



Office of the Bishop
Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH – 2021

A Pastoral Reflection by Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver

Bishop of Lubbock

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Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
 Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.
 When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
 but before they lived together,
 she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.
 Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man,
 yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
 decided to divorce her quietly.
 Such was his intention when, behold,
 the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
 "Joseph, son of David,
 do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.
 For it is through the Holy Spirit
 that this child has been conceived in her.
 She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus,
 because he will save his people from their sins."
 When Joseph awoke,
 he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
 and took his wife into his home. (MT 1:16, 18-21. 24a)

As the Fourth Week of Lent 2021 draws to a close, with the Coronavirus Pandemic continuing but perhaps easing up a bit due to vaccinations, we celebrate a major solemnity of the Church Year, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Francis has invited the Church to dedicate the year 2021 to prayer to St. Joseph. Therefore, on this solemnity I would like to offer a brief reflection on the model St. Joseph presents to us, drawn from one of the Gospel options for use at Mass today.

St. Joseph, husband of Mary, protector of Christ and his Body, the Church, has been honored as such for centuries. The Gospel itself explicitly refers to Joseph as "a **righteous** man." The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines "righteous" as "acting in accord with divine or moral law." It includes being "free from guilt or sin." That is in accord with all of our popular characterizations of Joseph.

Related to that is the presumption of Joseph's **purity**. But the purity need not be equated with weakness or impotence of any sort. The tradition portrays Joseph as a man filled with virility, living out his profession as a carpenter. Joseph thus poses a great model for all men to follow.

In his treatment of Mary, who was found to be pregnant not with his own child, Joseph chose the route of **compassion and mercy**. The law of the society at the time could have subjected Mary to the severest of punishment. Joseph "unwilling to expose her to shame," chose a route that would spare Mary's life, which would be the most merciful way to deal with an intended spouse presumed to have been unfaithful.

That all changed when the angel made Joseph aware of God's plan for the couple and for the human race. Joseph was **attentive** to God's messenger, to God's plan. Joseph proceeded to embrace that incomprehensible plan, thus becoming a model of **obedience** to God's will.

In his response to the mystery with which Joseph became associated, the mystery we now know as the Incarnation, Joseph is seen as a man of **strength and courage**. His strength and courage are manifested in his response to the mysterious messages and circumstances. His attentiveness to later messages to take the family to Egypt, to search for and find the child Jesus in Jerusalem, to care diligently and faithfully for the mother and child, are clear examples of courage and strength put into action.

A man of such virtue deserves a special place in the history of Christianity and of the Church. In the course of his pontificate, Pope Francis has sought to raise the stature of St. Joseph in the consciousness of all believers. He inserted the name of Joseph into the Eucharistic Prayers at Mass. And now he has invited the Church into special prayer for his intercession as we, hopefully, come out from under the scourge of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Perhaps we can make use of the traditional Litany of St. Joseph which has reemerged with prominence as a result of the proclamation of the Year of St. Joseph. Through the Litany and the Church's rich treasury of other prayers to St. Joseph, may we seek his intercession in a special way in the remaining months to come.

Let us celebrate the exemplary manner in which St. Joseph cooperated in God's mysterious plan of salvation for the human race in the Mystery of the Incarnation. The Mystery of the Incarnation is celebrated in a special way on the day of this reflection's publication in and to the Church of the Diocese of Lubbock – The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, March 25, 2021.

Litany of Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.	Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.
God our Father in heaven,	have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit,	have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God,	have mercy on us.
Holy Mary,	pray for us.
Saint Joseph,	pray for us.
Noble son of the House of David,	pray for us.
Light of patriarchs,	pray for us.
Husband of the Mother of God,	pray for us.
Guardian of the Virgin,	pray for us.
Foster father of the Son of God,	pray for us.
Faithful guardian of Christ,	pray for us.
Head of the Holy Family,	pray for us.

Joseph, chaste and just,	pray for us.
Joseph, prudent and brave,	pray for us.
Joseph, obedient and loyal,	pray for us.
Pattern of patience,	pray for us.
Lover of poverty,	pray for us.
Model of workers,	pray for us.
Example to parents,	pray for us.
Guardian of virgins,	pray for us.
Pillar of family life,	pray for us.
Comfort of the troubled,	pray for us.
Hope of the sick,	pray for us.
Patron of the dying,	pray for us.
Terror of evil spirits,	pray for us.
Protector of the Church,	pray for us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,	have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,	have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,	have mercy on us.

God made him master of his household,

And put him in charge of all that he owned.

Let us pray.

O God, who in your inexpressible providence
were pleased to choose Saint Joseph
as spouse of the most holy Mother of your Son,
grant, we pray,
that we, who revere him as our protector on earth,
may be worthy of his heavenly intercession.
Through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen.