

APOSTOLIC LETTER

PATRIS CORDE

OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF SAINT JOSEPH AS PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Meeting 4

6. A working father

An aspect of Saint Joseph that has been emphasized from the time of the first social Encyclical, [Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*](#), is his relation to work. Saint Joseph was a carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family. From him, Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labour.

In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue, and unemployment at times reaches record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which Saint Joseph is an exemplary patron.

Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion. It becomes an opportunity for the fulfilment not only of oneself, but also of that primary cell of society which is the family. A family without work is particularly vulnerable to difficulties, tensions, estrangement and even break-up. How can we speak of human dignity without working to ensure that everyone is able to earn a decent living?

Working persons, whatever their job may be, are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around us. The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new "normal" from which no one is excluded. Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities. Let us implore Saint Joseph the Worker to help us find ways to express our firm conviction that no young person, no person at all, no family should be without work!

7. A father in the shadows

The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*,^[24] tells the story of Saint Joseph's life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses' words to Israel: "In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled" (*Deut* 1:31). In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life.^[25]

Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person.

Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers. The Church too needs fathers. Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians remain timely: "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (*1 Cor* 4:15). Every priest or bishop should be able to add, with the Apostle: "I became your father

in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (ibid.). Paul likewise calls the Galatians: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (4:19).

Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities. Perhaps for this reason, Joseph is traditionally called a "most chaste" father. That title is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs. It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration.

When fathers refuse to live the lives of their children for them, new and unexpected vistas open up. Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child's freedom. A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes "useless", when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. When he becomes like Joseph, who always knew that his child was not his own but had merely been entrusted to his care. In the end, this is what Jesus would have us understand when he says: "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Mt 23:9).

In every exercise of our fatherhood, we should always keep in mind that it has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a "sign" pointing to a greater fatherhood. In a way, we are all like Joseph: a shadow of the heavenly Father, who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45). And a shadow that follows his Son.

Questions for Meeting 4

1. *"Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion."* **How can I recognise this description in my current work or in the work of others?**
2. **How can we as a parish help those who are in financial crises or lost their jobs during the COVID pandemics? How can we find them and how can we offer help in a decent way without compromising their dignity?**
3. *"Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities."* **How can Catholic parents support their children to grow in Faith in the current secular and non-Christian society?**

Special prayer intentions for this session:

- For those who lost their jobs due to COVID
- For those graduates who are seeking for jobs after finishing university
- For those who are in financial crises due to COVID

Prayers (see Appendix)

Appendix

Prayer to St Joseph (After each sessions)

*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.*

Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Padre Pio's Novena)

O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Behold I knock, I seek and ask for the grace of

(Mention your Intention here e.g. name your family members, friends, colleagues and ask for God's Grace and for the gift of Faith for them)

Our Father.... Hail Mary....Glory be..... Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Behold, in your name, I ask the Father for the grace of...

(Mention your Intention here for the sick, Covid victims, Health care professionals and for the deceased)

Our Father.... Hail Mary....Glory be..... Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." Encouraged by your infallible words I now ask for the grace of...

(Mention your Intention here for the Church (safe opening of the Church, for our Pope, Bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious, parish groups, catechists, parish family, etc.)

Our Father.... Hail Mary....Glory be..... Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Let us pray:

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on us miserable sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of you, through the Sorrowful

and Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and ours. St Joseph, Foster Father of our Lord, Jesus pray for us . In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer for the Spirit of Work

God our Father, Creator and Ruler of the universe, in every age you call us to use and develop our gifts for the good of others. With St. Joseph as our guide, help us to do the work you have asked and come to the rewards you have promised. Please grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFICIAL PRAYER OF THE YEAR OF St JOSEPH.

To you, O blessed Joseph (Ad te, beate Ioseph)

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our afflictions, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

PRAYER TO ST JOSEPH THE
MIRACLE WORKER

O St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interest and desires.

O St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So that, having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of Fathers.

O St. Joseph, I never weary of contemplating you, and Jesus asleep in your arms; I dare not approach while He reposes near your heart. Press Him close in my name and kiss His fine head for me and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath. St. Joseph, patron of departing souls, pray for me. Amen

Summary

* * *

"Get up, take the child and his mother" (Mt 2:13), God told Saint Joseph.

The aim of this Apostolic Letter is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.

Indeed, the proper mission of the saints is not only to obtain miracles and graces, but to intercede for us before God, like Abraham^[26] and Moses^[27], and like Jesus, the “one mediator” (1 Tim 2:5), who is our “advocate” with the Father (1 Jn 2:1) and who “always lives to make intercession for [us]” (Heb 7:25; cf. Rom 8:34).

The saints help all the faithful “to strive for the holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life”.^[28] Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice.

Jesus told us: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29). The lives of the saints too are examples to be imitated. Saint Paul explicitly says this: “Be imitators of me!” (1 Cor 4:16).^[29] By his eloquent silence, Saint Joseph says the same.

Before the example of so many holy men and women, Saint Augustine asked himself: “What they could do, can you not also do?” And so he drew closer to his definitive conversion, when he could exclaim: “Late have I loved you, Beauty ever ancient, ever new!”^[30]

We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion.

Let us now make our prayer to him:

*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.*

Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 8 December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 2020, the eighth of my Pontificate.

Franciscus

[1] Lk 4:22; Jn 6:42; cf. Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3.

[2] S. RITUUM CONGREGATIO, *Quemadmodum Deus* (8 December 1870): ASS 6 (1870-71), 194.

[3] Cf. *Address to ACLI on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Worker* (1 May 1955): AAS 47 (1955), 406.

[4] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (15 August 1989): AAS 82 (1990), 5-34.

[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1014.

[6] *Meditation in the Time of Pandemic* (27 March 2020): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 March 2020, p. 10.

[7] *In Matthaeum Homiliae*, V, 3: PG 57, 58.

[8] *Homily* (19 March 1966): *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, IV (1966), 110.

[9] Cf. *Autobiography*, 6, 6-8.

[10] Every day, for over forty years, following Lauds I have recited a prayer to Saint Joseph taken from a nineteenth-century French prayer book of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary. It expresses devotion and trust, and even poses a certain challenge to Saint Joseph: "Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen."

[11] Cf. *Deut* 4:31; *Ps* 69:16; 78:38; 86:5; 111:4; 116:5; *Jer* 31:20.

[12] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 88, 288: AAS 105 (2013), 1057, 1136-1137.

[13] Cf. *Gen* 20:3; 28:12; 31:11.24; 40:8; 41:1-32; *Num* 12:6; *1 Sam* 3:3-10; *Dan* 2, 4; *Job* 33:15.

[14] In such cases, provisions were made even for stoning (cf. *Deut* 22:20-21).

[15] Cf. *Lev* 12:1-8; *Ex* 13:2.

[16] Cf. *Mt* 26:39; *Mk* 14:36; *Lk* 22:42.

[17] SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (15 August 1989), 8: AAS 82 (1990), 14.

[18] *Homily at Mass and Beatifications, Villavicencio, Colombia* (8 September 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1061.

[19] *Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate*, 3.11: PL 40, 236.

[20] Cf. *Deut* 10:19; *Ex* 22:20-22; *Lk* 10:29-37.

[21] Cf. S. RITUUM CONGREGATIO, *Quemadmodum Deus* (8 December 1870): ASS 6 (1870-1871), 193; BLESSED PIUS IX, Apostolic Letter *Inclytum Patriarcham* (7 July 1871): l.c., 324-327.

[22] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

[23] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 963-970.

[24] Original edition: *Cień Ojca*, Warsaw, 1977.

[25] Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 7-8: AAS 82 (1990), 12-16.

[26] Cf. *Gen* 18:23-32.

[27] Cf. *Ex* 17:8-13; 32:30-35.

[28] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 42.

[29] Cf. *1 Cor* 11:1; *Phil* 3:17; *1 Thess* 1:6.

[30] *Confessions*, VIII, 11, 27: PL 32, 761; X, 27, 38: PL 32, 795.

