

‘Go to Joseph’



INTRODUCTION

The aim of this little booklet is to make St. Joseph better known and loved.

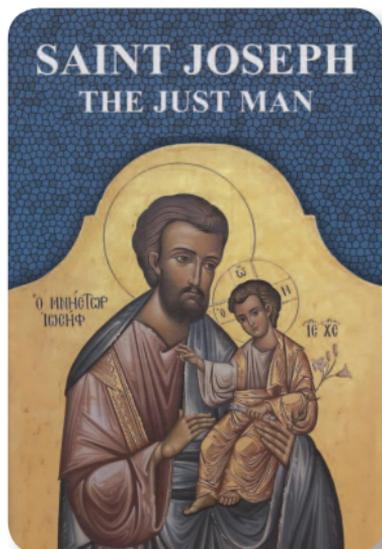
- The first part will tell us who this great Saint is by giving quotations from Scripture and other sources.
- The second part will be mainly quotations from the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and of her experience of the powerful intercession of St. Joseph in her own life.

She says, *‘I had the desire to persuade all to be devoted to him.’*



PART ONE

Who is St. Joseph?



Scripture tells us, “*St. Joseph was the husband of Mary, of her was born Jesus who is called Christ*”
(St Matthew Ch.1:V.16)

Continue to read chapters one and two of this Gospel. Also read St Luke’s Gospel, Ch. 1:26-38 and especially Ch. 2:1-52. There you will see the role played by St. Joseph in the great mystery of the Incarnation. We won’t find one word spoken by Saint Joseph in the Gospels. He is therefore known as the silent saint, the just man and a man of faith; the obedient servant to whom God spoke in dreams.

Many Popes have endorsed devotion to St. Joseph and his name has been included in the Canon of the Mass. St. Joseph is named Patron of the Universal Church and his feast day is celebrated as a Solemnity on March 19th. St. Joseph is invoked as the Patron of a happy death as we presume he had the happiness of dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary. We don't know at what age he died.



We know from the Gospel of St. Luke, that when Jesus was twelve years of age, Mary and Joseph and the boy Jesus went as usual to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When they were on their way home after the feast Jesus stayed behind without his parents knowing it. They had to return

to Jerusalem and search for him. After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors of the Law. His parents were overcome when they saw Him and His Mother said to Him, *'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been looking for you'*. This incident lets us know that St. Joseph was still alive when Jesus was twelve years of age.

St Joseph, the husband of Mary, was the guardian and foster father of the Child Jesus. Jesus was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary is His true mother. We are told that St. Joseph was a carpenter and therefore the bread winner for the family. It is likely that Jesus learned the trade. Who can tell the story of the love and intimacy that existed in the Holy House of Nazareth between Jesus, Mary and Joseph – The Earthly Trinity!





Prayer to St Joseph

Grant we pray Almighty God,
that by St. Joseph's intercession,
your Church may constantly watch
over the unfolding of the mysteries
of human salvation whose beginnings
you entrusted to his faithful care.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son
who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit one God
for ever and ever.



PART TWO

St. Teresa speaks of her love for St. Joseph and of her experience of his powerful intercession in her own life.



Who is this St. Teresa?

The ‘great St. Teresa’, as she is often called, was born in Avila, Spain on March 28th 1515. On November 2nd 1535, at twenty years of age, she entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation, Avila, which still exists, and was professed there on 3rd November 1537. Two years later she became seriously ill and was completely paralyzed. The doctors gave her up as incurable. She writes,

‘Since I saw myself so crippled and still so young and how helpless the doctors of earth were, I resolved to go for aid to the doctors of heaven....’

In the Book of her Life, St. Teresa writes,

‘I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph and earnestly recommended myself to him. I saw clearly that as in this need so in other greater ones concerning honour and loss of soul, this father and lord of mine came to my rescue in better ways

than I knew how to ask for. I don't recall up to this day ever having petitioned him for anything that he failed to grant.

It is an amazing thing, the great many favours God has granted me through the mediation of this blessed Saint, the dangers I was freed from, both of body and soul. For with other Saints it seems the Lord has given them grace to be of help in one need, whereas with this glorious Saint I have experience that he helps in all our needs and that the Lord wants us to understand that just as He was subject to St. Joseph on earth, for since, bearing the title of father and being the Lord's tutor, Joseph could give the Child commands – so in heaven God does whatever he commands. This has been observed by other persons, also through experience whom I have told to recommend themselves to him. And so there are many who in experiencing this truth, renew their devotion to him.

I endeavoured to celebrate his feast with all

the solemnity possible. But, in my desire to do so very carefully and well, I was filled more with vanity than with spirituality, though my intention was good. This was a fault I had, that if the Lord gave me the grace to do something good, what I did was filled with imperfections and many failures. In wrongdoing, curiosity and vanity, I was especially skilful and diligent. May the Lord pardon me.



Because of my impressive experience of the goods this glorious Saint obtains from God, I had the desire to persuade all to be devoted to him. I have not known anyone truly devoted to him and rendering him special services who has not advanced more in virtue. For in a powerful way he benefits souls who recommend themselves to him.

It seems to me that for some years now I have asked him for something on his feast day and

my petition is always granted. If the request is somewhat out of line he rectifies it for my greater good. If I were a person who had authority for writing, I would willingly and in a very detailed way enlarge upon what I am saying about the favours this glorious Saint did for me and for others.

I only ask for the love of God anyone who does not believe me to try and he will see through experience the great good that comes from recommending oneself to this glorious patriarch and being devoted to him. Persons of prayer especially should always be attached to him. For I don't know how one can think about the Queen of Angels and about when she went through so much with the Infant Jesus, without giving thanks to St Joseph for the good assistance he then provided them both with. Anyone who cannot find a master to teach him prayer should take this glorious Saint for his master and he will not go astray.

Please God, I may not have erred in being so bold as to speak about him, for although publicly I am devoted to him, I have always been lacking in serving and imitating him. For he being who he is brought it about that I could rise and walk and not be crippled; and I being who I am used this favour badly’.
(Life: Ch.6, Par. 6, 7, 8)

We see how her faith in St. Joseph was rewarded. While St. Teresa never had robust health she lived for another forty-five years. At the age of forty-seven she was inspired to found with four other sisters the first Monastery of her Reform in Avila. This was to be a smaller Convent with not more than thirteen nuns. They were to live a life of prayer, penance and solitude.

She said, “Our Lord told me to call the new Monastery St. Joseph’s, that this Saint would keep watch over it at one door and Our Lady at the other, that Christ would remain with us and that it would be a star shining with great splendour”. **(Life Ch.: 32-11)**

She lived in this Monastery for five years, *'the happiest of her life'*. She then went on to found many more Monasteries travelling the roads of Spain in all weathers by mule or wagon. Read her description of these journeys in the 'Book of Foundations', you will discover what she suffered and also her sense of humour. She is well christened, 'The Saint of Common Sense'.

In the prologue to the Book of her Foundations, St. Teresa writes

'I begin in the name of the Lord, taking for my help his Glorious Mother whose habit I wear although unworthy and also my glorious father and lord, St. Joseph in whose house I am, for he is the patron of this monastery of Discalced Nuns through whose prayers I have been constantly helped'.

We see many times in her writings how St. Teresa gives thanks to Our Lord, Our Lady and St. Joseph for favours received during these busy years of buying and renovating houses into new Convents

'the dove cots of our Lady'. She was often in dire need of money and on one occasion she tells us,

'I didn't know what to do or how to pay some workmen. St. Joseph, my true father and lord appeared to me and revealed to me that I would not be lacking, that I should hire them. So I did without so much as a penny and the Lord, in ways that amazed those who heard about it, provided for me'.

(Life Ch.: 33-14)

Among the necessary things St Teresa brought with her when making a new foundation was a statue of Our Lady and St. Joseph.



In the ‘Spiritual Testimonies’ she writes

‘I understood that I had a great obligation to serve Our Lady and St. Joseph, for often when I went off the track completely, God gave me salvation through their prayers again. Alas my daughters pray for me and be devoted to Saint Joseph who can do a great deal’.

In another extract from the Book of her Life, Teresa tells us she was at Mass in a Monastery of St. Dominic on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, a rapture came upon her and she saw Our Lady at her right side and St. Joseph at the left and they were clothing her in a white robe of shining brightness. Our Lady, she says, took her by the hands.

She told her

“I made her very happy in serving the glorious Saint Joseph, that I should believe that what I was striving for in regard to the Monastery (St Joseph Avila) would be

accomplished, that Our Lord and those two would be greatly served in it”.

(Life Ch. 33-14)

When Teresa was planning to make a foundation in Burgos she decided on buying a certain house which others had turned down and there were many obstacles in her way of purchasing it. Some thought it too expensive. After she and her nuns recommended the matter to God, the Lord said to her, “*Do not hesitate over money*”. The sisters prayed earnestly to St. Joseph that they might have a house for his feast day and although there was no thought of having it so soon, he heard their prayers and the house was bought and all the legal demands completed on the Vigil of the feast of St. Joseph. So it was again and again with all her foundations – St Joseph proved himself her faithful advocate. This was the last of St Teresa’s foundations and it opened in April 1582.

St Teresa died in October of that year.



Many other references could be made to St. Joseph, which are not included here.

See especially the Book of the Foundations where St. Teresa speaks of her new Monasteries and how St. Joseph helped her.

Carmelites call St. Joseph ‘Protector of the Order’ and delight in honouring him as St. Teresa wished. Many of our Churches and Monasteries worldwide are dedicated to St. Joseph. I think I am correct in saying that St. Teresa was the first ever to dedicate a Church in honour of St. Joseph – St Joseph’s, Avila, Spain.



May all who read this little booklet come to know and love St. Joseph and experience his powerful intercession.

Deo Gratias



APPENDIX

Someone may ask, did St. Teresa pray only to St. Joseph? What about her love for Jesus and Mary?

Yes! Teresa had a profound love of Our Lord whom she often addressed as ‘His Majesty’. Read her commentary on the Our Father in the Way of Perfection for instance. We all know of her deep devotion for the Humanity of Christ. She was truly on fire with love for Jesus, her Divine Spouse. She rejoiced when a new Carmel was founded and the Blessed Sacrament reserved that there was another Tabernacle where Our Lord was adored.

She said that in her monasteries *‘she would like to see His image wherever she turned her eyes’*. One could go on. Read her books and find out for yourself as Edith Stein - St. Benedicta of the Cross did and exclaimed when she had finished reading the Life of St. Teresa, ‘This is the truth’.

St. Teresa's love for Mary the Mother of God was highlighted when after her own mother's untimely death in 1528. Teresa only thirteen years of age went before an image of Our Lady and besought her with many tears to be her mother.

In Chapter one of the story of her life, she tells us that she

'sought out solitude to pray her devotions and they were many, especially the Rosary to which my mother was very devoted and she made us devoted to it too'.



Scripture Quotations - Jerusalem Bible
1966, 1967 and 1968 by
Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

All other quotations are taken from the
Collected Works of St. Teresa, three volumes.
Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh O.C.D. and
Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., Washington D.C.
I.C.S. Publications 1976, 1980, 1985
Volume 1, Life, Spiritual Testimonies
Volume 3, Foundations.

Compiled by Sr. Mary Joseph

Star of the Sea
Carmelite Monastery
Seapark
Malahide
Dublin
K36 P586

www.malahidecarmelites.ie



Printed by
www.martellopress.ie