

“SPENDING TIME WITH ST. JOSEPH”: THIRTY-THREE DAYS TO HOLINESS

Some things simply cannot be rushed. They take commitment, foresight and perseverance. Have you ever met someone who mastered the game of **golf** in the first year? Probably not. What about someone who took up running and completed a **marathon** in the first six months? Again, not likely. Or created a **needlepoint** masterpiece worthy of entry into the State Fair on the first try? Okay, my point is made. Spiritual growth is no different. Some things simply **require time**. But they also require **commitment**. This year’s Solemnity of St. Joseph takes on special meaning as it falls during a special year dedicated to him. I have previously written (twice) about this special year— perhaps the third time is the charm. I invite you to join me in beginning a **33-day period of preparation** so that you may be poised to make a **personal consecration** to St. Joseph on his Feast Day. You would simply begin your **33-day period** of preparation on the day before Mardi Gras— that is, on Monday February 15.

The consecration to St. Joseph follows the model of **St. Louis de Montfort** in his Marian consecration. It would entail approximately **twenty (20) minutes** each day for the duration of the period. Each day includes a short exposition on one of the invocations in the powerful Litany of St. Joseph, followed by a reading on St. Joseph, concluding with the recitation of the **Litany of St. Joseph**. I myself have committed to this worthy spiritual “at home” retreat. Its stated purpose is to help us become “another Joseph,” in the sense that we will become more attentive, more faithful and loving, and an even more trusting companion of Jesus and Mary. Why is this important? Occasionally referred to as the “forgotten member” of the Holy Family, St. Joseph is a **model**, especially for men, of **virtue, courage and tenderness**, qualities so needed in our families today.

I enjoyed joining a recent Saturday morning “That Man is You!” session, via Zoom during the pandemic. They are motivated Cathedral parishioners, zealous and truly desire to learn more about their faith. Then, I read about a group of men in St. Louis, MO who introduced the “Joseph Challenge,” a **two-day 24-mile walking pilgrimage**. That alone is impressive, though participants may choose different phases, and needn’t complete all of them! Now in its sixth year, it takes place over the weekend nearest May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. It is successful because **young men** especially love **challenges**. I can personally attest that even “not so young” men like to be challenged. Events such as this also facilitate solid spiritual bonding, something all too often absent in the lives of many men. I am in discussions with several Archdiocesan pastors, as we consider whether and how such a challenge could work here in our Archdiocese. Stay tuned, as I believe the idea might have legs— pun intended!

It is an historic struggle for men to open up to one another. This has been the case for as long as I can recall. When I was a high school chaplain, we had a bevy of Mother-Son events, including special Masses and retreats. But it took some **initiative** to jump start a Father-Son retreat. An industrious school counselor along with a religion teacher promoted it, and I have excellent memories travelling to **Dunrovin** Retreat Center in Marine on St. Croix to offer Mass. Consecration to Saint Joseph is for all people, men and women, boys and girls. But this year, I especially invite the **men of our parish** to step out of their comfort zone and consider joining this program. A consecration is a formal act of filial entrustment. Typically, it has referred to the more traditional forms of consecration, especially to the Blessed Mother and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Here, it means **seeing St. Joseph** as a spiritual father who cares for your spiritual well-being and who leads you closer to Jesus.

Nearly twenty years ago (Dec. 2001), the Vatican issued a most helpful **guide** entitled, “**Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy**,” a source book that has come in handy over the years. In paragraph no. 204 it notes: “Liturgical theology and the consequent rigorous use of terminology would suggest reserving the term *consecration* for those self-offerings which have God as their object, and which are characterized by totality and perpetuity, which are guaranteed by the Church’s intervention and have as their basis the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.” Some have suggested that the term “**entrustment**” might be a more fitting word, though in this case, people of good will may differ. The document continues: “The faithful should be carefully instructed about the practice of consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary. While such can give the impression of being a solemn and perpetual act, it is, in reality, only analogously a “consecration to God”. It springs from a free, personal, mature, decision taken in relation to the operation of grace and not from a fleeting emotion.”

We have purchased **30 copies** of Fr. Donald Calloway's *Consecration to Saint Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father* and will gladly share them with anyone seriously interested in committing to this program. If we need more, we will order more. Additionally, a **fold-out Litany** to St. Joseph will soon be available in the Saint Joseph Chapel before Lent begins. This Lent is the opportune time to "think outside the box," to challenge yourself in a **new way**. Ash Wednesday is drawing near. Let us commit to being ready on "**Day 1**" to engage in prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

- The Cathedral lost a good friend and arguably our most **zealous** and **experienced tour guide** in the person of **Carl Simmons**. A Cathedral friend/associate, upon my arrival in 2012, Carl gave me a series of tours—**unforgettable** tours. I couldn't get enough! A retired commercial pilot, he approached his tours with the same precision he did with the craft of flying. It is a huge loss, and our prayers are with his entire family.
- **Ash Wednesday is approaching on** February 17. Ashes will be distributed at three Masses, plus an additional deacon-led evening Liturgy of the Word with Ash Distribution. We will make one adjustment, by order of the Vatican this year— a change I fully support. Ashes will be distributed the "European" way, namely **sprinkled gently** on the **crown** of the head, thus avoiding any skin-to-skin contact, as with our normal manner on the forehead.
- It was **one year ago** that President Trump blocked entry into the U.S. from anyone who had been in China in the past two weeks. Few were paying any attention until then. Then, the flights were cancelled and—well, we all know the story. What a year it has been!
- Better late than never! The Holy Father established a World Day for **Grandparents and the Elderly**, to be held on the fourth Sunday of July. No generation has suffered more in 2020—none is more deserving. The Pope also updated the July 29 Feast Day by adding **Sts. Mary and Lazarus** to the existing Feast of St. Martha. It's now a family affair and highlights the importance of hospitality and being in the presence of the Lord.
- Ash Wednesday Mass Schedule: **7:00 a.m. | 12:00 Noon | 5:15 p.m.** (with schola); a deacon led Prayer Service with the distribution of ashes completes the day at **7:00 p.m.**

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector