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|  | **Down and Connor**  **Catholic Schools’ Support Service** | C:\Users\admin\Pictures\2016-04-21 Crest\Crest 001.jpg |
| ***2020 – The Year of St Joseph – 2021***   |  | | --- | | **Prayer to St Joseph**  *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*  ***Pope Francis***  ***8th December 2020*** | | | |

**Welcome**

*As staff enter the room and settle down for prayer, you could play some quiet, reflective music and ask staff to find a comfortable sitting position and put away any distractions.*

**Introduction**

In his Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde (With a Father’s Heart),* Pope Francis describes St Joseph as:

* A beloved father.
* A tender and loving father.
* An accepting father.
* A courageous father.
* A working father.

This letter was written against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the letter, Pope Francis reminds us that despite the challenges and difficulties the pandemic has wrought, it has also been a period in which we have been able to see more clearly the “ordinary” people who exercise patience and offer hope every day. To borrow and modify the words of St Therese of Lisieux, these ordinary, everyday actions – the ones we so often take for granted – have been revealed as extra-ordinary.

Pope Francis explains to us that St Joseph is one of these ordinary people, sometimes overlooked and forgotten. But in his ordinariness, he does an extraordinary thing – he is the father, the watchful guardian to Jesus whom the four gospels all refer to as the “son of Joseph”.

*A useful and thought provoking resource that could be shared with staff is Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter on St Joseph, (a very short document).*

<http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.pdf>

***The reflection leader invites staff to think about the following:***

* Think about St Joseph – what do you know about him?
* If you had to describe him in a few words what would they be?
* Is he someone you associate with the Christmas story, a figure in the crib?

Or is he someone you think of as more prominent in the life of Jesus?

***Invite staff to share their thoughts.***

After they had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to **Joseph** in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.” So **Joseph** got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt.

***Mt 2:13-15***

When **Joseph** woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do; **he** took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and **he** named him Jesus.

***Mt 2:25***

*…* and coming to his home town, he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is **the carpenter’s son,** surely?”

***Mt 13:54***

While **they** were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for **them** at the inn.

***Lk 2:6-7***

As the child’s **father** and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them … when **they** had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

***Lk 2: 33 & 39***

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. “This is **Joseph’s** son, surely?”

***Lk 4:16 & 23***

“Surely this is Jesus, **son of Joseph”** they said. “We know his **father** and mother. How can he say now, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

***Jn 6:42***

* Have the above passages distributed to members of staff to read aloud from the Bible, allowing a few minutes silent reflection time between each one.
* Ask staff to keep these thoughts as they spend a little time reflecting on the scripture passages.

**Leader**

*Invite staff to share their thoughts or what has struck them during the readings:*

* What do the Gospel passages say to me today?
* Who is the man Joseph behind these individual portraits of him?
* What can I learn from St Joseph?
* What is God calling me to do?

***Following the group discussion, summarise what has been said. The following ideas offer some thoughts that might help with this or, alternatively, stimulate discussion if needed.***

* From these Gospel passages, we learn that Joseph is a just and obedient man. He is a man of tremendous faith, willing to do, without hesitation, whatever God asks of him. Think about Joseph’s response to the angel’s warning and his desire to protect Mary and Jesus.
* Joseph carries out the actions of a loving, dutiful father during the journey to Bethlehem, finding somewhere to stay and the birth of his son. He cares for Mary and Jesus during the pregnancy and time of birth in Bethlehem and is responsible for their safety. After this he is the one who, together with Mary, is responsible for the child being “brought up” (*Lk* 4:16) at Nazareth, so much so that when Jesus speaks in the synagogue there, the people are surprised, for they have known him always simply as “Joseph’s son.” (*Lk* 4:22)
* It is also Joseph and Mary who see to the fulfilment of all the temple rites for Jesus. Luke presents the circumcision and naming, the purification and presentation, and the episode when Jesus is twelve. In these three passages, he emphatically shows Joseph and Mary to be models of obedience to the angel and the law of the Lord, thus also fulfilling the parental role of being faithful examples for the child.
* Together with Mary, Joseph brought Jesus to the temple. He was responsible for providing the offering. He and Mary present the child, marvel at the prophecy, and receive Simeon’s blessing as Jesus’ “father and mother.” Having fulfilled all the rites at the temple, he would presumably fulfil the usual fatherly role of teaching the Torah to Jesus at their home in Nazareth. This would seem to be implied in the summary verse: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.” (*Lk* 2:40)
* There is little known about Jesus’ early life. He lived as a child in the family, so as to be known by the people of his town as nothing more than “Joseph’s son” (*Lk* 4:22). Joseph is the father who helps him increase “in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.” (*Lk* 2:52)
* We can all learn from the example and qualities of St Joseph as we play our part in turning problems into possibilities, welcoming every person we meet and ensuring our role in the work of salvation as we strive to provide the best we can for everyone in our school community.

**Concluding Prayer**

Almighty God,

when Mary conceived your Son and brought him into the world,

You placed them under Joseph’s watchful care.

Joseph loved and accepted Jesus as his own son,

caring for him, teaching him and protecting him.

May we accept all that God gives us

and care for those children he has entrusted to our school community.

**Amen**