



SEVEN SUNDAYS DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION

The *Seven Sundays Devotion* is a long-standing tradition of the Church in preparation for the feast of St. Joseph on March 19. The devotion begins on the seventh Sunday before March 19 and honors the seven joys and seven sorrows that St. Joseph experienced as husband of the Mother of God, faithful guardian of Christ, and head of the holy family. The devotion is a prayerful opportunity to “help us find out what God is telling us through the simple life of Mary’s husband” (St. Josemaria Escriva; *Christ is Passing By*, no. 39).

ST. JOSEPH, PATRON AND GUARDIAN

“The whole Church recognizes St Joseph as a patron and guardian. For centuries many different features of his life have caught the attention of believers. He was a man ever faithful to the mission God gave him. That is why, for many years now, I have liked to address him affectionately as ‘our father and lord.’

“St Joseph really is a father and lord. He protects those who revere him and accompanies them on their journey through this life – just as he protected and accompanied Jesus when he was growing up. As you get to know him, you discover that the holy patriarch is also a master of the interior life – for he teaches us to know Jesus and share our life with him, and to realize that we are part of God’s family. St Joseph can teach us these lessons, because he is an ordinary man, a family man, a worker who earned his living by manual labor – all of which has great significance and is a source of happiness for us.”

St. Josemaria Escriva
Christ is Passing By, no. 39

LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH

Lord, have mercy...
Christ, have mercy...
Holy Trinity, one God...

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Have mercy on us.

Holy Mary...
St. Joseph...
Noble son of the House of David...
Light of patriarchs...
Husband of the Mother of God...
Guardian of the Virgin...
Foster father of the Son of God...
Faithful guardian of Christ...
Head of the holy family...
Joseph, chaste and just...
Joseph, prudent and brave...
Joseph, obedient and loyal...
Pattern of patience...
Lover of poverty...
Model of workers...
Example to parents...
Guardian of virgins...
Pillar of family life...
Comfort of the troubled...
Hope of the sick...
Patron of the dying...
Terror of evil spirits...
Protector of the Church...

Pray for us.
Pray for us.
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Pray for us.
Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world...
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world...
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world...

Have mercy on us.
Have mercy on us.
Have mercy on us.

God made him master of his household...

And put him in charge of all that he owned.

Let us pray: Almighty God, in your infinite wisdom and love you chose Joseph to be the husband of Mary, the mother of your Son. As we enjoy his protection on earth, may we have the help of his prayers in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he decided to leave the Blessed Virgin;
His joy when the angel told him the mystery of the Incarnation.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O chaste spouse of Mary, great was the trouble and anguish of your heart when you were considering quietly sending away your inviolate spouse; yet your joy was unspeakable, when the surpassing mystery of the Incarnation was made known to you by the angel. By this sorrow and this joy, we beseech you to comfort our souls, both now and in the sorrows of our final hour, with the joy of a good life and a holy death after the pattern of your own life and death in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

GOSPEL READING | MATTHEW 1:18 – 25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly.

But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

And this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, *God with us*).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

REFLECTION

“St. Joseph was an ordinary sort of man on whom God relied to do great things. He did exactly what the Lord wanted him to do, in each and every event that went to make up his life. That is why Scripture praises Joseph as “a just man” (Mt 1:19). And in Hebrew a just man means a good and faithful servant of God, someone who fulfills the divine will, or who is honorable and charitable toward his neighbor. So a just man is someone who loves God and proves his love by keeping God’s commandments and directing his whole life toward the service of his brothers, his fellow men” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 40).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

SECOND SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he saw Jesus born in poverty;
His joy when the angels announced Jesus' birth.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O most blessed patriarch, glorious Saint Joseph, who was chosen to be the foster father of the Word made flesh, your sorrow at seeing the child Jesus born in such poverty was suddenly changed into heavenly exultation when you heard the angelic hymn and beheld the glories of that resplendent night. By this sorrow and this joy, we implore you to obtain for us the grace to pass over from life's pathway to hear angelic songs of praise and to rejoice in the shining splendor of celestial glory.

GOSPEL READING | LUKE 2:1 – 20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

REFLECTION

"The name Joseph, in Hebrew, means 'God will add.' God adds unsuspected dimensions to the holy lives of those who do his will. He adds the one important dimension which gives meaning to everything, the divine dimension. To the humble and holy life of Joseph he added – if I may put it this way – the lives of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus, our Lord. God does not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. Joseph could make his own the words of Mary, his wife: 'he has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid... because he who is mighty, he whose name is holy, has wrought for me his wonders'" (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 40; quoting Mt 1:19).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

THIRD SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he saw Jesus' blood shed in circumcision;
His joy in giving him the name of Jesus.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O glorious Saint Joseph, who faithfully obeyed the law of God, your heart was pierced at the sight of the most precious blood that was shed by the infant Savior during his circumcision, but the name of Jesus gave you new life and filled you with quiet joy. By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us the grace to be freed from all sin during life and to die rejoicing, with the holy name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips.

GOSPEL READING | LUKE 2:21

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

REFLECTION

“To be just is not simply a matter of obeying rules. Goodness should grow from the inside; it should be deep and vital – for ‘the just man lives by faith’ (Hab 2:4). These words, which later became a frequent subject of St Paul’s meditation, really did apply in the case of St Joseph. He didn’t fulfill the will of God in a routine or perfunctory way; he did it spontaneously and wholeheartedly. For him the law which every practicing Jew lived by was not a code or a cold list of precepts, but an expression of the will of the living God. So he knew how to recognize the Lord’s voice when it came to him so unexpectedly and so surprisingly.

“St Joseph’s life was simple, but it was not easy. After considerable soul-searching, he learned that the son of Mary had been conceived through the Holy Spirit. And this child, the Son of God, the descendant of David according to the flesh, was born in a cave. Angels celebrated his birth, and distinguished people from distant countries came to adore him. But the King of Judea wanted to kill him, and they had to flee. The son of God was, it appeared, a defenseless child who would live in Egypt” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 41).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

FOURTH SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he heard the prophecy of Simeon;
His joy when he learned that many would be saved through the sufferings of Jesus.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O most faithful Saint Joseph, who shared the mysteries of our redemption, the prophecy of Simeon, touching the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, caused you to shudder with mortal dread but at the same time filled you with a blessed joy for the salvation and glorious resurrection that would be attained by countless souls. By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that we may be of the number of those who, through the merits of Jesus and the intercession of Mary the Virgin Mother, are predestined to a glorious resurrection.

GOSPEL READING | LUKE 2:22 – 35

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel.”

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

REFLECTION

“When relating these events in his Gospel, St Matthew continually emphasizes Joseph’s faithfulness. He kept the commandments of God without wavering, even though the meaning of those commandments was sometimes obscure or their relation to the rest of the divine plan hidden from him” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 42).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

FIFTH SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he had to flee to Egypt;
His joy in being always with Jesus and Mary.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O most watchful guardian of the Son of God, glorious Saint Joseph, great was your toil in supporting and waiting upon the Son of God, especially during the flight into Egypt! Yet, how you rejoiced to have God himself always near you. By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us the grace that would keep us safe from the devil, especially the help we need to flee from dangerous situations. May we serve Jesus and Mary, and for them alone may we live and happily die.

GOSPEL READING | MATTHEW 2:13 – 15

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.”

REFLECTION

“Joseph’s faith does not falter, he obeys quickly and to the letter. To understand this lesson better, we should remember that Joseph’s faith is active, that his docility is not passive submission to the course of events. For the Christian’s faith has nothing whatever to do with conformity, inertia or lack of initiative.

“Joseph entrusted himself unreservedly to the care of God, but he always reflected on events and so was able to reach that level of understanding of the works of God which is true wisdom. In this way he learned little by little that supernatural plans have a logic which at times upsets human plans.” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 42).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

SIXTH SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he was afraid to return to his homeland;
His joy on being told by the angel to go to Nazareth.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O glorious Saint Joseph, you marveled to see the King of heaven obedient to your commands. Your consolation in bringing Jesus out of the land of Egypt was troubled by your fear of Archelaus. Nevertheless, being assured by an angel, you lived in gladness at Nazareth with Jesus and Mary. By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that our hearts may be delivered from harmful fears, so that we may rejoice in peace of conscience and may live with Jesus and Mary, and, like you, may die in their company.

GOSPEL READING | MATTHEW 2:19 – 23; LUKE 2:40

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

REFLECTION

“In the different circumstances of his life, St Joseph never refuses to think, never neglects his responsibilities. On the contrary, he puts his human experience at the service of faith. When he returns from Egypt, ‘learning that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there’ (Mt 2:22). In other words, he had learned to work within the divine plan. And to confirm that he was doing the right thing, Joseph received an instruction to return to Galilee.

“That’s the way St Joseph’s faith was: full, confident, complete. And it expressed itself in an effective dedication to the will of God and an intelligent obedience. With the faith went love. His faith nurtured his love of God, who was fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, Jacob and Moses, and his affection for Mary his wife and her Son. This faith, hope and love would further the great mission which God was beginning in the world through, among others, a carpenter in Galilee: the redemption of man” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 42).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

SEVENTH SUNDAY

*His sorrow when he lost the Child Jesus;
His joy in finding him in the temple.*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

O glorious Saint Joseph, pattern of all holiness, when you lost the child Jesus, you sought him sorrowing for the space of three days, until with great joy you found him again in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors. By this sorrow and this joy, we ask you, with our hearts upon our lips, to keep us from ever having the misfortune of losing Jesus through mortal sin. Grant also that we always may seek him with unceasing sorrow, when we commit a serious sin, until we find him again, ready to show us his great mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

GOSPEL READING | LUKE 2:41 – 50

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but, supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.

REFLECTION

"Faith, hope, love: these are the supports of Joseph's life and of all Christian lives. Joseph's self-giving is an interweaving of faithful love, loving faith and confident hope. His feast is thus a good opportunity for us to renew our commitment to the Christian calling God has given each of us.

"When you sincerely desire to live by faith, hope and love, the renewal of your commitment is not a matter of picking up again something neglected. When there really is faith, hope and love, renewal means staying in God's hands, despite our personal faults, mistakes and defects. It is a confirmation of our faithfulness. Renewing our commitment means renewing our fidelity to what God wants of us: it means expressing our love in deeds" (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 43).

Conclude by praying the Litany of St. Joseph found on page four.

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE

St. Josemaria Esciva dedicated his priestly life to helping men and women of all backgrounds *to understand that ordinary life can be holy and full of God* – naturally and simply, living in the middle of the world dedicated to one’s work and family, sharing in the needs and interests of one’s neighbor and society, respecting the freedom of every person, and striving towards holiness.

The St. Josemaria Institute seeks to increase devotion to St. Josemaria and to share his message among all men and women who desire to find meaning and happiness in their daily lives by growing closer to God. Our hope is that people everywhere will have the opportunity to hear the message of St. Josemaria and accept the challenge he set forth in the first point of his spiritual classic, *The Way*:

“Don’t let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail. Shine forth with the light of your faith and of your love... light up all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you carry in your heart.”



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