

***Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***Sexagesima - Second Sunday before Lent (Latin Mass)***  
***February 20, 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 all Catholics should know, the honor and devotion we owe to the Blessed Virgin Mary is solely expressed in the fact that she is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true concerning Saint Joseph. We attribute honor and devotion to Saint Joseph because he is the foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is an idea which had to develop over much prayer, reflection, and debate in time. In a nutshell, some would question the fatherhood of Saint Joseph? Jesus was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit. No one would contradict this truth of our Catholic faith. Yet, in a crude but bashful way, one must ask how could Joseph be considered Jesus’ father when we know he did not contribute to the physical generation of the child? Please forgive me, but this is a real issue that took quite a long time to come to understand and needs to be examined for the reason that ALL devotion hinges upon the fatherhood of Saint Joseph. We must understand how this statement came to be defined, for our devotion to Saint Joseph depends upon it.

We begin by asking ourselves a particular question: “How do we define fatherhood (or motherhood)?” A simple answer to this, using as many adult terms and concepts as I can muster, realizing little ears will be present on Sunday hopefully listening, would be through generation. Men and women come together to generate a creature in much the same fashion as any other animal. Dogs generate dogs, cats generate cats, and humans generate humans. All of these are physical in nature. Yet, are we not more than just physical beings? Are we not created in the image of God who is both spiritual and physical, due to His Incarnation in the womb? Yes, we are more than just physical creatures. We possess a soul as much as we possess a body and it is our soul which endows us with a moral responsibility to care for the life we have physically created. I stress these two words for they separate humans from other animals in the created universe. Lower animals, not endowed with a human soul, act upon their instinct. There is a difference in the level of instinctual care given to the eggs of a chicken as opposed to those of a sea turtle. Also, we can find numerous examples, in the natural world, of animals whose young are born or hatched with everything needed to care for themselves since they will not have a parental protector. We humans acknowledge both the need for a physical bond as well as for something more. We know the child must also be nourished mentally (educated and mentored) as well as physically (food, water, shelter). We understand that being a parent requires more than just being a “material donor” or “walking incubator.” Being a parent requires more.

This “more” is exactly why Saint Joseph is truly a father to the child Jesus and should be held in high regard. Yes, Saint Joseph is not the physical father of Jesus and the Catholic Church teaches this fact. He is, by the moral authority placed upon him through his marriage to the Blessed Mother Mary, the foster father of Jesus. It is in the marriage that we see the Holy Family fulfilling the “goods” of marriage - children (Jesus, who is cared for) and the mutual care of the spouse (the unrecorded love shared between Joseph and Mary). Allow me to leave you with one thought, not found in Sacred Scripture yet very real nonetheless to consider, imagine the innocent hands of young Jesus being guided, as He learned the carpenters trade, from the cracked, rough hands of Saint Joseph, His foster father. You place this image in your mind, then you understand that Jesus knew Saint Joseph to be more than just a caretaker, provider, or even foster father. He called Saint Joseph - “Daddy.”