

Feast of St Joseph Prayer and Reflection 2021

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas Skies and Waterways

As we reflect on St Joseph, who lived at a time of the crossroads between New and Old and Testament, it is a timely reminder that the Creator Spirit has been a part of First Nations Peoples who have walked upon and cared for these lands, seas and waterways for many thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations Peoples to this place and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Context of the Year of St Joseph

This year we celebrate 150 years since St Joseph was declared the Patron Saint of the Universal Church. Pope Francis took this opportunity to invite us all to look at the gifts of St Joseph; a man who became foster father to Jesus. A father who was tender, loving, accepting and brave. Pope Francis outlined his feelings and thoughts in the Apostolic Letter "Patris corde" ("With a Father's Heart") and declared the year of St Joseph from December 8 2020 to December 8 2021.

Scripture

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew [Matthew 2: 13 – 15 NRSV]

Now after they had left,
an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,
"Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt,
and remain there until I tell you;
for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."
Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night,
and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.
This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet,
"Out of Egypt I have called my son."

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection by Bec Burns

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This Gospel Reading, known as the 'The flight to Egypt' is often used to paint a picture of Joseph as a protector. Sometimes, the recount is used to remind us of the fact that the Holy family were refugees, fleeing from the violence that threatened Jesus. Fr Michael McGrath explains that this story, which alludes to the slaughter of innocent children at the order of Herod, is less about a historical recount and more about the spiritual truth that Jesus was in need and Joseph protected him.

St Joseph may have felt trepidation about raising a child that would change the world (as foretold in a dream by an Angel). Yet, with trust in God, St Joseph welcomes this child and provides love, care, protection and connection so Jesus experiences humanity and the opportunity to live the life which God had prepared.

This excerpt from the Bible is a reminder that, in the words of Fr Michael, through Baptism, Christians "are called to see the face of Jesus in everyone, so that we are strangers and aliens no longer." Whilst St Joseph literally saw the face of Jesus in the child he raised, we are called to see the presence of Jesus in those we encounter today. Every day, parents see the face of Jesus in their children. From the age of 4 or 5, parents

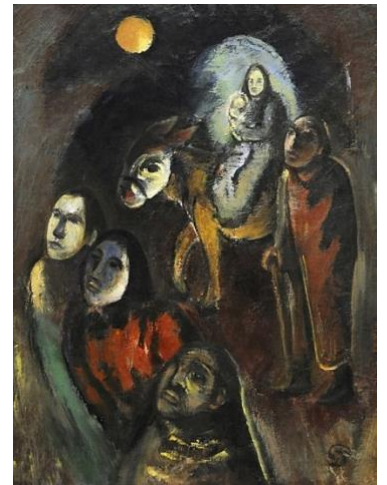


Figure 1 Pranas Domsaitis Flight to Egypt, 1918.

childcare workers, teachers and support staff also see the face of Jesus in these little people, and in so doing, have that face burnt into their hearts. As a teacher I encouraged children to connect to the story of the class, creating belonging and safety. Working with parents, as a teacher, I ensured I provided role modeling; showing what it means to forgive and love generously. Just as Joseph did for Jesus.

Like Joseph, as he raised Jesus, I too, communicate with God, through prayer and ritual, living the truth that we all have a very important role in raising the children in our care. Joseph had a true understanding of the concept that no child really belongs to any human being. Pope Francis states true fathers, “refuse to live the lives of their children for them,” and further challenges us with the thought that success as a father and educator comes at the point when...[we] sees that [this] child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied.”

Prayer

At the conclusion of his Letter, Pope Francis offers one prayer to St Joseph which he encourages all of us to pray together:

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.



Figure 2 St Joseph and Jesus walking hand-in-hand.

Call to Action

- Using St Joseph as a role model to see the face of Jesus in all, we encourage you and your family to learn the stories featured in [Project Compassion 2021](#) and invite you to think of ways you and your family can raise awareness, fundraise or pray for people in need.
- Join the Sisters of Saint Joseph who are marking each of their primary feasts with special prayers and celebrations. The first of these will be a [week of prayer in preparation for the Feast of St Joseph on 19 March](#).
- Spend some time reflecting on Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter – [Patris Corde](#)

References

Figure 1: *Pranas Domsaitis (1880-1965). Lithuanian painter. Flight to Egypt, 1918. National Gallery of Art. Vilnius. Lithuania.. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 22 Oct 2018. quest.eb.com/search/144_2851145/1/144_2851145/cite. Accessed 11 Mar 2021.*

Figure 2: 18th/19th century French coloured woodcut. Photography. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. quest.eb.com/search/300_2290430/1/300_2290430/cite. Accessed 11 Mar 2021.