

INTRODUCTION



Those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.

In response to the continuing global pandemic, when worship is virtual, personal contact is limited, and we're all learning new ways of maintaining relationships, Pope Francis has focused on St. Joseph as a model and guide for us on this journey.

Why Joseph? Because, even though he never speaks in the Scriptures, his role is so significant that no saint aside from Mary, his spouse, is mentioned more often in the Church today. Yet he exists in the shadows—much like the frontline workers in our hospitals, grocery stores, post offices, and everywhere that essential personnel are keeping the needs of our daily lives met. This quiet man, who responded to God's voice coming to him in dreams, who fulfilled the role of earthly father to Jesus, is an excellent person to ponder in these troubling days. May these thirty reflections on Pope Francis's words about St. Joseph open our eyes and hearts to this great guide.

1 | THE OLD AND THE NEW

*Descendant of David, spouse of Mary,
foster father of Jesus...*

Joseph never speaks in the Scriptures, but he is a man of reflection and action. More than this, as a descendant of David and husband of Mary, Joseph bridges the Old and New Testaments. Pope Francis says that it is often the quiet folks doing their jobs patiently and well—those we don't stop to consider when shelves are stocked, mail is delivered, streets are plowed, and children are cared for—who perform the most significant acts. Each caregiver, driver, teacher, or parent-stepping-in is a hero.

PONDER

Who have I failed to notice in the course of the day?

PRAY

God of wonder and surprise, thank you for the gift of all those who help in whatever way, each and every day.

2 | GOD'S RAW MATERIAL

*Even through Joseph's fears,
God's will and plan were at work.*

Joseph is perhaps our best reminder of how God works. Whenever we feel we're inadequate to do God's will, Pope Francis says, we must remember that it is through our very imperfections and weaknesses that God can produce the most fruit. Joseph feared to take Mary as his wife; he was afraid to flee to Egypt. And it's clear that he was equally fearful of returning home when Herod's threat was no more. Yet in every situation he trusted God's guidance and did not let fear overcome him. As Pope Francis reminds us, "we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course."

PONDER

Have I ever completely given myself over to God's will, without questioning or second-guessing?

PRAY

God of wonder and surprise, give me the courage I need to follow you.

3 | DARING TO TRUST

It was through dreams that God spoke to Joseph, which was a time-honored way for God to communicate to ancient peoples.

When Mary told Joseph she was pregnant, he was understandably disturbed and decided to put her aside quietly rather than expose her to public ridicule and punishment. But then the angel appeared to him in a dream and told him it was God's will that he take Mary as his wife. When he awoke, Joseph immediately followed God's plan. This unquestioning obedience, Pope Francis tells us, is a hallmark of how we should follow God's prompting. We may not be visited in a dream, but we certainly encounter God in the people we meet each day who need our help and acceptance.

PONDER

Who needs my help today?

PRAY

God of wonder and surprise, open my eyes today to see you in everyone.

4 | THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

*Regardless of the hardship involved,
Joseph did not hesitate to obey when told
to take Mary and Jesus away.*

Most of us know the Serenity Prayer, asking for the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change what we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. When Joseph was told, in a second dream, to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, he again did not hesitate, “regardless of the hardship involved,” as Pope Francis reminds us. In our daily lives we are often presented with hard decisions to make. How we respond makes all the difference. We should never be afraid to ask God for wisdom and help.

PONDER

Do I call on God in times of tough decisions?

PRAY

God of wonder and surprise, help me to see opportunity hidden in challenge and to do your will joyfully.

5 | ON THE ROAD AGAIN...

Once again, Joseph promptly obeyed.

So many people during the pandemic have lost their jobs, and so many others have had their life disrupted and reduced to a family bubble and masked trips to the grocery store. Joseph, too, knew disruption and uncertainty. When the danger to Jesus had passed, Joseph was told to go back to Israel with his family, and, Pope Francis tells us, he obeyed immediately. It couldn't have been easy, yet Joseph trusted that what God was asking him to do was the right thing. How can we learn patience and resolve in our own lives? Perhaps imitating Joseph is a good way to start.

PONDER

How can I reach out to someone who has been let go? What can I offer to help them?

PRAY

God of wonder and surprise, help me develop the patience and courage to follow your path.