

Did you know . . .

St. Joseph, The Just Man

The Catholic Church dedicates the month of March to St. Joseph, often known as the “Just Man.”

St. Joseph, a carpenter in the village of Nazareth, was descended from the royal house of David. Joseph and Mary were betrothed when he found she was pregnant, presenting Joseph with a terrible dilemma. According to law, Mary would be stoned to death, but Joseph, “being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame”, decided to divorce her quietly until an angel appeared to Joseph while he was sleeping and explained what happened.

Although Joseph was the foster father Our Lord, for many centuries the Church paid him very little attention. Only in the 16th century did the Church officially encourage his cult, as St. Joseph proved to be an ideal “provider and protector” of the Holy Family. Foster-father of Our Lord appears in local martyrologies of the 9th and 10th centuries. The first church dedicated in his honor was in Bologna, Italy in 1129. In the 15th century, Pope Sixtus IV officially acknowledged March 19 as the feast of St. Joseph and Pope Pius IX declared him Patron of the Universal Church in 1870.

In 1989, Pope John Paul II reflected deeply on the life and witness of St. Joseph in *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer).

Among the saints known to have particular devotions to St. Joseph are St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Gertrude, St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Alphonsus, and St. Teresa of Avila.

“Thought linked to the house of David, he remains a carpenter from a Galilean town so miniscule that it serves as the butt of jokes. Thus, while Joseph recedes from the Gospel story, he remains a reminder of Jesus’ humble origins—and an enduring reminder of His humanity.” [*Blessed Among Us*]

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