

## Tools for Spiritual Growth from Saint Joseph

Normally this weekend on Sunday, March 19, we'd be celebrating Saint Joseph's Day in the Church. However as his feast falls on a Sunday in Lent, Saint Joseph gets bumped to Monday, March 20th.

As the patronal feast day for our parish, Saint Joseph is perhaps among the most familiar of all the saints. We all know that he is the foster-father of Jesus. But of course we know very little about the man himself; the Gospels say simply he was a just man, and he also utters no words.

Nonetheless, from his life, we can really learn so much.

First, we look to him and see his incredible trust in God. He has plans, but he lets those plans take a back seat to what God has called him to do. Sometimes we want to do it "our way" but Saint Joseph reminds us to do it the Lord's way.

Second, he acts with fortitude. Not only is the message that his fiance is with child, but this child will be born a Savior. A lesser man would have run for the hills, but Joseph without hesitation does what the angel tells him. He takes Mary into his home. He leads the family into Egypt to flee Herod. And then he leads them back on the difficult journey to Nazareth. Through it all, it's about trusting in God. How about you and me? It sounds easy but when we sit in silence and listen to God sometimes He will really challenge us and move us out of our comfort zones. It might be a difficult journey as it was for Joseph but ultimately God will always see us through.

Third, as we think about Joseph, it's worth remembering too he was part of a family. He was no "lone ranger." Mary helped him as he helped Mary. So, who are the Josephs in our life we can seek out? Joseph tenderly loved Mary and Jesus and kept them safe doing so much for them. Sometimes we might feel like asking for help is a sign of being vulnerable. But being vulnerable is a good thing. We need to seek people out for guidance as we journey through life; people who will tell us what we need to hear; people who will listen; people who will help us discern what God is calling us to do and to live it out. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

And lastly we go forward with God and with others also knowing God can use us to do such great things. Because of Joseph, the Holy Family was kept safe and protected. Joseph never sought out glory for himself; we do not hear him say a word. Yet his actions did so much. In our lives, we can take a page from him knowing that we too can do great things, but it's not for our glory. Sometimes we will stumble and fall on the way; I can't help but wonder if Joseph had nights wondering what have I got myself into, or when will we be able to leave Egypt, or what of this sword that Simeon spoke of that was to pierce my wife's heart? But he did not let the anxiety overwhelm him; he moved forward, he did his job, and in doing that he did great things. Things that aren't recorded, but things that made a profound impact for Mary, Jesus and all of us. May we

too never forget what a difference we make when we live out our vocation and love one another, doing the simple things God asks us to do with great love.

A little over twenty years ago in front of a statue of the Sacred Heart at the Cathedral, I prayed quietly before a vocations discernment dinner with the archbishop. The following August after nearly bailing out because of ruminating “what if this doesn’t work” and thinking I need more time to sort it out, I decided I needed to “let go, let God” and I entered the seminary. Six years later I was ordained and had my first blessings in front of the same statue. Now just about 16 years into my priesthood, like all of us I have ups and downs; I get nervous sometimes about the future. I can’t see the finish line, but I do know that God and many great people are guiding me every step of the way. And my hope is that eventually, please God, when I get there, I’ll have helped people who also helped me on the journey too. Unlike Joseph, I’m not a saint though I’m trying to become one. But he can help you and me to do just that, so may we seek him out and trust in his intercession and follow his example, knowing that with a little bit of trust, God will truly take us on an incredible adventure that leads to what eye has not seen and ear has not heard.

Saint Joseph, Pray for Us!

Fr. Paul