but tell me, What is the divorce rate for marriages again? ~ Even among Catholic marriages? How many women are trying to be both mother and father to their kids? What is the abortion rate? What's going on with gender issues? Why are people not just enjoying being themselves as created by God? Why are so many young people running wild lately in so many ways? Hmm. What would happen if fathers stepped up?

I have always known that Saint Joseph was good for me in a practical way. I have asked him, in my heart, to be a father to me, a husband for me and a father to my own children. I asked him to be those things in my life. And I could feel his presence and care. It made a difference and I knew that things were going to be alright. I prayed for him to be there for me. Of course, I came from an intact home, but still there was something that I needed on a practical level. **He really is the good Saint Joseph. I feel a certain privilege when I think of him now, like I am proud of him as my own father.** I cannot say that I fully understood him and the gift that he is. But I see the care of a dad when I just happened upon this 33-day consecration to Saint Joseph. It was not my effort that brought this into my life. It was not a coincidence. I see it as a way that Joseph was trying to be a dad to me. He was being a dad that I really need.

This is the gift for the Church. I think it is the time for us to really know Saint Joseph as a father. He was the father of Jesus. He was the husband of Mary. Our Heavenly Father blessed and sanctified everything about family life by creating the Holy Family for us. He blessed and sanctified the role of fatherhood through Joseph. In fact, he put flesh on fatherhood, His own Fatherhood, by providing

Joseph for Jesus in this world. It is the time for us to receive Joseph. Let us see what he can do through his intercession.

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