

Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church

Feast Day: March 19th



Saint Joseph was called by God to serve him in a very important manner. God entrusted to Saint Joseph the care and protection of his Son, Jesus, and Jesus' mother Mary. We do not know much about Saint Joseph from Scripture, but what the Gospels do tell us is that Joseph was a just man. It would make sense that God would choose a man such as Joseph of Nazareth to take on such an extraordinary task. As well as being a just man, some other attributes of St. Joseph are his faithfulness, his humility, his silent yet strong stance, and his obedience to the will of God. The Catholic Church has long venerated Saint Joseph, knowing that he watches over and guides all of us, just as he did Jesus and Mary. For this reason, he is the patron saint of the entire, universal Church.

Sleeping Saint Joseph

Pope Francis has a very strong devotion to Saint Joseph, and in 2015 he introduced us to one of his favorite images of him, the "sleeping Saint Joseph." Since then, this image has grown in popularity world-wide. Pope Francis explains...

I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church!

Joseph's rest revealed God's will to him. In this moment of rest in the Lord, as we pause from our many daily obligations and activities, God is also speaking to us.

But like St. Joseph, once we have heard God's voice, we must rise from our slumber; we must get up and act.

This image of Saint Joseph sleeping comes right from Matthew's Gospel. Here we find three accounts of God giving Joseph guidance on what to do through a dream. ***(Matthew 1: 18-24 and Matthew 2: 13-15 and Matthew 2: 19-23)*** In each instance, God sent an angel to speak to Joseph as he slept, and, in each instance, Joseph got up and did what the Lord told him. So, we

can see where the power of this image comes from, and we ask Saint Joseph to “sleep on” our concerns and intentions that we bring to him for his help and intercession.



Seeking the Intercession of Saint Joseph

One of the ways people ask for Saint Joseph’s intercession with this devotion is to write their problem or concern on a piece of paper and put it under the “Sleeping Joseph” statue. Pope Francis himself does this, as he then sleeps peacefully knowing that Saint Joseph is looking out for the Church! This could be one way to teach children the Catholic belief of asking the saints to intercede or pray for us, to turn to them with our needs and concerns.

Honoring Saint Joseph in Your Classroom

You can purchase “Sleeping Saint Joseph” statues at many Catholic religious shops, or on websites that sell Catholic articles. For little children, they can make and cut out their own version. The website www.looktohimandberadiant.com (click the Saints tab) has a craft that children can make, as well as many other good ideas!

Joseph's Song

Another way to honor Saint Joseph is through song. "Joseph's Song" by Michael Card is a beautiful and meditative reflection on Joseph's role of being asked to be Jesus' father on earth. It is usually considered to be a Christmas song, but works just as well to honor St. Joseph on his feast day. Older children may want to listen and reflect on St. Joseph's willingness to "fit into" God's plan for him. How does that relate to our lives?

There are numerous prayers and devotions to St. Joseph. These can be found in prayer books and on Catholic websites. Make sure to plan a way to honor this great Saint on March 19th with your students.

Saint Joseph, pray for us!

