



Year of St. Joseph Recognizes Virtues of Ordinary Workers

Rev. Michael Trail

Pope Francis reflected on overlooked workers as he declared the Year of St. Joseph, from December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021.

In his apostolic letter on the year, he pointed out that doctors and nurses, and workers in supermarkets, transportation, and other essential services have sustained society during the pandemic. "People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the events of our history," the pope writes in *Patris corde* (With a Father's Heart), promulgated on the 150th anniversary of the naming of St. Joseph as patron of the universal Church. The letter's introduction states that "Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A role of recognition and gratitude is due them all."

A MODEL TO FOLLOW

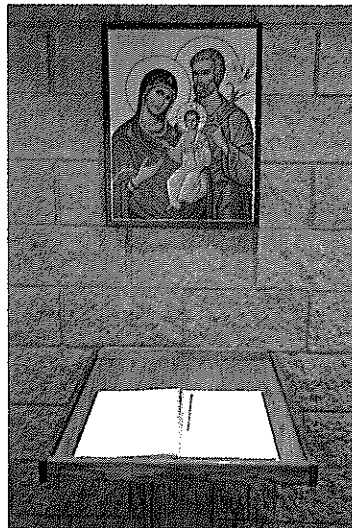
The qualities that St. Joseph lived out can serve as a model for all of us. Biblical accounts of St. Joseph consistently portray four qualities: his faithfulness, his ability to listen, his follow through, and his presence.

He Is Faithful

In St. Joseph, we see modeled not only a man who is faithful to the law, but one who also becomes a loyal and devoted husband to Mary. Joseph, being a righteous man, knew the Jewish law well and could have followed those rules. Given the cultural norms at the time, Mary's news of conception while unmarried puts Joseph in an awkward position. Does he remain faithful to the law, which dictated that he had to break off the marriage contract (see Matthew 1:18), or does he proceed with his betrothal? When he listens to the angel's instructions, he confirms his faithfulness to Mary.

He Listens

Joseph does not say a word in the Gospels, but we hear about his capacity for listening to God's commands. Matthew 1:24 states: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Joseph's stillness and silence enable him to be open to hear the voice of God through the angel's message. Joseph's skill in listening keeps him open to God's plans.



St. Joseph represents the many faithful ordinary people who play a role in salvation history.

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He Follows Through

St. Joseph takes the necessary steps to follow through with God's plans. Matthew 18:24 states: "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." It is one thing to hear the command of the Lord, but it is an entirely different thing to follow it. Through the gift of free will, Joseph had the ability to accept or reject the promptings of the Lord.

The rather heroic characteristic of St. Joseph is that he follows through with the promptings of the Lord. Not only does he welcome Mary into his home as his wife, but he later protects Mary and Jesus by taking them to Egypt to escape King Herod, who has planned to murder male children.

He Is Present

St. Joseph is actively present to others as a husband and a father. He is present for Mary throughout her pregnancy. He is present and involved at the birth of Christ (see Luke 2:16) and while protecting and guiding the family to Egypt and to Jerusalem. All of those events represent how St. Joseph was present for and attentive to the people that God placed in his life and under his protection. ♦

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