



In Honor
of St. Joseph

- Novena
- Holy Cloak
- Joys and Sorrows



SHALOM



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Cover by: Luigina C.
original image is located in the Oasis of Peace, Bijakovici

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ISBN 9 7 8 8 8 8 4 0 4 2 9 6 5

To order this book please quote the code number 8596

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INTRODUCTION

St. Joseph is a solid, down-to-earth man who embraces with love those given to him: Mary and Jesus.

Mary is already engaged with Joseph when she receives the visitation of the angel Gabriel. When God personally addresses Mary, He intimately unites Joseph to the mystery of the Incarnation. By welcoming Mary into his home, Joseph welcomes both the mystery of Jesus in her and also the mystery that is Mary herself. He respects her deeply and loves her with authentic love.

It is not Mary but rather Joseph, father and protector of the Holy Family, who gives a name to the son of God. God, source of all paternity in heaven and earth, wants Joseph to name His child Jesus – a name He himself has revealed. The Most High wants Joseph to assume this honor for many reasons. He wishes for Joseph to intimately take part in Redemption so that he too, in a spiritual sense, may “bring forth” Jesus. In entrusting His only begotten Son to Joseph, God desires to impress His own divine paternity and fecundity on human paternity.

Very few are the references to Joseph in the Gospel, yet it is possible to glean some revealing elements of his vocation: “*Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety,*” says Mary. “... *I must be in my Father’s house,*” (Lk 2,48:49) responds Jesus. These words are important to grasp the mystery behind

the paternity of Joseph. He is truly the spouse of the Holy Virgin and earthly father of Jesus, as Mary states. Yet Joseph's role is completely relative to the dual nature of Jesus, man and God. Joseph too is called to become a disciple of Jesus, devoting his existence as a service to the only begotten Son of the Father and to His Virgin Mother – a mission that he expands to the whole Church, which is never deprived of his assistance and protection.

“You have but one Father,” (Mt 23,9) announces Jesus to the crowd and to his disciples. There is no paternity but that of God; however, man, created in His image and likeness, is given to partake in His divine paternity (ref. *Eph 3,15*), a grace that St. Joseph fully embodies. Although he is not the biological father of Jesus, he lives a full and complete paternity. Being a father means primarily to be at the service of life and human development; St. Joseph wholeheartedly devotes himself to this calling. For Christ, he suffers persecution, exile and poverty; he is forced out of his hometown into a foreign land. His sole recompense is to be with Jesus and with Mary.

Among Joseph's many remarkable attributes, particular consideration should be given to his silence. His is a silence permeated with deep contemplation of God's mystery in an attitude of complete abandonment to His will. Joseph's silence is not a sign of inner

emptiness but, to the contrary, an expression of the fullness of faith he carries in his heart and which drives his every thought and action. It is through this silence that, in perfect unison with Mary, he keeps the Word of God in his heart and uses it constantly to interpret the daily events of his life with Jesus. His silence is submersed in faithful prayer – a prayer of blessing to the Father, of abandonment to His will, and of trust in His divine providence.

It is not an exaggeration to say that it is from Joseph that Jesus learned – from a human perspective – that sound interior life which is the foundation of true justice, the same divine justice which Jesus one day will teach to his disciples. From Joseph, Jesus learned to be and act as a man. Helped by this just man and our Virgin Mother, we too are called to learn the meaning of our humanity. If Mary is the mirror of the life-bearing “maternity of God,” Joseph is the sign of the fruitful, certain and loving paternity of the Father.

Joseph’s life, spent in perfect obedience to the Word, is an eloquent sign for all disciples of Jesus who aspire to the unity of God’s people. His example reveals that full abandonment to God’s will is an essential condition for man to become an instrument in God’s plan which aims to reunite men under one family. For this reason, the Church looks at St. Joseph as *the* model of service to Christ and to the divine plan

of salvation. She invokes him as the special patron and protector of the family of believers.

Our reflection on the human and spiritual path of St. Joseph draws us to fully appreciate the richness of his vocation. Over the centuries, he remains the model for all of those who dedicate their lives to Christ whether they are lay people, consecrated men and women, or families. St. Joseph lived at the light of the mystery of the Incarnation, not only physically (because of his proximity to Jesus), but also with the fullness of his heart. He unveils for us the secret of a humanity that lives in the presence of the Mystery and is open to it through the most concrete events of daily existence. In him there is no division between faith and action. His faith drives his actions in a decisive way. Paradoxically, it is by actively assuming his responsibilities that Joseph places himself and his just aspirations aside – thus letting God realize His plan.

Over the centuries, many saints are known to be devoted to St. Joseph. Let us remember **St. Teresa of Avila** who said: *“No matter how great your needs, turn to the powerful help of St. Joseph... rest assured that your pleas will certainly be heard. [...] His help has always been greater than I could hope for. I cannot remember one single time in which I prayed to him for a grace without having it obtained. He greatly helps those who recommend themselves to him.”* **St. Joseph Marelllo**

used to say to his faithful followers: *“We need to ask St. Joseph to be our spiritual director. We need to be inspired by him who was the first on earth to care for Jesus. He looked after him as an infant, protected him as a child, and was his father for the first years of his life.”*

Blessed Luigi Guanella describing St. Joseph as model of piety, hard work and dignifying poverty said: *“When overwhelmed by necessity, tiredness, or sadness, we feel the need for a powerful voice to intercede for us before the Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Let us have recourse to St. Joseph; he, who many times experienced the strains and humiliations of poverty, will become our powerful advocate and father.”*

Many Popes have spread the devotion to the most holy spouse of Mary as well. Among them, **Pope Leon XIII** proclaimed St. Joseph patron of all Christians. In his writings we read: *“To all fathers he will grant the grace to raise their children with vigilance and educate them in a Christian way. To all spouses he will grant the gift of a reciprocal and long-lasting love, of perfect unity in the sacrament of marriage. To single men and women, he will grant the spirit of perfect purity and chastity. To the rich, he will teach true richness and greatness. To the poor, he will teach to sanctify themselves through work and to accept poverty with serenity.”* **Blessed Pope John XXIII** said: *“O St. Joseph! I love him so much that I cannot either start or close the*

day without first giving to him my first word and last thought.” And **Blessed John Paul II** declared: *“The Heavenly Father put all treasures of redemption, which are Mary and Jesus, in the hands of Joseph.”*

St. Joseph is truly a father who protects and accompanies those who venerate him, just as he protected and accompanied Jesus during his early life. Let us constantly ask his precious intercession so that all fathers – both family fathers and priests – may express their paternity with the same loving and firm justice that this extraordinary man used to love the whole of mankind through his spouse, Mary, and in God’s Son, Jesus. Let us learn from St. Joseph to be attentive to those surrounding us and to show the loving Face of God to those who are poor and in particular need of love.

By living an intimate relationship with Joseph, we will discover in him a true master of interior life: he will teach us to know Jesus, to live with him and to be part of God’s family.



NOVENA to St. Joseph

*The following novena can be prayed for nine consecutive days starting on **March 10** (as St. Joseph's day is celebrated on March 19). It can also be recited at any other time to express devotion to **St. Joseph**, to ask the Lord for a particular grace through his intercession, or in thanksgiving for a grace received.*

The only condition to fulfill this novena is to be resolute and perseverant in praying it without interruption for nine consecutive days.

Recommendations:

*Our Mother Church teaches us that spiritual life is tightly linked to sacramental life; spiritual exercises and devotions are as fruitful as the measure with which we respond to God's grace with our own will. While doing this novena, it is therefore **recommended** to go to **Confession** asking the Lord forgiveness for one's sins and to participate in **Holy Mass** (if possible daily), receiving Jesus in the **Holy Eucharist** – the source and culmination of all Christian life.*

*In addition, during the nine days of the novena it **is appropriate** to:*

1) Praise, bless and thank the Most Holy Trinity: God the Father for the gift of Creation, God the Son for the gift of Redemption, God the Holy Spirit for the gift of Sanctity.

2) Forgive always and everyone.

3) Live prayer with seriousness and perseverance.

4) Do works of mercy.

5) Surrender to God's will.

By doing so, one can experience an authentic Christian life, obtain God's grace, practice faithfulness, and receive the many blessings and spiritual consolations which give life to our daily existence.

If done with firm faith, this novena to St. Joseph is a very powerful devotion to overcome periods of suffering such as sickness, anguish, moral decadence, family and marital crisis, lack of work, etc. It can be used to be enlightened before an important decision, to be healed, consoled, or to ask any type of help in small or great matters. It is also a wonderful way to offer thanksgiving for the immense graces that one constantly receives from the Lord.