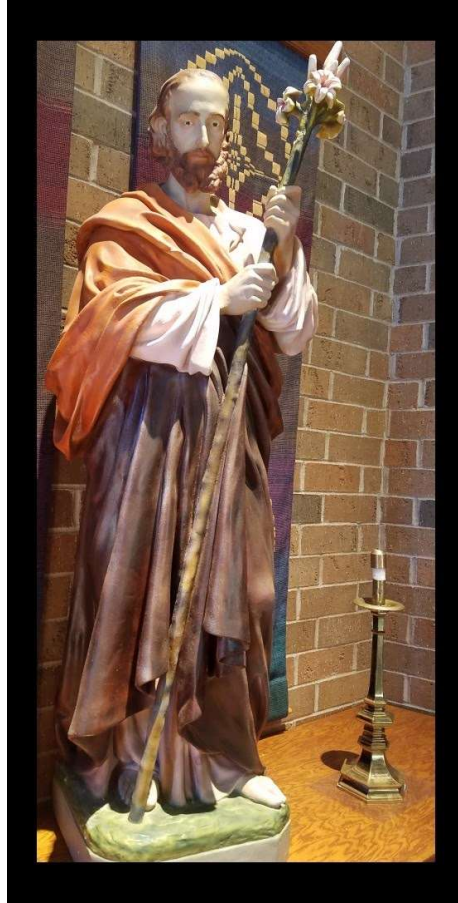


Christ at Work in the World: A Novena for Saint Joseph the Worker



Daily Prayers:

Saint Joseph the Worker Prayer

Reading

Reflection

Litany of Saint Joseph

The Lord has a plan for the salvation of the world and you are a part of it. In fact, even your job, no matter what it is, has an important role in that glorious plan for our salvation. Why is human work important? Does it have anything to do with our call to holiness and the call of evangelization? Absolutely. In speaking about the call to holiness, the Second Vatican Council taught that the lay faithful, “by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity” (Day Five). God has a plan. He called you to a particular place, at a particular time, with a particular group of people, so that you may carry His Light and Truth into that space and

provide an opportunity for everyone you meet there to encounter Him and come to know Him. Your contribution to society matters. It is a contribution to the mission of the Church. Please never think anything different. And yet, you are far more than a means to that end. First and foremost, your work matters, because *you matter*. You are a treasured and valued part of the Lord's design. Thus, this novena can be offered in prayer for those still seeking gainful employment, those unable to work due to illness or injury, and those experiencing difficulty in the transition into retirement, just as much as it can be for those needing to be renewed in their current work. This is a prayer that all would rediscover the true reason for their dignity: that they are made in the image of the God who looked upon His work and said, "Behold, it is very good." That God never stops laboring for our salvation. May we continue to allow ourselves to be created by the Master Craftsmen, for we are clay in the hands of the Potter. Saint Joseph, Model of Workers, pray for us!

Saint Joseph the Worker Prayer:

O God, Creator of all things, who laid down for the human race the law of work, graciously grant that by the example of Saint Joseph and under his patronage we may complete the works you set us to do and attain the rewards you promise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

Litany of Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.
St. Joseph, pray for us.
Renowned offspring of David, pray for us.
Light of Patriarchs, pray for us.
Spouse of the Mother of God, pray for us.
Chaste guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.
Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us.
Zealous defender of Christ, pray for us.
Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.

Joseph most just, pray for us.
Joseph most chaste, pray for us.
Joseph most prudent, pray for us.
Joseph most courageous, pray for us.
Joseph most obedient, pray for us.
Joseph most faithful, pray for us.

Mirror of patience, pray for us.
Lover of poverty, pray for us.
Model of workmen, pray for us.
Glory of home life, pray for us.
Guardian of virgins, pray for us.
Pillar of families, pray for us.
Comfort of the afflicted, pray for us.
Hope of the sick, pray for us.

Patron of the dying, pray for us.
Terror of demons, pray for us.
Protector of Holy Church, pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord!.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord!.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. .

V. He made him the lord of his household. R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray. O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever. R. Amen

Day One

Reading: Matthew 13:54-58

Jesus came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on Human Work (*Laborem Exercens*)

The truth that by means of work man participates in the activity of God himself, his Creator, was given particular prominence by Jesus Christ-the Jesus at whom many of his first listeners in Nazareth "were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him?.. Is not this the carpenter?'" For Jesus not only proclaimed but first and foremost fulfilled by his deeds the "gospel", the word of eternal Wisdom, that had been entrusted to him. Therefore this was also "the gospel of work", because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth. And if we do not find in his words a special command to work- but rather on one occasion a prohibition against too much anxiety about work and life- at the same time the eloquence of the life of Christ is unequivocal: he belongs to the "working world", he has appreciation and respect for human work. It can indeed be said that he looks with love upon human work and the different forms that it takes, seeing in each one of these forms a particular facet of man's likeness with God, the Creator and Father. Is it not he who says: "My Father is the vinedresser", and in various ways puts into his teaching the fundamental truth about work which is already expressed in the whole tradition of the Old Testament, beginning with the Book of Genesis?

Day Two

Reading: Sirach 38:24-34

The scribe's wisdom increases wisdom; whoever is free from toil can become wise. How can one become learned who guides the plow, and thrills in wielding the goad like a lance, Who guides the ox and urges on the bullock, and whose every concern is for cattle? His concern is to plow furrows, and he is careful to fatten the livestock. So with every engraver and designer who, laboring night and day, fashions carved seals, and whose concern is to vary the pattern. His determination is to produce a lifelike impression, and he is careful to finish the work. So too the smith sitting by the anvil, intent on the iron he forges. The flame from the fire sears his flesh, yet he toils away in the furnace heat. The clang of the hammer deafens his ears; his eyes are on the object he is shaping. His determination is to finish the work, and he is careful to perfect it in detail. So also the potter sitting at his labor, revolving the wheel with his feet. He is always concerned for his products, and turns them out in quantity. With his hands he molds the clay, and with his feet softens it. His determination is to complete the glazing,

and he is careful to fire the kiln. All these are skilled with their hands, each one an expert at his own work; Without them no city could be lived in, and wherever they stay, they do not go hungry. But they are not sought out for the council of the people, nor are they prominent in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench, nor can they understand law and justice. They cannot expound discipline or judgment, nor are they found among the rulers. Yet they maintain the fabric of the world, and their concern is for exercise of their skill.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on Human Work (*Laborem Exercens*)

The books of the Old Testament contain many references to human work and to the individual professions exercised by man: for example, the doctor, the pharmacist, the craftsman or artist, the blacksmith—we could apply these words to today's foundry-workers—the potter, the farmer, the scholar, the sailor, the builder, the musician, the shepherd, and the fisherman. The words of praise for the work of women are well known. In his parables on the Kingdom of God Jesus Christ constantly refers to human work: that of the shepherd, the farmer, the doctor, the sower, the householder, the servant, the steward, the fisherman, the merchant, the labourer. He also speaks of the various forms of (household) work. He compares the apostolate to the manual work of harvesters or fishermen. He refers to the work of scholars too.

Day Three

Reading: Acts of the Apostles 18:1-4, 9-11

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to visit them and, because he practiced the same trade, stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. Every sabbath, he entered into discussions in the synagogue, attempting to convince both Jews and Greeks. One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in this city." He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on Human Work (*Laborem Exercens*)

This teaching of Christ on work, based on the example of his life during his years in Nazareth, finds a particularly lively echo in the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Paul boasts of working at his trade (he was probably a tent-maker), and thanks to that work he was able even as an Apostle to earn his own bread. "With toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you". Hence his instructions, in the form of exhortation and command, on the subject of work: "Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living", he writes to the Thessalonians. In fact, noting that some "are living in idleness ... not doing any work", the Apostle does not hesitate to say in the same context: "If any one will not work, let him not eat". In another passage he encourages his readers: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward". The teachings of the Apostle of the Gentiles obviously have key importance for the morality and spirituality of human work. They are an important complement to the great though discreet gospel of work that we find in the life and parables of Christ, in what Jesus "did and taught".

Day Four

Reading: Matthew 13: 24-30, 34b-35

Jesus proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at

harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'" He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation [of the world]."

Reflection: St. John Paul II on Human Work (*Laborem Exercens*)

On the basis of these illuminations emanating from the Source himself (Christ), the Church has always proclaimed what we find expressed in modern terms in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: "Just as human activity proceeds from man, so it is ordered towards man. For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches which can be garnered ... Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and allow people as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfil it". Such a vision of the values of human work, or in other words such a spirituality of work, fully explains what we read in the same section of the Council's Pastoral Constitution with regard to the right meaning of progress: "A person is more precious for what he is than for what he has. Similarly, all that people do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood, and a more humane ordering of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances. For these advances can supply the material for human progress, but of themselves alone they can never actually bring it about". This teaching on the question of progress and development-a subject that dominates present day thought-can be understood only as the fruit of a tested spirituality of human work; and it is only on the basis of such a spirituality that it can be realized and put into practice. This is the teaching, and also the programme, that has its roots in "the gospel of work".

Day Five

Reading: Matthew 13: 31-33

Jesus proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'" He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

Reflection: The Second Vatican Council on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*)

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. It is true that those in holy orders can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are by reason of their particular vocation especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry. Similarly, by their state in life, religious give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.

Day Six

Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-6

This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Arise and go down to the potter's house; there you will hear my word. I went down to the potter's house and there he was, working at the wheel. Whenever the vessel of clay he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making another vessel of whatever sort he pleased. Then the word of the LORD came to me: Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done?—oracle of the LORD. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph
(*Redemptoris Custos*)

In recalling that "the beginnings of our redemption" were entrusted "to the faithful care of Joseph," the Liturgy specifies that "God placed him at the head of his family, as a faithful and prudent servant, so that with fatherly care he might watch over his only begotten Son." Leo XIII emphasized the sublime nature of this mission: "He among all stands out in his august dignity, since by divine disposition he was guardian, and according to human opinion, father of God's Son. Whence it followed that the Word of God was subjected to Joseph, he obeyed him and rendered to him that honor and reverence that children owe to their father." Since it is inconceivable that such a sublime task would not be matched by the necessary qualities to adequately fulfill it, we must recognize that Joseph showed Jesus "by a special gift from heaven, all the natural love, all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know." Besides fatherly authority over Jesus, God also gave Joseph a share in the corresponding love, the love that has its origin in the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named". The Gospels clearly describe the fatherly responsibility of Joseph toward Jesus. For salvation—which comes through the humanity of Jesus—is realized in actions which are an everyday part of family life, in keeping with that "condescension" which is inherent in the economy of the Incarnation. The gospel writers carefully show how in the life of Jesus nothing was left to chance, but how everything took place according to God's predetermined plan. The oft-repeated formula, "This happened, so that there might be fulfilled..." in reference to a particular event in the Old Testament serves to emphasize the unity and continuity of the plan which is fulfilled in Christ.

Day Seven

Reading: Genesis 1:31a, 2:1-3

God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph
(*Redemptoris Custos*)

The same aura of silence that envelops everything else about Joseph also shrouds his work as a carpenter in the house of Nazareth. It is, however, a silence that reveals in a special way the inner portrait of the man. The Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph "did." Still, they allow us to discover in his "actions" - shrouded in silence as they are - an aura of deep contemplation. Joseph was in daily contact with the mystery "hidden from ages past," and which "dwelt" under his roof. This explains, for example, why St. Teresa of Jesus, the great reformer of the Carmelites, promoted the renewal of veneration to St. Joseph in Western Christianity. The total sacrifice, whereby Joseph surrendered his whole existence to the demands of the Messiah's coming into his home, becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life. It was from this interior life that "very singular commands and consolations came, bringing him also the logic and strength that belong to simple and clear souls, and giving him the power of making great decisions—such as the decision to put his liberty immediately at the disposition of the divine designs, to make over to them also his legitimate human calling, his conjugal happiness, to accept the conditions, the responsibility and the burden of a family, but, through an incomparable virginal love, to renounce that natural conjugal love that is the foundation and nourishment of the family. This submission to God, this readiness of will to dedicate oneself to all that serves him, is really nothing less than that exercise of devotion which constitutes one expression of the virtue of religion.

Day Eight

Reading: Exodus 31:1-11

The LORD said to Moses: See, I have singled out Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with a divine spirit of skill and understanding and knowledge in every craft: in the production of embroidery, in making things of gold, silver, or bronze, in cutting and mounting precious stones, in carving wood, and in every other craft. As his assistant I myself have appointed Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. I have also endowed all the experts with the necessary skill to make all the things I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant with its cover, all the furnishings of the tent, the table with its utensils, the pure gold menorah with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar for burnt offerings with all its utensils, the basin with its stand, the service cloths, the sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, the vestments for his sons in their ministry, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense for the sanctuary. According to all I have commanded you, so shall they do.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph
(Redemptoris Custos)

Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). This "submission" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of his presumed father, he was known as "the carpenter's son." If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families, in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. In our own day, the Church has emphasized this by instituting the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1. Human work, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work too has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation, and has also been redeemed in a special way. At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption.

Day Nine

Reading: Romans 12:1-12

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.

Reflection: St. John Paul II on the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph
(Redemptoris Custos)

In the human growth of Jesus "in wisdom, age and grace," the virtue of industriousness played a notable role, since "work is a human good" which "transforms nature" and makes man "in a sense, more human." The importance of work in human life demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to "help all people to

come closer to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world, and to deepen...friendship with Christ in their lives, by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King." What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies;...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things-it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic."