

Novena to St. Joseph

March 10—March 18, 2021

The Year of St. Joseph

Please join the Novena by reading the short reflection for each day, and saying the Novena Prayer to St. Joseph.

Novena Prayer to St. Joseph (from the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*—With a Father's Heart)

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.

Please call to mind your special intentions...

St. Joseph, Pray for us.

**Add: Our Father..., Hail Mary...,
Glory be to the Father..., Amen.**



The image above is from a hand-painted icon donated to the Mill Hill Missionaries by The Tablet, and is now in our chapel in Maidenhead.

Day 1

Joseph—a Beloved Father

"Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do." (Gen. 41:55)

Our own St. Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill is simply one out of many religious Institutes, Confraternities and ecclesial groups inspired by his spirituality and bearing his name. These, and the many churches worldwide dedicated to him, are testimony to the sense of Joseph's fatherhood felt everywhere in the universal Church.

Even though the above scriptural quote refers to Joseph of Egypt in the Book of Genesis, nevertheless, the phrase "Go to Joseph" expresses the sense of trust that out of famine will come plenty, out of despair will come hope and out of the messiness of human history will come the assurance of God's continual presence in our lives.

St. Joseph, as our beloved father, may you continue to protect us from all harm.

Day 2

Joseph—a Tender and Loving Father

"Where did that man (Jesus) get all this wisdom?" (Mt. 13:54)

Not only is Joseph a loving father for the whole Church, but he is also a tender, caring father to God's Son, Jesus. Such was his care for him that "Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and with people" (Lk. 2:52). In time, the model of Joseph's fatherhood would become for Jesus the template for God's Fatherhood.

Joseph's solid and faithful coaching and mentoring of the young Jesus would have nurtured the kind of wisdom that the people in the synagogue would have marvelled at as Jesus began his public ministry. Joseph's model of earthly fatherhood shaped Jesus' own understanding and teaching of God's Fatherhood as intimate, loving, caring and forgiving.

St. Joseph, help us experience God as a caring, tender and loving Father.

Day 3

Joseph—an Obedient Father

"When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." (Mt. 1:24)

How often did Joseph have to change his plans as a result of instructions given him in dreams? How different would our salvation history have been had Joseph divorced Mary (Mt. 1:19)? Or remained in Bethlehem after Jesus' birth (Mt. 2:13-15)? Or returned to Judea after their flight to Egypt (Mt. 2:22-23)? Even his long, arduous journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth was in obedience to a command from a Roman Emperor (Lk. 2:1). Moreover, Joseph was a devout Jew, obedient to all the prescriptions of the Law (Lk 2:21-24).

Joseph's example and model of obedience taught the young Jesus the value of discerning and putting God's will ahead of personal self-interest or short-term gain. It is a model of selflessness and trust. That is why Jesus taught us to pray "thy will (not mine!) be done."

St. Joseph, give us the wisdom to discern and obey God's will for us.

Day 4

Joseph—an Accepting Father

"[Joseph] took [Mary] as his wife." (Lk. 1:24)

Joseph's life was one of acceptance. He accepted Mary as his wife. He accepted to be the father of God's Son, to being uprooted and fleeing to Egypt, to resettling in Nazareth when it became obvious that returning to Judea would be too dangerous (cf. Mt. 2:22).

In accepting these things, Joseph was not just a passive recipient. He also embraced these sudden changes as opportunities to further God's divine plan. We may have little or no control over what happens to us. Joseph shows us that openness to God's grace can guide our response to what happens.

St. Joseph, help us to accept and embrace life's challenges as moments of grace.

Day 5

Joseph—a Courageously Creative Father

"Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt." (Mt. 2:14)

The courageous and creative ways in which Joseph responded to the many sudden changes forced upon him are often more implicit than explicit in the Gospels. He would have to have been resourceful and proactive to find accommodation in Bethlehem, for instance, or to be able to support Mary and Jesus during their flight into Egypt and throughout their stay there.

In the face of life's difficulties it is easy to be negative, reactive and destructive—to blame others and refuse to accept responsibility. Joseph's example shows us how life's challenges can reveal to us hitherto unknown gifts and talents.

St. Joseph, help us to respond creatively and courageously to life's difficulties.

Day 6

St. Joseph—a Working Father

"Isn't he the carpenter's son?" (Mt. 13:55)

From Joseph, the young Jesus would have learned the value and dignity of work and the enjoyment of the fruit of one's own labour. He would also, perhaps, have learned of the precariousness of seasonal work, of hiring oneself for daily labour, and the scourge and hardship of unemployment.

Joseph taught Jesus—and us too—that through work we cooperate in God's own creative activity. Through work, we contribute to building God's Kingdom by developing our gifts and talents, and using them not only in self-fulfilment, but also in the building up of community and the alleviation of suffering and poverty.

St. Joseph, help us find dignity and value in the work by which we serve others.

Day 7

Joseph—a Father in the Shadows

"Call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. (Mt. 23:9)

The word "shadow" used here is a deliberately ambiguous one. In one sense, Joseph was for Jesus the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father, watching over him and protecting him. In the other, Joseph fulfilled the role of any good parent introducing their child to life and reality. He gradually withdrew into the shadows, giving Jesus the freedom to mature and to grow into his full potential.

Joseph's earthly, temporary fatherhood of Jesus was simply a sign pointing to a greater, permanent fatherhood—God's heavenly Fatherhood.

St. Joseph, teach us how to care for little ones and nurture their growth.

Day 8

Joseph—a Man of Mission

"Get up, take the child and his mother..." (Mt. 2:13)

Joseph was a missionary in a much deeper sense than simply bringing Jesus and Mary to Egypt. As a father, a husband, a worker, a migrant and a refugee, Joseph showed what it was to live the gospel values of humility, patience, trust and loving dedication long before the first words of the Gospel were ever written. He was a living example of the exhortation of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel constantly. If necessary, use words."

St. Joseph, through your intercession, may we grow ever closer to your son, Jesus.

Day 9

Joseph—a Man of Loving Service

"To Love and to Serve" (the motto of the Mill Hill Missionaries)

In 1866, Herbert Vaughan chose the words 'To love and to serve' as his motto for St. Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill. He saw in St. Joseph's life of love and service a model for missionary life. Much of Joseph's life and work was obscure, hidden away, unrecognised and unrewarded, at least in worldly terms. He has left us no body of writing, no words of wisdom.

May his life and work be an example to us, helping us to trust in the Providence of God and to imitate the obedience of Jesus, who came not to do his own will, but the Will of the Father.

St. Joseph, inspire us to be faithful, unselfish and devoted to doing God's will.

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