

MARCH 19, 2021
Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary
Principal Patron of Canada & Patron of the Universal Church
Matthew 1: 16, 18-21, 24a

“A FATHER IN THE SHADOWS.”

“A retreat master was addressing a group of fathers. He proposed St. Joseph as a perfect model for them as the head of their families. At that, one retreatant said: “Joseph’s situation was totally different from mine. He was a saint, his wife was sinless, and his Child was the Son of God. I’m no saint, my wife is not sinless, and my child isn’t the Son of God.” Without batting an eyelid, the quick-witted Retreat master responded: “Was your wife pregnant before marriage and you didn’t know by whom? Did your son leave home for three days and you didn’t know where he was? Were you ever awakened in the middle of the night and urged to flee from the imminent threat of your innocent child’s assassination?”¹ He is not different from us or from other fathers in the world as he protected, cared and loved his family, and willing to do the best that he can for the good of Jesus and Mary, even forgetting himself.

As today we celebrate the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the Husband of Mary, the Principal Patron of Canada and Patron of the Universal Church, our gospel speaks about St. Joseph planning to dismiss Mary quietly after he found out she was with a child and describes as a just and righteous man. To called just man in the Old and New Testament means he is a man who tries to live according to God’s will and plan. By entrusting God the Son to him, he acted a vital role in the plan of salvation. Amidst difficulties and challenges, as a man of faith, generous, and just, he stood the test and served God wholeheartedly and lovingly.

To commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis on his Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde (With a Father’s Heart)*, dedicated December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph. According to Pope Francis: “Saint Joseph is a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an

¹ www.stories4homilies.co

accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows. Saint Joseph concretely expressed his fatherhood by making an offering of himself in love, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home. At the same time, Joseph is an accepting Father because he accepted Mary unconditionally - an important gesture even today, in our world where psychological, verbal, and physical violence towards women is so evident. But the Bridegroom of Mary is also the one who, trusting in the Lord, accepts in his life even the events that he does not understand, setting aside his own ideas, and reconciling himself with his own history. Joseph's spiritual path is not one that explains but accepts - which does not mean that he is resigned. Instead, he is courageously and firmly proactive because with Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude, and full of hope, he is able to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments. The carpenter of Nazareth was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting in divine providence. He had to deal with the concrete problem his Family faced. A carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family, St Joseph also teaches us the value, the dignity, and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labour. He knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus."²

My brothers and sisters, like St. Joseph, we too can fulfill our mission amidst difficulties and hardships just believe, be open to the will of God, trust and surrender all our lives to Him. St. Joseph is not an extraordinary person, a superman, but by his faith he became a father that is best for Jesus and a loving and faithful husband to Mary. He is teaching us how to be a disciple and follower of God's plan by committing and listening to the Word everyday. May we draw inspiration to Joseph especially to all fathers who are experiencing difficulties and hardships in family life. May they look on Joseph and be strengthened despite trials and challenges. May St. Joseph be our model of faith as we dedicate our lives to Jesus all throughout our lives, and we say: St. Joseph, pray for us!

² www.vaticannews.va