

## ***Year of Saint Joseph Liturgical Reflections***

**Sunday, February 21, 2021**

### **Pope Francis proclaims Year of Saint Joseph**

On December 8, 2020, the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron Saint of the Universal Church, Pope Francis issued the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde (With a Father's Heart)* as an extended reflection of the holy foster father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. Written in the backdrop of the Covid-19 Pandemic he shares, "Saint Joseph devoted himself as a father in varied ways: beloved, tender and loving, obedient, accepting, creatively courageous, working, and "in the shadows."

Because of Pope Francis' deep devotion to Saint Joseph, he also announced on December 8 that the Church would be celebrating a Year of Saint Joseph, "which would take place for one year up to December 8, 2021. This is to be a special year with a special focus of the Church's prayers and activities devoted to Saint Joseph. This year can also be a special year for those in need of Saint Joseph's healing intercession in their relationship with their own father. It will be a year of discovery and growth for all. (*Church Grants Plenary Indulgence for the Year of Saint Joseph*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-12>)

There will be prayer experiences, liturgies, special activities and local pilgrimage sites named throughout the eight counties in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. There will be many opportunities to gain Plenary Indulgences during the year according to the norms of the Church. **2021, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Liturgy Committee, Liturgy Office, Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, 2713 W. Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601.**

**Sunday, February 28, 2021**

### **Prayer and Plenary Indulgence options for the Year of Saint Joseph**

The first way to get to know Saint Joseph is through reading and praying with the Gospels of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew and Saint Luke. We learn the history of Saint Joseph in an indirect way through the story of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The actions and facts of Saint Joseph's life are revealed through his relationships and roles as the foster father of Jesus and the spouse of Mary.

During this special year in the Catholic Church, the Faithful will have the opportunity to commit themselves "with prayer and good works, to obtain, with the help of St. Joseph, head of the Heavenly Family of Nazareth, comfort and relief from the serious human and social tribulations that besiege the contemporary world today." They will be granted what is called a "Plenary Indulgence," a time to repair the sinful relationship that we entered into because of personal sin, even though we have been forgiven. "It is in offering actions and prayers that allow for "a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins." (#1471, Catechism of the Catholic Church).

There is a lengthy list of options named by Pope Francis and the Vatican Committee on Indulgences in addition to the standard obligations. A growing list of pilgrimage opportunities will be offered by the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. **2021, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Liturgy Committee, Liturgy Office, Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, 2713 W. Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601**

**Sunday, March 7, 2021**

### Pope Francis Prayer and Novena Prayer

Pope Francis' deep devotion to Saint Joseph was highlighted when he chose his inaugural day to be on a March 19, the Solemnity (Feast) of Saint Joseph. Writing *Patris Corde* during the Covid-19 Pandemic, he was inspired that Saint Joseph, "has helped us see more clearly the importance of 'ordinary' people who though far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day. In this, they resemble Saint Joseph, the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence," who nonetheless played "an incomparable role in the history of salvation'." (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-12>)

In the closing of *Patris Corde*, Pope Francis shared the prayer of trust he has prayed for over 40 years at the conclusion of Morning Prayer: "*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 on the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.*"

Faithful believers pray the ancient Nine Day Novena Prayer to Saint Joseph during the Church Year all throughout the world. It is extremely powerful to begin the Nine Days leading up to March 19, the Feast of Saint Joseph. This year the 9 days would begin on Wednesday, March 10 and conclude on the Eve of the Feast Day. For the full Novena see: <https://www.praymorenovenas.com> **2021, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Liturgy Committee, Liturgy Office, Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, 2713 W. Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601.**

**Sunday, March 14, 2021**

### The Saint Joseph Table

The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is always on March 19th, in the middle of Lent, and is especially commemorated and celebrated in Italy, particularly in Sicily. St. Joseph has been long-regarded as the island's patron saint. It is there that the tradition of the "Tavola di San Giuseppe" or "St. Joseph's Table" has its origins.

The celebration is a symbolic "thank you" and a renewal of the Sicilian people's devotion to Saint Joseph. It is a *shared* celebration with the entire community where the riches of food are given as alms to the poor: traditional etiquette is that *no one* can be turned away from this table. The origin of the celebration comes from the Middle Ages and is attributed to the end of a devastating drought and famine through a prayer-devotion that the Sicilian people made to St. Joseph. Food crops for both people and livestock withered and died. The people prayed to St. Joseph for help. Desperately-needed rain poured down. After the harvest, to show their gratitude, they prepared a table with special foods to honor St. Joseph. After thanking and honoring the saint, they distributed the food to the poor and less fortunate. It became an annual tradition and eventually spread throughout the world. The feast itself is celebrated after Mass.

As there is no meat on the Saint Joseph Table, a dispensation is unnecessary if March 19 falls on a Friday. (Learn more at <https://yearofstjoseph.org/devotions/st-joseph-table>) There are parishes in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown who have assumed this tradition but are unable to do so this year. Please go to [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org) for a taped presentation on the Saint Joseph Table with Fr. Brian Saylor, Pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Altoona. **2021, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Liturgy Committee, Liturgy Office, Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, 2713 W. Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601.**