

Cloak Novena (see page 245). Novenas are normally nine days long, but the Holy Cloak Novena consists of 30 days of prayer in honor of the 30 years St. Joseph lived with Jesus. The Holy Cloak Novena is considered one of the most efficacious novenas in the treasury of the Church.

Place yourself under the paternal cloak of St. Joseph. Open your heart to the spiritual fatherhood of St. Joseph and experience the love of the best of fathers.

It is natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family of Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.¹³

— Pope Leo XIII

Glorious St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary, we beseech you through the heart of Jesus Christ, grant to us your fatherly protection.¹⁴

— St. Francis de Sales

DAY 10 - SUPPLEMENTARY READING *Ite ad Ioseph!*

If you wish to be close to Christ, we again today repeat, "Go to Joseph."¹⁵

— Venerable Pope Pius XII

What is the closest possible union you can have with Jesus in this life? The answer is easy: your reception of Jesus in Holy Communion. There is no greater intimacy with Jesus possible in this life than when you receive the Eucharist at Holy Mass. The Blessed Sacrament is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Did you know that, without St. Joseph's earthly paternity of Jesus, you would not now be able to receive the Bread of Life? Saint Joseph was given the role of maintaining and protecting the sacred bread for you.

Let me explain.

You are probably familiar with the story in the Book of Genesis about the sons of Israel selling one of their brothers into slavery. The brother sold into slavery was named Joseph. Joseph ended up being taken by his owners to Egypt, far away from all his other kin. What

the men did to their brother was horrible and shameful. But God had a plan.

Incredibly, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, adopted Joseph into his own family so that Joseph was regarded as a son of Pharaoh. Joseph was given great authority; Pharaoh placed him in charge of all the granaries in Egypt. At that time, Egypt was considered the bread basket of the world, and Joseph did an incredible job of storing up grain.

Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

— Gen 41:49

Though Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery, God had wonderful plans for Joseph. After Joseph had stored up an immeasurable quantity of grain, a severe famine broke out in Egypt and the surrounding territories. As a result of the shortage of food, Pharaoh instructed everyone in Egypt: "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you!" (Gen 41:55). The famine became so extreme that Joseph's own brothers, the ones who had sold him into slavery, journeyed to Egypt in search of food.

When the brothers met the man in charge of the granaries in Egypt, so much time had elapsed that they did not realize that they were standing in the presence of their own brother, whom they had sold into slavery years ago. Like everyone else, they, too, considered Joseph to be Egyptian royalty, and they addressed him as their lord. Joseph, however, recognized them.

To make a long story short, Joseph hid his identity, but was filled with kindness and mercy toward his brothers. He provided grain for them, filling their sacks so they could take back plenty to their father, Israel. Eventually, Joseph revealed his identity to them and extended forgiveness to his brothers. Thanks to Joseph and his role as the keeper of the grain, countless lives were saved from famine and death.

The story related in the Old Testament is true and is a prefiguration of a much greater Joseph who would bring his Son, the Bread from Heaven, to safety in Egypt. Saint Joseph safeguarded a food capable of saving the entire world!

Saint Joseph, our spiritual father, is much greater than the Joseph of the Old Testament. Our Joseph was the keeper of the Bread from Heaven! His desire in heaven is that all of his children consume the Bread of Everlasting Life!

The former Joseph [of the Old Testament] was holy, righteous, pious, chaste; but this Joseph so far surpasses him in holiness and perfection as the sun outshines the moon.²

— St. Lawrence of Brindisi

God sent St. Joseph to Egypt so that, out of Egypt, St. Joseph could bring the Bread of Life to the nations. Saint Joseph saved our Bread from Herod; he protected and preserved him in Egypt; and he now desires that we receive the Bread of Life at Holy Mass. Unlike the Joseph of the Old Testament, St. Joseph's Heavenly Bread is more numerous than the sands of the sea. This Heavenly Bread is able to feed all the multitudes and satisfy every soul.

Pharaoh, the mighty king of Egypt, exalted Joseph and made him the highest prince in his kingdom, because he stored up the grain and bread and saved the people of his entire kingdom. So Joseph saved and protected Christ, who is the living bread and gives eternal life to the world.³

— St. Lawrence of Brindisi

He [St. Joseph] most diligently reared him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.⁴

— Blessed Pope Pius IX

If you want to form an idea of St. Joseph's greatness, consider that by a divine privilege he merited to bear the title "Father of Jesus." Reflect too that his own name "Joseph" means — an increase. Keeping in mind the great patriarch Joseph, sold by his brothers in Egypt, understand that our saint has inherited not only his name, but even more, his power, his innocence, and his sanctity. As the patriarch Joseph stored the wheat not for himself, but for the people in their time of need, so Joseph has received a heavenly commission to watch over the living Bread not for himself alone, but for the entire world.⁵

— St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Without Joseph, we would not have the Living Bread of the Eucharist. Mary "kneaded the dough" in her sacred womb; St. Joseph lovingly preserved the Bread in Egypt. He continues to guard and preserve the Bread of Life in every tabernacle in the world. Saint Joseph made it possible for all his children to receive the Bread of Everlasting Life.

[Saint] Joseph is still charged with guarding the Living Bread!⁶

— Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

Today, there is a worldwide spiritual and moral famine on the earth. Souls are dying because of a lack of spiritual nourishment. Hearts are broken; marriages are ruined; lives are destroyed; children are murdered in the womb; and truth and common sense are in short supply. The spiritual and moral famine in the world is devastating every nation, laying waste to humanity. There is not a single country left that has not been affected by it. What are we to do? To whom can we go to find nourishment for our souls?

Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you!

— Gen 41:55

To Jesus through Mary and St. Joseph!

He [St. Joseph] always favors with special protection those souls who are enrolled beneath the standard of Mary!⁴

— St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

When the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph intercede together it is very powerful!⁵

— St. André Bessette

Grant that according to your example [St. Joseph] we may keep our eyes fixed on our mother Mary, your most sweet spouse.⁶

— Venerable Pope Pius XII

WONDER 4

VIRGINAL FATHER OF JESUS

Since there is nothing on record that he [St. Joseph] ever had any other spouse than the Virgin Mary, it is also certain that he remained a virgin all his life.

— St. Jerome

DAY 12 SUPPLEMENTARY

Feast of the Holy Spouses

No husband and wife ever loved one another so much as Joseph and Mary.¹

— Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

Did you know there is a liturgical feast that celebrates the marriage of Mary and Joseph? It's called the "Feast of the Holy Spouses" (sometimes also referred to as the "Feast of the Espousals of Mary and Joseph").

The Feast of the Holy Spouses has a long history going all the way back to the 15th century. The day traditionally designated for the feast is January 23. In a few countries, the feast is celebrated on January 22 or November 26, but those dates tend to be exceptions. Nobody is exactly sure why January 23 was chosen as the day for the feast, but we are given a fascinating insight into the date in the mystical visions of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824).

In the accounts we have of her visions, Blessed Anne Catherine claims to have been transported to the marriage of Mary and Joseph and witnessed the ceremony. Blessed Anne Catherine offers details about the wedding and explicitly mentions the date of the marriage. She writes:

The espousals took place, I think, upon our 23rd of January. They were celebrated in Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, in a house used for such feasts.²

Another mystic, Venerable Mary of Ágreda (1602-1665), also claims to have had visions about the lives of Mary and Joseph. She wrote extensively about her mystical experiences and claims to also have been present at the wedding of Mary and St. Joseph. Her

account of the wedding provides detailed descriptions of such things as the dress Our Lady wore, the stateliness and attractiveness of St. Joseph, and the joy experienced by everyone in attendance. Venerable Mary of Ágreda wrote the following about what she witnessed at the wedding of Mary and St. Joseph:

By divine operation the two most holy and chaste spouses felt an incomparable joy and consolation [on their wedding day]. The heavenly princess, as one who is the Mistress of all virtues, lovingly corresponded to the desires of St. Joseph. The Most High also gave to St. Joseph new purity and complete command over his natural inclinations so that he might serve his spouse Mary.³

Why don't more people know about the liturgical feast of the Holy Spouses? Well, unfortunately, the feast is not on the universal liturgical calendar of the Church. The Feast of the Holy Spouses is only celebrated in a few shrines dedicated to St. Joseph (for example, the Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal, Canada); a few dioceses where the local bishop has approved it; and in several religious communities dedicated to St. Joseph. One notable religious community that celebrates the Feast of the Holy Spouses is the Oblates of St. Joseph. Founded in Asti, Italy, by St. Joseph Marelló in 1878, the Oblates of St. Joseph are a wonderful religious community of men serving the Church, and they celebrate the feast annually on January 23. Their founder, St. Joseph Marelló, was a very holy bishop who had a tremendous love of and devotion to St. Joseph. He was canonized by St. John Paul II in 2001.

Interestingly, in 2002, St. John Paul II also offered the world the Luminous Mysteries of the rosary. The Luminous Mysteries were actually founded in 1957 by St. George Preca of Malta, but St. John Paul II offered them to the universal Church to help us call to mind important truths of Christianity that are under attack today. The Second Luminous Mystery is the Wedding Feast at Cana. In meditating on this mystery, we are reminded that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Since this perennial truth is so hotly contested today, the Church needs a universal liturgical feast that celebrates marriage. It would be truly wonderful if the Church placed the Feast of the Holy Spouses on the universal liturgical calendar. Such a feast would serve as a reminder to all men and women of the sanctity of Holy Matrimony. What a delight it would be to liturgically celebrate the holiest couple

who ever lived! Let us pray that more places request permission to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Spouses, and that someday it may be placed on the universal liturgical calendar.

Everything that refers to that marriage [of Mary and Joseph] happened by an intimate disposition of the Holy Spirit.⁴

— St. Bonaventure

~~STOP HERE~~
Virginal Father of Jesus

It is perfectly in accordance with the faith and spirit of the Church, to honor as a virgin not only the Mother of God, but likewise Joseph.¹

— St. Peter Damian

The mother of Jesus is a virgin, a perpetual virgin. The perpetual virginity of Mary has been a very important teaching of Christianity from the beginning. How important? Well, in the fourth century, a bishop named Bonoso from Illyricum (that is, modern day areas of Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia) was rebuked by his brother bishops and stripped of his episcopacy for teaching that Mary and Joseph had more children after Jesus was born. The pope at the time, St. Pope Siricius, wrote a letter to the faithful bishops in Illyricum thanking them for disciplining the errant bishop. He wrote:

We surely cannot deny that you were right in correcting the doctrine about children of Mary, and you are right in rejecting the idea that any other offspring should come from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the flesh.²

The doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity is such an important teaching of Christianity that St. Pope Martin I made it a dogma of the faith at the Lateran Council in 649.

With this in mind, did you know that there is a tradition in the Church that holds that St. Joseph was a perpetual virgin as well? It is a tradition that has been adhered to and promoted by saints, holy mystics, and popes for centuries. Before delving into this tradition, it is necessary to address common objections that are often raised against the virginity of Mary. In addressing these objections, a clearer picture of the virginity of St. Joseph will emerge.

DAY 11 SUPPLEMENTARY Young Husband of Mary

long journey. The distance from Bethlehem to the border of Egypt is 40 miles. No historian believes that the Holy Family lived on the border. Rather, they went much farther into Egypt where there was the possibility of work, food, and some semblance of civilization. We don't know exactly where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph settled down in Egypt, but it did require them to walk farther than the border.

Have you ever been to the Holy Land or North Africa? If you have, you know that the terrain is rough, the heat intense, and the dangers many. Walking to Egypt, being there for years without knowing anyone, and trying to make a living are not things associated with elderly men.

And then, after many years of living in Egypt, St. Joseph learned from the angel that Herod was dead. Saint Joseph was now required to pack up his family and walk from Egypt all the way back to Nazareth. That's more than 120 miles! The distance from New York City to Philadelphia is 92 miles. Add another 30 miles, and that's what St. Joseph had to do. There was no Jersey Turnpike, with smooth roads and cozy rest stops along the way. It was uphill, downhill, and around hills.

The endless walking didn't stop once the Holy Family reached Nazareth either. As faithful Jews, the men of the household were required to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to fulfill the Law of the Lord. "Three times a year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the God of Israel" (Ex 34:23). Remember: That's 80 miles one way. That is a lot of walking!

Saint Joseph could not have been an old man when he espoused Mary. Old men don't walk to Egypt. They don't walk three times a year from Nazareth to Jerusalem either.

Good Father [St. Joseph], I thank you for having watched over my Mother Mary while you were on earth.²

— Servant of God Sr. Mary Martha Chambon

I don't agree with the traditional picture of St. Joseph as an old man, even though it may have been prompted by a desire to emphasize the perpetual virginity of Mary. I see him as a strong, young man, perhaps a few years older than Our Lady, but in the prime of his life and work.¹

— St. Josemaría Escrivá

Have you ever read such a statement from a saint about the age of St. Joseph? Saint Josemaría has good reason for asserting that St. Joseph was a young man when he married Our Lady — and St. Josemaría is not the only one who thinks this way.

The Catholic Church has no formal, official teaching on the age of St. Joseph. You are free to believe that St. Joseph was an old man when he espoused Mary if you want to. You are also free to believe he was a young man. Personally, I find it very hard to believe that St. Joseph was an old man. The physical demands of his mission make the probability of him being an old man practically zero.

If you consider the titles that the Church gives St. Joseph in his Litany (Guardian of the Redeemer; Chaste Guardian of the Virgin; Guardian of Virgins; Model of Workmen; Terror of Demons; etc.), they lean in the direction that St. Joseph was young and strong. These titles are not descriptions of an elderly man. Is an old man capable of guarding virgins? Can an elderly man serve as a model of laborers? It takes strength to be a guardian; it takes health to be a worker. Can an old man do these things? As Mother Angelica said, "Old men don't walk to Egypt!" Neither do old men guard anything whose safekeeping requires mobility and strength. None of this implies any moral fault in elderly men, of course. The world is filled with countless holy old men who are virtuous, wise, and saintly. Yet old men are not known for their physical capacity to do the kinds of things that St. Joseph was required to do for the Holy Family.

Then why has the vast majority of art over the centuries depicted St. Joseph as an old man? The most articulate answer to this question is provided by Venerable Fulton J. Sheen. He writes:

Was he [St. Joseph] old or young? Most of the statues and pictures we see of Joseph today represent him as an old man with a gray beard, one who took Mary and her vow under his protection with somewhat the same detachment as a doctor would pick up a baby girl in a nursery. We have, of course, no historical evidence

whatsoever concerning the age of Joseph. Some apocryphal accounts picture him as an old man; Fathers of the Church, after the fourth century, followed this legend rather rigidly ...

But when one searches for the reasons why Christian art should have pictured Joseph as aged, we discover that it was in order better to safeguard the virginity of Mary. Somehow, the assumption had crept in that senility was a better protector of virginity than adolescence. Art thus unconsciously made Joseph a spouse chaste and pure by age rather than by virtue. But this is like assuming that the best way to show that a man would never steal is to picture him without hands ...

But more than that, to make Joseph out as old portrays for us a man who had little vital energy left, rather than one who, having it, kept it in chains for God's sake and for his holy purposes. To make Joseph appear pure only because his flesh had aged is like glorifying a mountain stream that has dried. The Church will not ordain a man to his priesthood who has not his vital powers. She wants men who have something to tame, rather than those who are tame because they have no energy to be wild. It should be no different with God.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to believe that Our Lord would prefer, for a foster-father, someone who had made a sacrifice rather than someone who was forced to it. There is the added historical fact that the Jews frowned on a disproportionate marriage between what Shakespeare called "crabbed age and youth"; the Talmud admits a disproportionate marriage only for widows or widowers. Finally, it seems hardly possible that God would have attached a young mother, probably about sixteen or seventeen years of age, to an old man. If he did not disdain to give his mother to a young man, John, at the foot of the Cross, then why should he have given her an old man at the crib? A woman's love always determines the way a man loves: she is the silent educator of his virile powers.

Since Mary is what might be called a "virginizer" of young men as well as women, and the greatest inspiration of Christian purity, should she not logically have begun by inspiring and virginizing the first youth whom she had probably ever met — Joseph, the Just? It was not by diminishing his power to love but by elevating it that she would have her first conquest, and in her own spouse, the man who was a *man*, and not a mere senile watchman!

Joseph was probably a *young* man, strong, virile, athletic, handsome, chaste, and disciplined. Instead of being a man incapable of loving, he must have been on fire with love. Just as we would

give very little credit to the Blessed Mother if she had taken her vow of virginity after having been an old maid for fifty years, so neither could we give much credit to a Joseph who became her spouse because he was advanced in years. Young girls in those days, like Mary, took vows to love God uniquely, and so did young men, of whom Joseph was one so preeminent as to be called the "just." Instead, then, of being dried fruit to be served on the table of the king, he was rather a blossom filled with promise and power. He was not in the evening of life, but in its morning, bubbling over with energy, strength, and controlled passion. Mary and Joseph brought to their espousals not only their vows of virginity but also two hearts with greater torrents of love than had ever before coursed through human breasts ...

How much more beautiful Mary and Joseph become when we see in their lives what might be called the first Divine Romance! No human heart is moved by the love of the old for the young; but who is not moved by the love of the young for the young? In both Mary and Joseph, there were youth, beauty, and promise. God loves cascading cataracts and bellowing waterfalls, but he loves them better, not when they overflow and drown his flowers, but when they are harnessed and bridled to light a city and to slake the thirst of a child. In Joseph and Mary, we do not find one controlled waterfall and one dried-up lake but rather two youths who, before they knew the beauty of the one and the handsome strength of the other, willed to surrender these things for Jesus. Leaning over the manger crib of the Infant Jesus, then, are not age and youth but youth and youth, the consecration of beauty in a maid and the surrender of strong comeliness in a man.²

Wow! Fulton Sheen is brilliant! As far as I know, no other person in the entire history of the Church has articulated a more convincing argument for a young St. Joseph than Fulton Sheen. As he so clearly states, theology and art only depicted St. Joseph as an old man in order to protect the virginity of Mary.

Now, to be fair, the decision to depict St. Joseph as an old man, whether in preaching, writing, or art, did work to safeguard Mary's virginity and purity. As an extreme example of this, an ancient Coptic text on the life of St. Joseph presents him as being 91 years of age when he espoused Mary! However, all historians and theologians acknowledge that the sources for presenting St. Joseph as an old man come from apocryphal — that is, non-canonical — documents. Relying on apocryphal writings to offer an age for St. Joseph led to presentations of him as an old man, diminishing his virtue, importance,

and greatness in the minds of Christians. No wonder so few people have paid attention to St. Joseph over the centuries.

How drastic an effect did this approach to St. Joseph have? To this day, St. Joseph is rarely included in seminary classes on Christology, Mariology, soteriology, or ecclesiology. The man universally acclaimed as the most loving, just, chaste, prudent, courageous, obedient, and faithful man to ever live doesn't even get mentioned in classes on the theological or moral virtues. This needs to change! Thank God for the wisdom and insights of people such as St. Josemaría Escrivá, Mother Angelica, and Venerable Fulton Sheen. The Church needs to re-present to her children an image of St. Joseph that depicts him as strong, masculine, and young. The constant presentation of him as an old man has severely warped our understanding of the greatest saint (besides Mary) to walk this earth! It's time to reclaim St. Joseph!

Now, don't take this the wrong way. The Lord loves elderly men. God loves a man's years of hard work, service, selfless dedication, and sacrificial love. Calm, just, and peaceful societies rest on the foundations established by old men. Yet those men built the foundations and pillars of civilization when they were young, not when they were old. Likewise, the formative years of Jesus Christ were lovingly ruled by a strong young father named Joseph. It was this hardworking, caring, and virtuous father who laid the foundations for the human growth and development of Jesus Christ. While there is no doubt that an old man is just as capable of being holy as any young man, it takes a strong young father to teach a boy how to swing an axe, work with wood, carry lumber, walk great distances, and earn a living by the sweat of his brow.

If earthly princes consider it a matter of so much importance to select carefully a tutor fit for their children, think you that the Eternal God would not, in his almighty power and wisdom, choose from out of his creation the most perfect man living [St. Joseph] to be the guardian of his divine and most glorious Son, the Prince of heaven and earth?³

— St. Francis de Sales

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade echoes a similar idea, but looks at St. Joseph's manhood from the perspective of his marriage to Our Lady. He writes:

If God had charged you with the honorable task of choosing from among the kings a husband for the Blessed Virgin, would

you not have given her the greatest mind in the world? And if he had ordered you to pick one of the saints, would you not have given her the greatest saint who ever trod the earth? Now, do you think that the Holy Spirit, who is the author of this divine marriage, is less concerned than you are to provide her with a husband suited to her merits?⁴

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

Makes a lot of sense, right? Sure it does. Saint Joseph was the loving husband of Mary, not a "retired" husband incapable of manual labor and long journeys on foot. Saint Joseph was known by everyone in Nazareth as the father of Jesus, not the grandfather of Jesus.

As the father of Jesus, St. Joseph was a zealous defender and strong protector of his beloved Son. Saint Joseph sacrificed everything — including the pleasures of conjugal love — to fulfill his mission as "Guardian of the Virgin" and "Guardian of the Redeemer." Incidentally, when popes and saints use the word "guardian" in reference to St. Joseph, they are using it in more than just a legal sense. They use it in the protective, fatherly, and manly sense. A guardian is someone who is strong, not only in mind and heart, but also physically. Saint John Henry Newman spoke of the guardianship of St. Joseph in the following way:

He [St. Joseph] was the Cherub, placed to guard the new terrestrial paradise from the intrusion of every foe.⁵

A man charged with guarding a territory from the intrusion of every foe needs to be a physically powerful man, not an elderly man requiring a cane. Like a powerful cherub, dedicated to the protection and service of the Queen of Angels, St. Joseph was given the task of guarding the temple of Mary's body, and in particular, her virginity. Mary's guardian had to be young and strong in order to successfully fulfill his mission. An elderly man would probably not have the strength to guard a young wife. Neither would an elderly man be likely to have the stamina needed to raise an infant son.

Saint Joseph's manhood was a protective shield, a protective cloak, for the Blessed Virgin. No man or beast could do any harm to the Virgin because St. Joseph stood attentive and ready to defend her, even to the point of death.

The cloud [that] in the Old Law overshadowed the tabernacle is a figure of St. Joseph's marriage with the Blessed Virgin. *The cloud covered the tabernacle of the covenant, and the glory of the*

Lord filled it (Ex. 40:32). Saint Joseph's marriage is a sacred veil which covers the mystery of the Incarnation. Everyone sees that Mary is a mother, but only Joseph knows that she is a virgin.⁶

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

As a young husband and father, St. Joseph modeled manhood for his Son, Jesus. Every boy should be able to look to his father to understand what it means to be a man. If St. Joseph had been an elderly man, would Jesus have observed in his father any physical strength or true love put into practice through heroic chastity, hard work, and bodily gestures of piety — kneeling, for example? If St. Joseph were two or three times the age of his wife, what would Jesus have observed in his father: afternoon naps and forgetfulness? Again, there's nothing wrong with old age. Growing old is part of human life. Saint Joseph himself aged as life went on, as happens to all men. But would God the Father entrust the upbringing and education of his Son — the Lion of Judah and King of Kings — to an elderly and fragile man? Probably not.

What the Church and the world can learn from a younger depiction of St. Joseph — especially in theology, preaching, literature, and art — is that young men can be chaste, heroic, and holy. Indeed, the Church has countless examples of young men who kept themselves chaste and pure for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. And St. Joseph was the greatest of them all. Saint Josemaría Escrivá tells us:

You don't have to wait to be old or lifeless to practice the virtue of chastity. Purity comes from love; and the strength and gaiety of youth are no obstacle for noble love. Joseph had a young heart and a young body when he married Mary, when he learned of the mystery of her divine motherhood, when he lived in her company, respecting the integrity God wished to give the world as one more sign that he had come to share the life of his creatures. Anyone who cannot understand a love like that knows very little of true love and is a complete stranger to the Christian meaning of chastity.⁷

In my opinion, St. Joseph was a young husband, tender and loving toward his wife, but always chaste, modest, and pure. Mary loved her Joseph. His manly love for her was strong and always controlled by reason and faith. His virile powers, always held in restraint and service to God's will, made him the most virtuous husband and father ever to walk this earth. No woman ever had a greater man than St. Joseph.

God would not have given the most holy Virgin to Joseph as his wife unless he had been holy and righteous. What right-minded father would ever give his most beloved daughter in marriage to a man who was not moral and beyond reproach according to his rank and state in life?⁸

— St. Lawrence of Brindisi

So what are you to gain from this wonder of St. Joseph? Are you required to believe that St. Joseph was young? No, you are not. But do you understand, at least based on the physical demands his mission would have inevitably placed on him, why it makes more sense that St. Joseph was young rather than old when he married Our Lady? Regardless of which depiction of St. Joseph you prefer, know that St. Joseph is your loving, strong, and fearless spiritual father. Thank him for all that he did out of selfless love for Jesus and your spiritual mother, Mary. Thank him for all that he does for love of you.

I thank you, O holy patriarch Joseph, because we who are incapable of even knowing how to love Jesus and our Immaculate Mother, know and rejoice that you at least loved her as she deserved to be loved, the worthy and true Mother of Jesus.⁹

— Blessed Gabriele Allegra

The Consecrated Knight

Saint Joseph sweetly and continuously stimulates us to love, serve, and imitate the Queen of his heart, the Immaculate Mother of Jesus.¹

— Blessed Gabriele Allegra

Saint Joseph is the most Marian of all saints. His love for Mary is greater than that of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Maximilian Kolbe, and St. John Paul II combined. There has never been a greater Marian saint than St. Joseph, and there never will be.

Saint Joseph is the model for total consecration to Mary. Long before Calvary, when Jesus commanded all of his disciples to take Mary into their hearts and homes (see Jn 19:26-27), St. Joseph had already taken Mary into his heart and into his home. She is his heart; she is his home. Everything he did was done for Jesus and Mary. He lived and died for Jesus and Mary.

READINGS FOR MEETING DAY 10

Light of Patriarchs, *Pray for Us*

How I love to call St. Joseph the Patriarch of Christians and of God's elect! How could we not give him this venerable title ... he, above all, who played such a large part in the mysteries of our spiritual regeneration?¹

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

The word “patriarch” means father. What all the patriarchs of the Old Testament foreshadowed, and all Christian fathers are called to reflect, is the paternal light of God shining through the fatherhood of St. Joseph. After Christ, St. Joseph is the greatest of all the patriarchs; he is the greatest of all fathers!

Picture to yourself the sanctity of all the patriarchs of old, that long line of successive generations which is the mysterious ladder of Jacob, culminating in the person of the Son of God. See how great was the faith of Abraham, the obedience of Isaac, the courage of David, the wisdom of Solomon. After you have formed the highest opinion of these saints, remember that Joseph is at the top of the ladder, at the head of the saints, the kings, the prophets, the patriarchs, that he is more faithful than Abraham, more obedient than Isaac, more generous than David, wiser than Solomon, in a word, as superior in grace as he is close to the source, Jesus sleeping in his arms.²

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

SAINT JOSEPH IS A REFLECTION OF THE FATHER OF LIGHTS. In the Letter of James, we read:

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change.

— Jas 1:17

In the beginning, God created the great luminaries in the heavens: the sun, the moon, and the stars. Without light, creation would be in darkness. In the New Testament, the Father establishes a new creation in Christ. Through Christ, the Father places his divine life,

love, and light within our hearts. Saint Joseph and his fatherhood play a very important role in God's wonderful plan. Saint Joseph is the perfect reflection of the Father of Lights, and he helps us to receive the light of Christ. Saint Joseph is a bearer of light. He brings Jesus, the true Light of the World, to us.

SAINT JOSEPH WILL HELP YOU LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD. You are a child of the light. As a Christian, Jesus gives you a share in his light. He makes you the light of the world (see Mt 5:14-16).

All of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness.

— 1 Thess 5:5

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.

— Eph 5:8-9

THE "LUMEN PATRIARCHARUM" TERRIFIES SATAN. In the Latin version of the Litany of St. Joseph, the title "Light of Patriarchs" appears as "*Lumen Patriarcharum*." The Devil hates St. Joseph and his light. Satan's other name is *Lucifer*, which means "light bearer." Lucifer lost the light because of his pride and disobedience to God. Now, Satan lives in perpetual darkness and abhors the light. Satan fears your spiritual father because St. Joseph is a humble creature of flesh and blood, the perfect reflection of the Father of Lights. Saint Joseph is a true and everlasting light bearer, an icon of God the Father. After Jesus and Mary, there is no person that Satan detests more than St. Joseph. Stay close to St. Joseph and walk in the light!

I wish to extend a particular word of encouragement to fathers so that they may take St. Joseph as their model. He who kept watch over the Son of Man is able to teach them the deepest meaning of their own fatherhood.³

— Pope Benedict XVI

Read "*Ite ad Ioseph!*" (page 108)
Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (page 233)

DAY 11

Spouse of the Mother of God, *Pray for Us*

How hard he [St. Joseph] must have prayed to come to know and ever increase in love toward his immaculate wife.¹

— Blessed Gabriele Allegra

There has never been a man more in love with a woman than St. Joseph was in love with Mary. What dignity and holiness were required of St. Joseph to be the husband of Mary! In her feminine Heart, Mary knew that she was secure in the manhood of St. Joseph. He was her knight and warrior. Every wife desires such a husband — a gentleman, a protector, and a good father.

Women deserve men who are strong and protective, yet gentle, loving, and trustworthy. Every woman wants to find security in the arms of a man who is willing to lay down his life for her. The Church and the world need men like St. Joseph. He is the model husband.

Saint Joseph was the spouse of Mary. In the same way, each father sees himself entrusted with the mystery of womanhood through his own wife. Dear fathers, like St. Joseph, respect and love your spouse; and by your love and your wise presence, lead your children to God.²

— Pope Benedict XVI

Every Catholic heart wants shepherds like St. Joseph as well, priests and bishops — spiritual fathers — who are gentlemen, chivalrous warriors, protectors, and defenders. Catholics expect their priests and bishops to be prayerful, trustworthy, gentle, compassionate, and virtuous. The bride of Christ, the Church, deserves to have leaders who are willing to fight off the wolves for love of the flock, slay spiritual dragons, and preach the truth with passion, Christian charity, and zeal. Saint Joseph is the model of all fatherhood. Without looking to the model of St. Joseph, no husband, father, or priest will ever fully understand what it means to be a sacrificial man, a loving husband and father, and a truly masculine saint.

SAINT JOSEPH IS THE MODEL HUSBAND AND FATHER. The vocation of all men is to be at the service of those entrusted to their love and care. Many men have forgotten this today, but St. Joseph will help them remember. He will help men be holy and chivalrous again. All men discover in St. Joseph a model of strength, fidelity, heroism, and virtue. If men — husbands, fathers, priests, and bishops — follow the example of St. Joseph, families will be loving and secure, husbands will be holy, priests will be dragon-slayers, and bishops will again be shepherds of souls and pillars of truth.

SAINT JOSEPH IS A MODEL FOR ALL MEN. Real men are true gentlemen, at the service of others. Real men love. Real men protect women and children against any and all threats. Real men are willing to die for their wives and children. Holy priests and bishops are willing to suffer and die for the souls entrusted to their care. Priests and bishops of this caliber are not afraid of ridicule, slander, poverty, or imprisonment. Men like St. Joseph are willing to fight for what they love, what is good, true, and beautiful. May the Church and families once again be filled with such men!

To you, O Blessed Joseph, we come in our trials, and having asked the help of your most holy spouse, we confidently ask your patronage, also.³

— Pope Leo XIII

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse!

Read “Young Husband of Mary” (page 115)
Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (page 233)

DAY 12

Chaste Guardian of the Virgin, *Pray for Us*

It was necessary that divine Providence should commit her [Mary] to the charge and guardianship of a man absolutely pure.¹

— St. Francis de Sales

Chastity is a virtue. A very important virtue. To be chaste is to have self-mastery, to be in control of your passions and sexuality. Contrary to what many people think, a person who exercises chastity is not repressing or rejecting the beauty of human sexuality. On the contrary, chastity preserves the human heart and body for authentic self-giving. All people, no matter their vocation in life, are called to chastity. Chastity is the virtue that prevents us from being slaves to our passions and acting like irrational animals.

Celibacy, on the other hand, is a special form of chastity. God calls some men and women to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Joseph was both chaste and celibate. He was called by God to espouse a virgin consecrated to God in her mind, body, and soul. Saint Joseph was the Chaste Guardian of the Virgin.

Saint Joseph and Mary lived in what is often called a “Josephite marriage.” They were truly husband and wife, but they never engaged in sexual relations. Their vocation was to be united in heart, mind, and soul, but never in body. They were both consecrated to God and sacrificed a natural good for a greater good: the salvation of souls.

SAINT JOSEPH IS PURE OF HEART. To be chaste is to be pure of heart. If a person’s heart is not pure, they are incapable of seeing God. Saint Joseph’s heart is exceptionally pure. Saint Joseph gazed on the countenance of God in the Person of his Son for decades. Poets have often stated that the eyes are the window to the soul. If this is true, St. Joseph must have had the most chaste and pure eyes of any husband who ever lived. His eyes and heart were pure-intentioned, chaste, and afire with love for Jesus and Mary.

Modern man has become blinded by impurity. The world encourages premarital relations, cohabitation, contraception, and many other immoral practices. Chastity is a forgotten virtue today. Even married

couples live with the idea that they are free to do whatever they desire with the body of their spouse. However, this is not true. Chastity is required in marriage as well, in order for couples to truly love one another, to retain their dignity and respect for each other.

YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER IS A GENTLEMAN. Saint Joseph is the first Christian gentleman; next to Jesus, he is the greatest example of masculine chastity. He was married to the most beautiful woman in the world, and he treated her with respect, dignity, and reverence. If men today were more like St. Joseph — protectors and defenders of beauty, instead of users and abusers of the feminine mystery — what a different world this would be.

God wants all men to be like St. Joseph. He is the *first* Chaste Guardian of the Virgin. Most men will be called to marriage, while some are called to consecrated celibacy. Both vocations are necessary. Without marriage, there are no children. Without priests, there are no Sacraments. Married men need to be chaste in marriage; priests and bishops need to be like St. Joseph in their chaste love for the virginal Church — guardians, defenders, and protectors of the beauty entrusted to them, not users and abusers of the sacred mysteries.

Joseph, the just man, is appointed to be the steward of the mysteries of God, the *paterfamilias* and guardian of the sanctuary, which is Mary the bride and the Logos in her. He [Joseph] thus becomes the icon of the bishop, to whom the bride is betrothed; she is not at his disposal but under his protection.²

— Pope Benedict XVI

Read “Feast of the Holy Spouses” (page 125)
Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (page 233)