

SAINT JOSEPH

NOVENA AND PRAYERS

By Fr. Reginald, OFM Cap

Introduction

As the life of St Joseph was a hidden life upon earth, so devotion to St Joseph, deep and ardent though it always has been, has been hidden in the Church for centuries.

The Franciscan Order was the first to propagate devotion to St Joseph in the Western Church. The first Life of the glorious Patriarch was written by a Child of St Francis (Patrignani); the first Feast in his honour was established by a General Chapter of the Order, at Assisi AD 1399; and the first Confraternity under his patronage was founded by a Franciscan missionary, Blessed Bernardine of Feltria, AD 1487. The members of the Franciscan Order not only introduced and propagated this devotion in every country in the world evangelised by their missionaries, but it is also mainly owing to them that St Joseph has been proclaimed the Patron of the Universal Church, by the illustrious Child of St Francis, Pius IX — Pius, the priest of the Sacred Heart, and the preacher of Mary's privileges — to bring St Joseph more prominently before the faithful, thus reuniting, as it were, to the eyes of the faithful, the Sacred Trinity upon earth. The Holy Family of the House of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

In the Apostolic Decree which constituted St Joseph patron of the Universal Church, it is stated that the Church has always most highly honoured and praised the most blessed Joseph, next to his Spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in time of trouble'.

It is related that during Pope Pius IX's reign, there lived a great artist in Rome. He received an order one day from the Vatican to paint a portrait of the Pope, and a painting of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

When the outline of the painting had been made, he took it to the Vatican for the Pope's approbation. Skilful though he was, he had great difficulty in grouping round the heavenly throne the many choirs of saints and angels. Throwing a quick glance over the sketch the Holy Father detected an omission. 'And St Joseph,' said he, 'where is he?' I will put him there,' said the artist, pointing to a group lost in clouds of light and glory. 'Not so,' said the Holy Father, 'but', laying his finger by the side of Our Divine Lord, 'you will put him there, for that is his place in Heaven.'

Our eternal lot depends on the hour of our death. If we are then in the state of grace, we shall be forever happy in Heaven; if in mortal sin, we shall forever suffer the terrible pains of hell. Hence, we should pray daily to St Joseph for that greatest of graces, a good and holy death fortified by the Sacraments of the Church.

About forty years ago a missionary in South Africa lost his way, and came to the house of a Protestant, and made himself known as a Catholic priest. The Protestant said to him: 'You have come just in time; one my workmen, a Catholic, is at the point of death.' The priest went at once to visit the dying man. On seeing the priest he said: 'Thanks be to God. I knew that St Joseph would send me a priest to prepare me for death.' He told the priest that, when he was a boy, his mother had taught him to pray every day to St Joseph, saying: 'St Joseph, obtain for me a holy death.' When he became a soldier and had to go to South Africa, his mother, when bidding him farewell again, admonished him never to omit saying that prayer daily to St Joseph. This he promised her, and afterwards faithfully kept his promise. When he got sick the nearest priest lived 150 miles away and, even if he had been sent for, he could not have arrived in time to prepare him for death. But Joseph sent the missionary to the place where his client was dying, in order to prepare him for a good death by administering to him the Last Sacraments.

Let us, while we enjoy good health, never forget to pray daily to the Blessed Virgin, 'Pray for us now and at the hour of our death' and to St Joseph, the patron of a happy death, for the grace to die a holy death.

We should have a special devotion to St Joseph, father of Jesus. He is the Patron of the Universal Church, a great helper in temporal needs, for he was the provider of the Holy Family; also a helper of those who try to pray well, and

especially the patron of a holy death, for he is the only saint who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Trusting prayer

‘All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive,’ says Our Divine Lord. To his disciples who wondered at the withering of the fig tree, he said: ‘If you shall have faith and stagger not, not only this of the fig tree shall you do, but if you shall say to this mountain: ‘Take up and cast yourself into the sea, it shall be done.’

To the blind man of Jericho he said: ‘Receive your sight, your faith has made you whole,’ and to the centurion: ‘As you have believed so be it done to you,’ and his servant was healed at the hour.

He rebuked his disciples in the boat: ‘Why are you fearful, you of little faith?’ ‘Do you believe I can do this to you?’ he asked of the two blind men. They say to him: ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes saying, ‘According to your faith be it done unto you,’ and their eyes were opened.

He cured the Canaanite girl for the sake of her mother’s persevering, confident prayer.

And, as if to impress upon us that there is nothing impossible to trusting prayer, he said to Martha, who seemed to have no hope in her brother’s return to life after his being four days in the grave: ‘Did I not say to you that if you believe you shall see the glory of God?’

God alone knows what is good for us: how often is the refusal of our request a far greater favour than would be the granting of them. Certainly Our Divine Lord who once said: ‘Whatsoever you ask of the Father in my name the same shall be given unto you,’ will not turn a deaf ear to our prayers.

If, like Apostles, you enter the novena with a spirit of reverence, of perseverance, of resignation to the will of God, and of repentance, you may rest assured that every prayer will be granted somehow and at some time by our dear Lord.

Indulgences for devotion to St Joseph For Novena to St Joseph

(a) A Plenary Indulgence, if present at the Novena for at least five days, and complying with the usual conditions, namely, Confession, Communion, and prayers for the Pope’s, intentions.

(b) A Plenary Indulgence on the usual conditions, namely, Confession, Communion, and prayers for the Pope’s intentions. But where a Public Novena is taking place, this indulgence can be gained only by those who are legitimately prevented from attending the public one.

—Pius XI, March 6, 1935

For the Month of March

A Plenary Indulgence, if they perform this pious exercise for at least ten days, go to Confession, Holy Communion, and pray for the Pope’s intentions.

A Plenary Indulgence on the usual conditions, provided they have performed this pious exercise for the entire month. But where public exercises are being conducted, this indulgence can be gained only by those who are legitimately prevented from making them.

—Pius XI, November 21, 1933

For the First Wednesday of each month

1. A Plenary Indulgence on the usual conditions, namely, Confession, Communion, visit to a church, and prayers for the Pope’s intentions.

—Pius XI, May 13, 1933

2. A Plenary Indulgence may be gained on the usual conditions, provided this pious practice has been performed daily for the entire month.

—Pius XI, October 12, 1936

Manner of making Novena to St Joseph

1. For nine consecutive days or Wednesdays, recite the following prayers in any church or your own home, before a picture or statue of St Joseph.
2. On each of these days, if possible, assist at Holy Mass, and during or at the end of the Novena, receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.
3. Endeavour to propagate devotion to St Joseph, which can be done effectively by circulating this booklet.

Novena in honour of St Joseph

Prayer to the Holy Ghost

Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created. R. And you shall renew the face of the earth. Let us pray

O God, who instructed the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise, and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ Our Lord.

Prayers to be said each day of the Novena O glorious St Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, to you we raise our hearts and hands to implore your powerful intercession in obtaining from the benign Heart of Jesus all the helps and graces necessary for our spiritual and temporal welfare, particularly the grace of a happy death, and the special favour we now implore. (Here mention your request).

O Guardian of the Word Incarnate, we feel animated with confidence that your prayers on our behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God.

V. O glorious St Joseph, through the love you bear to Jesus Christ, and for the glory his name.

R. Hear our prayers and obtain our petitions.

Prayer

O glorious St Joseph, spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, obtain for me a pure, humble and charitable mind, and perfect resignation to the divine will. Be my guide, father and model through life, that I may merit to die, as you did, in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

O glorious St Joseph, I most humbly beg of you, by the love and care you have for Jesus and Mary, to take my affairs, spiritual and temporal into your hands.

Draw from them the greater glory of God and obtain for me the grace to do his holy will.

First day of Novena — 10 March

This Novena may also be used for the Feast of the Solemnity of St Joseph — third Wednesday after Easter, and for all the Wednesdays throughout the year. It may also be used for any nine consecutive days' novena at any time.

Faith, Hope and Charity

The three acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, contain all man's happiness on earth. By Faith, we believe what God has promised; we believe that we shall one day see and possess him, that we shall be with him for ever in heaven. By Hope, we await the fulfilment of his promises; we hope to be rewarded for all our good actions, thoughts, and desires, for God keeps count even of good desires.

In heaven, faith and hope will no longer exist, for the mists which obscure our reason will be dissipated. Our mind will gain comprehension of things which are hidden from it here below. We shall no longer have anything to hope for, since we shall have everything. One does not hope to acquire a treasure which one already possesses. . . But Love! Oh, we shall be intoxicated with it. We shall be drowned in this ocean of divine love, in this immense charity of the heart of Jesus. Thus charity is a foretaste of heaven. Oh, if we could understand it, could taste it, how happy we should be. The reason of our unhappiness is that we do not love God.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Second day of Novena — 11 March

Love of our neighbour

We should have peace if we knew how to bear patiently what we endeavour to avoid, and if we conformed ourselves of these words of St Paul: 'Clothe yourselves, as befits the beloved elect of God, in compassion, goodness, and humility, in modesty and patience, bearing with one another, and mutually pardoning offences, forgiving each other, as God has pardoned you.' How little patience would cost, if only we remembered how Jesus Christ bears with us, and how, through love, he expiated our sins upon the cross; if we thought of heaven, which awaits us as a recompense for the sufferings we endure for him; if we understood that to love one's neighbour is the surest means of attracting God's love; if we realised the glory of imitating the goodness, the clemency, the magnificence even of Jesus Christ and of his Father, by pardoning as they have pardoned us.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Third day of Novena — 12 March

The greater the cross — the brighter the crown

As, in constructing an edifice, more care and attention are devoted to the chiselling of one stone than another, according to the importance and beauty of its destined resting-place, so each Christian is tried by crosses and afflictions, which are heavy and grievous in proportion to the splendour of the crown prepared for him, and the degree of glory which God intends for him. He chastises those whom He loves, lest, corrupted by the pleasures of the age, they should stray from the path of salvation.

If we accustomed ourselves to look to God in everything, and to consider everything from his standpoint, we should remain firm and unmoved amid trials and temptations, saying with holy Job: 'Nothing has happened to me save what has pleased the Lord; blessed be his Holy Name.' God, who permits me to be afflicted, takes particular care of me, in his infinite goodness. He has fastened me to the cross; I will remain there until he unfastens me.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Fourth day of Novena — 13 March

The thought of heaven

We should often raise our minds to that celestial Jerusalem, that glorious city of God, where we shall hear his praises sung on every side by an infinite number of saints. If we inquire of them how they arrived there, we shall learn that the apostles have attained heaven chiefly by love, the martyrs by constancy, the doctors by meditation, the confessors by mortification, the virgins by purity of body and of heart, and all in general by humility.

Let us then walk cheerfully and joyously forward amid the difficulties of this transitory life; let us welcome, with open arms, mortifications, pains, and afflictions, if we meet them on our road, since we are assured that these trials will have an end, that they will terminate with our life, after which there will be nothing but contentment and eternal consolation.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Fifth day of Novena — 14 March

The vanity of earthly things

We are not sent into the world to amuse ourselves but, on the contrary, to suffer patiently and piously the pains of this exile, making use of them to win a holy and happy eternity. Oh! how sweet is a blessed eternity! What does it matter whether we are happy or unhappy on this miserable earth, so full of sadness! But what a wretched fate awaits those who, on earth, seek only pleasure and gratification! It makes little difference whether they find it or not. The little time these children of misfortune have to spend here will soon be passed; and afterwards it is a question of heaven or hell. Do not set your affections then, on the honours, riches, pleasures and luxuries of this world. Choose for yourself the only lasting happiness; reject the false happiness which is only a dream.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Sixth day of Novena — 15 March

The most tender of fathers

Joseph is our father, since we are Mary's children, the brothers and co-heirs of God's Divine Son. Jesus, in acting as Joseph's Son, infused into his heart a love more tender than the best of father's, and that not only in order to be loved himself as a son, but that this love might extend to all men, his children also. God has not commanded fathers and mothers to love their children, says St Thomas, because nature endows them with a love for them so strong, that it takes the place of law and precept. Judge, then, if St Joseph, the most tender of fathers, could forget mankind committed to his care. Thus it is that the holy patriarch has received a special gift of love, tenderness and solicitude, which impels him to bestow upon us benefits as great as the most loving father could desire for the children whom he loves more than himself.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Seventh day of Novena — 16 March

The love of God

To love God — such is the one end for which God has created us, and the one object which we should strive to realise here below, by constant effort and earnest solicitude.

Charity is the queen of all virtues; it reigns and will reign eternally. After death, faith will have its reward; it will see what it believed; but it shall not enter into heaven. Hope, after death, shall have its recompense; it will possess what it

longed for, but it shall not enter heaven. Charity, also, shall have its reward after death, but this reward will consist in lasting eternally in an immense beatitude, and burning eternally with its utmost ardour for the God whom it has loved upon earth. Charity shall enter heaven.

Let us love God, then, with all our heart and with all our strength. Let us have God before our eyes in all that we do, in order to confirm in all things to his holy will and good pleasure. Nay more, let us bear, not merely patiently, but even joyfully, everything which mortifies our self-love and our natural sensuality. Finally, let us prize nothing outside of the love of God; let his divine love be the sole object of our frequent and earnest supplications.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Eighth day of Novena — 17 March

Be ready

Few are converted at the hour of death. More than that, it is very difficult, if one has lived an evil life, to prepare oneself then to die well. Then is not the time to extirpate the bad habits which have rooted themselves in the soul, to tear from the heart the passions which rule it, and to remove its affection for the treasures of earth. At the hour of death all is dark. We have no light, and can no longer work. Hardness of heart, darkness of intellect, all kinds of troubles and fears, the attentions which the body demands, all combine to hinder the sinful soul from regulating his troubled conscience. Then what is done, is done. As our last illness finds us, in a state of grace or in sin, so shall we be at the hour of death and for all eternity.

We should, then, always be ready for the call of death. ‘Be ready,’ said Our Lord, ‘estote parati,’ now and always. ‘The time is short,’ says the Lord again; let us beware of losing a moment. This is why the Holy Ghost gives us the advice ‘Do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today.’

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Ninth day of Novena — 18 March

Never lose courage

Saint Bonaventure says that perseverance in prayer, and in the regulation of our lives, is of all things the one which leads us most rapidly to the height of perfection; for, however little the traveller advances, if he walks every day, he will arrive finally at the place he wishes to reach. But if we lose courage, if we stop at every step, we have to begin anew every day, and our lifetime passes before we can complete the journey which we had planned. If, in the course of your life, owing to human weakness, you have the misfortune to fall, or even lose strength, do not become disheartened, do not lose courage or hope. Even if you were to fall a thousand times a day, try to rise as often. Join your thread where it is broken, instead of taking a new one; you will thus finish your work quickly.

O Joseph, virgin foster father of Jesus, most pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray daily for us to the same Jesus, son of God, that being strengthened by the powers of his grace, and successfully striving during life, we may be crowned in death by him.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory.

St Joseph, foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us.

Jesus, Mary and good St Joseph, bless us now and in the agony of death.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Indulged prayers to St Joseph

Guardian of virgins and father, Holy Joseph, to whose faithful care Christ Jesus, innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of Virgins, were committed: I pray and beseech thee, by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that free from all uncleanness, and with spotless mind, pure heart and chaste body, you make me ever more chastely familiar with Jesus and Mary, all the days of life. Amen.

A *Plenary indulgence* may be gained on the usual conditions, provided this prayer has been said *daily* for the entire month.

Remember us, O Blessed Joseph, and aid us by your powerful intercession with him who allowed himself to be called your son; make also gracious to us your most Blessed Virgin Spouse, the Mother of him, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

—St Bernardine of Siena

A *Plenary Indulgence* may be gained on the usual conditions, provided this prayer has been said daily for the entire month.

Prayer to St Joseph

For the month of October

To you, O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our tribulations, and while imploring the aid of your most holy spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also. By that love which united you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by the fatherly affection with which you embraced the Infant Jesus, we humbly beseech you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by his blood, and to help us in our necessities by your powerful intercession.

Protect, O most provident guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen children of Jesus Christ; ward off from us, O most loving father, all taint of error and corruption; graciously assist us from heaven, O most powerful protector, in our struggle with the powers of darkness, as you once rescued the Child Jesus from imminent peril to his life, so now defend the holy Church of God from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity. Shield each one of us with your unceasing patronage, that, imitating your example, and supported by your aid, we may be enabled to lead a good life, die a holy death, and secure everlasting happiness in heaven. Amen.

A *Plenary Indulgence* may be gained on the usual conditions, provided this prayer has been said daily for the entire month.

Wednesday, dedicated to St Joseph

Each Wednesday in the year is dedicated to St Joseph, and all those devoted to him should on this particular day practice special devotion in his honour. And his own month — the month of March — set aside to honour him especially, will be gladly welcomed each year by the devout clients of the foster-father of Our Divine Lord. St Joseph was very near and dear to the heart of Jesus in his life, and so, too, he is very close to the hearts of those who love Jesus and who try to follow him, no matter how feebly.

The intercession of St Joseph is very powerful. St Teresa says: ‘I know by experience that the glorious St Joseph assists us generally in all necessities. I have never asked him for anything which he did not obtain for me.’

And that great Franciscan saint — St Margaret of Cortona — heard Our Lord say: ‘If you would do what is pleasing to me, do not let a single day pass without offering some tribute of praise and veneration to St Joseph.’ Therefore, let us pray to him constantly, and ask him to lay our petitions at the foot of the great white throne. Let us ask for patience on the hard road, and perseverance in our trials; above all, let us beg him each day for the grace of a holy and a happy death.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, who by subjecting yourself to Mary and Joseph consecrated family life with wonderful virtues, grant that by their help we may fashion our lives after the example of your Holy Family, and obtain everlasting fellowship with it. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

A *Plenary Indulgence* may be gained on the usual conditions, provided this prayer has been said daily for the entire month.
