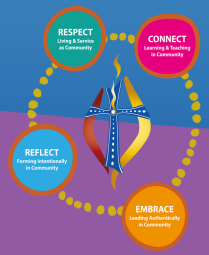


Family Prayer

St Joseph the Worker

by Jacinta Roberts | Identity and Encounter



Speaking to Country

This prayer was written on Mamu Country, an area rich with rainforest, creeks, rivers and coastal areas by the sea. I pay my respects to the Elders past and present, for they are the knowledge holders, the storytellers and teachers in the family, community and beyond. I acknowledge the way First Nations people work to not only bring community together, but to connect with the land and waterways in ways that sustain both their people and Country itself. We can learn so much from Traditional Custodians on this Country and across other parts of the Diocese about being in relationship with others and the world.

I encourage you to take time to pause...to feel the land beneath your feet...to focus on what you can see of the Land or water around you. Consider the Country you have travelled over...remember the Country where you grew up. Take the time now to honour the people who have cared for these lands and waterways for thousands of years...and all those who continue to connect, to care and to teach.

Context

On May 1st the Catholic Church honours Joseph, in the Feast of St Joseph the Worker. It is the second of two special days, the other being March 19, Joseph the Husband of Mary. Joseph was a carpenter. He is a “model of the holiness of human labour.”¹ The feast of St Joseph the Worker was first introduced in 1955 by Pope Pius XII, to coincide with International Workers’ Day on May 1.

Scripture: Matthew 13:54-58

Jesus came to his home town and taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter’s son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?’ And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is only despised in his own country and in his own house,’ and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Reflection

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic letter, “Patris Corde – With a Father’s Heart”, gives six descriptors to Joseph, husband of Mary and father to Jesus:



- ✓ A beloved father
- ✓ A tender and loving father
- ✓ An obedient father
- ✓ An accepting father
- ✓ A creatively courageous father
- ✓ A working father
- ✓ A father in the shadows [1]

Figure 1: Image taken by Jacinta Roberts (2015) of Christopher Slatoff’s bronze statue, “Adoption” which is on the north passage of the cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles.

They tell us something of the importance of Joseph as well as some of his qualities and roles. Joseph was a protector and a man of faith, taking on the challenges, trusting in the will of God. The image of Joseph above is a significant image of Joseph taking time out of his work to attend to Jesus. It is a wonderful blend of the two sides to Joseph as honoured by the Catholic Church.

Not only does this special feast recognise and honour St Joseph but also encourages an awareness of the dignity of work. Work is fulfilling in nature and is a way for people to participate in God's creation. Work allows for people to sustain themselves and/or their family, whilst also helping society to develop. It allows for people to use their God-given gifts and talents. It is necessary. Catholic Social Teachings and social doctrine of the Church, focus on the right one has to work as well as the dignity of work and workers.

"Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people." [3]

Knowing that Joseph was often in the shadows, it is also an opportunity to remember, acknowledge and thank those who help build our society. Those that often go unnoticed in their roles as mothers, fathers, cleaners, shop workers, drivers, clergy, volunteers, support workers, carers, researchers and the many other roles that are not necessarily spotlighted, but we cannot do without. They work for the good of others and the community.

Joseph also reminds us that God is faithful. We are given strength to navigate the challenges, but must also stand up, work hard and work through the frustrations and disappointments.

Prayer

Lord of all,
you have graced us with many different skills and talents.

Using these many gifts,
may we work together
each in our own special way
respecting everyone's contribution
to build up Christ's body
grounded in faith, hope and love.
Amen. [4]

Call to Action

- Thank those who help you through the work they do, such as shopkeepers, parents, bus drivers or teachers.
- Acknowledge a father figure in your life that has helped, protected and taught you, allowing you to become the person you are.
- Take the time to learn more about organisations such as Caritas and CAFOD, who help to promote human dignity and the dignity of workers all around the world.

References

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- [3] Francis, Fratelli Tutti, On Fraternity and Social Friendship, Encyclical, (Holy See, 2020),
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- [4] Sue Cooper, "Gifts and Talents" Prayer, CAFOD-The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, Accessed April 9, 2026.
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