

Did You Know?

March 14, 2021

This week's 'Did You Know?' column will take a little detour from talking about those in RCIA/RCIAC. Today, we pay homage to Saint Joseph, whose feast day as the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary is this Friday, March 19. To mark the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis wrote the Apostolic Letter "Patris corde" ("With a Father's Heart"), and proclaimed a "Year of Saint Joseph" from December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021.

Very little is known about Saint Joseph and there are no spoken words of his recorded in the bible. So what *do* we know?

From the genealogy accounts in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, we know Joseph was a descendent of King David. This is important because as Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph passes his lineage to Jesus, fulfilling scripture that the Messiah would be of the house of David.

Accounts in both Matthew and Luke help us see that Joseph was a good man: he "was a righteous man" (Mt. 1:19), meaning he was a devout follower of the Mosaic law; a kind and caring man based on Joseph's willingness when betrothed (legally married but before they lived together) to Mary to divorce her quietly to keep her from shame when she tells him she is pregnant (Mt. 1:19); and he was a man of strong faith and trust in God as depicted in the many times he listened to and did what the angel who appeared in his dreams told him to do (Mt. 1:24; Mt 2:13; Mt 2:19; Mt 2:22). This also shows Joseph as a strong protector of Mary and Jesus, willing to do whatever is needed to keep them safe.

We know through scripture that Joseph was a carpenter (Mt 13:55) and a devoted father (Lk 2:48). In his Apostolic Letter, Pope Francis writes, "Joseph saw Jesus grow daily "in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour" (Lk 2:52). As the Lord had done with Israel, so Joseph did with Jesus: he taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him (cf. Hos



11:3 4). In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God."

The goal of Pope Francis in establishing the 'Year of Saint Joseph' is that the faithful will increase our love for Saint Joseph. He hopes that we will ask for this great saint's intercession, and that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfillment of God's will."

The Pope writes, "Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes

believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture." We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion.

At the conclusion of his Apostolic Letter, Pope Francis added a prayer to St Joseph, which he encourages all of us to pray:

**Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.**

**Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,
and defend us from every evil.
Amen.**