

'GREAT ST JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF MARY'

Let's think of the several JOSEPHs in our Scriptures, and the qualities showing forth in those people: There is *Joseph of the 'technicolour dreamcoat'* fame who was sold by his brothers to slave traders who took him to Egypt. There this Joseph came to manage the grain store, and met up with his family again when they travelled to Egypt in search of grain. The reconciliation that is effected there presents Joseph as a man who by his **generosity of spirit** and **readiness to forgive** rebuilds a unity in the family.

There is *Joseph of Arimathea*, a disciple of Jesus who obtained His body after His death and buried him in his own family tomb. This Joseph shows deep **compassion**, wanting to **give the proper dignity** to someone who has died. He comes up with a **practical** solution that shows that he is **generous**, and **brave** in carrying through with an action which would have attracted some criticism and disapproval.

There is *Joseph surnamed Barsabbas*, one of the two proposed to fill the place of Judas so the number of Apostles would be built up to twelve again. Even though it was the other one, Matthias, who was called to that role, this Joseph must have clearly had those qualities that were being looked for in the Apostles – a **close knowledge of Jesus** and **deep relationship with him**, a person of **resurrection hope** and **of resurrection peace, ready to carry out the mission of Christ** when blessed and urged to that by the **Holy Spirit**.

And there is *Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus*. Joseph is called '**a man of honour**'. In the puzzling and troubling circumstance of Mary's pregnancy, Joseph **listens for the voice of God** and is **entrusted by God with the message** of the forthcoming birth. **Heeding God's word**, he is the one who **gives Jesus his name**. He begins to **make a home** – with Mary – for their 'family-on-the-way'. His **care and protection** surround the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. He again **listens into the voice of God and follows that** urging to take the surprising and risky journey with Jesus and Mary to Egypt.

Yet again Joseph **listens into the voice of God** and takes this new family out of Egypt - amidst danger and uncertainty - to **establish a home** in Nazareth [Matthew 2:19ff].

Joseph **participates in the traditions and rituals of his people** at the circumcision of Jesus and his presentation in the Temple. Following these traditions, Joseph leads the family in the annual Passover journey to Jerusalem: when he is twelve years old, Jesus has the **freedom** that brings about the situation where is lost. With Mary, Joseph '**looks for him everywhere**'.

Joseph was a carpenter by trade, it says, as was Jesus also – Joseph had **taught** Jesus, **handing on his skills and knowledge** to him, and **his faith** which brought the young Jesus to a ready familiarity with the Scriptures.

Were you counting – 28 different qualities!

St Joseph, 'foster father of our Lord', is given little opportunity in the Scriptures for us to get to know him. In that limited space, he comes to us as such a person of faith.

ST JOSEPH, PRAY FOR US!