

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Second Sunday after Epiphany (Latin Mass)
January 16, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

“All the direction we really need regarding a devotion to St. Joseph is already to be found in the deposit of Faith safeguarded by holy Mother Church. Thus a true devotion to St. Joseph does not depend on any other revelations or apparitions as we shall see.”
(Dominic De Domenico, O.P., True Devotion to St. Joseph and the Church, p.8)

As January 1, 2022 dawned upon our parishes, I resolved, as your pastor and spiritual father, to dedicate the needs of our parish family to the intercession of Saint Joseph, the foster father of our Lord Jesus. Furthermore, I would use the third Sunday of each month, to prayerfully reflect upon some aspect of our Catholic Church’s belief concerning Saint Joseph. Devotion to Saint Joseph should not strike us as something odd, forced, or new upon generations of Catholics. Due to our fundamental worship of God alone, some have proposed that devotion to Saint Joseph is neither warranted nor necessary for our salvation. And, they would be correct. As Catholics, we never need to remember or honor Saint Joseph to attain the blessed union with God we call Heaven. We must only worship God and follow His commands. Therefore, why should we take time this day to reflect upon the church’s belief concerning Saint Joseph? I offer you this thought for prayerful consideration: it would benefit us to gain a deeper knowledge of Saint Joseph for two important reasons. He is the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have mentioned previously, of all of the great figures in the Bible and human history until that time, God chose Saint Joseph to be the one who would provide His Son with both protection as an infant, guidance as a child, and become a role model of human fatherly masculine love as Jesus grew into adulthood. It is precisely because of his role in our salvation, we should take the time to get to know Saint Joseph. For in honoring Saint Joseph, we give glory, honor, and praise to God who chose him as His Son’s foster father and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth.

We first encounter Saint Joseph in the New Testament in both the Gospels of Saint Matthew and Saint Luke. Saint Matthew records his lineage, which can be traced from Abraham through King David and down to his own person. This is important, for Saint Matthew wants to establish the direct ancestry of Jesus as the being fulfillment of the promises made by God to both Abraham and David. This ancestry would have been extremely important to the early Jewish Christian converts. Although Jesus was not directly his son, due to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his Virgin Mother Mary, Jesus would have traced his own ancestry through Joseph and would have been considered his child. The reason for this would have been quite simple. The theology of

the Virgin Birth of Jesus had yet to be both thought of, reflected upon, and studiously developed at the time of the writing of Saint Matthew's Gospel.

A key point we can reflect upon today, which comes from the later writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, consists in the holiness which is offered by God. St. Thomas wrote: "Those whom God chooses for an office, He prepares and disposes in such a way that they become suited to it." (Summa, III, 27, 4). Saint Joseph would necessarily need to be a holy man to raise Jesus. This holiness of life, becoming sanctified, we understand as the infusion of sanctifying grace. This is the same grace that was poured into us at our own baptism. It is a free gift given by God's profound mercy to His children. We cannot merit this grace; we can only receive it. For Saint Joseph, and for ourselves, daily living in and through actual grace allows for sanctifying grace to be strengthened and deepened. This process we call growing in holiness of life. For the position he would hold of father, Saint Joseph would have been offered sanctifying grace and would have responded by living a life of actual grace to such a degree as would have prepared him for this great position. With all of this in mind, Saint Joseph, due to his connection with Mary and Jesus, would have been holier than any other person who had previously been mentioned in the Bible. His holiness would have only been exceeded by both Jesus and Mary. As we conclude today, let us continue to ponder the degree of holiness Saint Joseph would have risen up toward and how we should aspire, much like he did, to grow in holiness meeting the demands of the world we live in.