

ST. JOSEPH, PROTECTOR OF THE ORDER

Protector of the Church may be the last and greatest title that we can give to any Saint, that may be second only to the one who is the Church herself, who is the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God. In being named the *Protector*, St. Joseph espouses all the other titles that we have given him and that are named in the named in the Litany of St. Joseph. But the Order of Carmelites hold a special place of privilege for our Beloved Saint above other orders and the in the midst of the Church. As we read from the *The Carmelite Directory of the Spiritual Life* on Devotion to St. Joseph:

(5) As we already said, a special devotion to St. Joseph is peculiar to our Order. Indeed our Order was among the first to celebrate the office of the Saint; likewise, it is known that many of our religious brethren labored with great zeal to spread his devotion. Blessed Baptist of Mantua and St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi held St. Joseph in highest veneration. Especially did St. Theresa of Jesus inflame all with devotion for her “father and wonder-worker” (cf. *Anal.* X,)

We cannot fail to follow these examples.

THE CONUNDRUM OF ST. JOSEPH:

WHO WAS HE? HOW OLD WAS JOSEPH WHEN HE WAS BETROTHED TO MARY?

The question over St. Joseph’s background, who he was and how old he was at the time of Christ’s birth has been debated and battled over throughout the history of the Church. The early fathers thought of his to be an older man, some considering that he was a widower and already raised a family with adult children. Later, theologians and the Church depicted him as a somewhat younger man, middle-aged so that he was not quite a generation older than Mary. More recently, the image of Joseph as a contemporary of Mary

We are familiar with many images of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, not just in the way that artists have depicted her, but how she has truly appeared to communities, cultures and people throughout the world. Of course, there is Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, who also appeared at Garabandal and Fatima. But among the many other of her appearances are, Our Lady of Lavang, Our Lady of Kibeho, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. She comes to her people and given us her image through the many cultures and races of the world. The faithful do not question whether these different images and appearances are truly her. The identity of her Blessed Spouse St. Joseph, however, has been highly discussed and even contested throughout the centuries.

It is easy to understand why this may be. Sacred Scripture, and even the more legitimate apocryphal texts reveal very little of him. There have been very view apparitions of St. Joseph, Fatima and Knock, being the most well known. This is part of his calling and ministry to the Church. But where Mary has appeared in different peoples, Joseph has appeared in different ages.

OLDER MAN: (EXAMPLE OF VIRTUES)

Earliest testimony and tradition of the Church Fathers

Chosen to guard and protect the Virgin Mary as one dedicated to the Temple

Some early theologians considered Jesus' brothers named in the Gospel as Joseph's children from a prior marriage. Although this view was never widely accepted.

Titles from the Litany:

Joseph most just
Chaste, Prudent, strong, obedient, faithful
Mirror of Patience
Lover of Poverty
Model of Artisans
Glory of Home Life

MIDDLE-AGED: (COMPLETES WORK)

Became more prominent around the turn of the 1st Millennium and reinforced by Thomas Aquinas.

Several years older than Mary, but still of a family age

Seen less as a protector and defender

Titles from the Litany:

Guardian of virgins
Pillar of families
Solace of the afflicted
Hope of the sick
Patron of the dying
Terror of demons
Protector of Holy Church

YOUNG MAN: (ACCORDING TO RELATIONSHIP)

More contemporary image that we see in movies like the Nativity Story

Of normal marrying age, only a few years older than Mary

Chosen as her spouse for ordinary reasons

Titles from the Litany:

Renowned Offspring of David
Light of Patriarchs
Spouse of the Mother of God
Chaste Guardian of the Virgin
Diligent Protector of Christ
Head of the Holy Family

IN ALL AGES:

Fatherhood
Hiddenness
Prayer

LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH (TO BE PRAYED EACH DAY)

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Christ, hear us. Christ, hear us.
Christ graciously hear us. Christ graciously hear us.

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

Holy Mary. Pray for us.
St. Joseph . . .
Renowned offspring of David . . .
Light of Patriarchs . . .
Spouse of the Mother of God . . .
Chaste Guardian of the Virgin . . .
Foster Father of the Son of God . . .
Diligent Protector of Christ . . .
Head of the Holy Family . . .
Joseph most just . . .
Joseph most chaste . . .
Joseph most prudent . . .
Joseph most strong . . .
Joseph most obedient . . .
Joseph most faithful . . .
Mirror of patience . . .
Lover of poverty . . .
Model of artisans . . .
Glory of home life . . .
Guardian of virgins . . .
Pillar of families . . .
Solace of the afflicted . . .
Hope of the sick . . .
Patron of the dying . . .
Terror of demons . . .
Protector of Holy Church . . .

Spare us, O Lord.
Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Have mercy on us, O Lord.

V. He made him the lord of his household.

R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray: O God, Who in Your ineffable providence deigned 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 we venerate on earth as our Protector; You who live and reign forever, unto the ages of ages.--**AMEN**

PRAYER OF POPE LEO XIII

To you, O Blessed Joseph
do we come in our afflictions,
and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse,
we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you
to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God
and through the paternal love
with which you embraced the Child Jesus,
we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance
which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood,
and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family,
defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ;
O most loving father, ward off from us
every contagion of error and corrupting influence;
O our most mighty protector, be kind to us
and from Heaven assist us in our struggle
with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril,
so now protect God's Holy Church
from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity;
shield too, each one of us by your constant protection,
so that, supported by your example and your aid,
we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness,
and to obtain eternal happiness in Heaven.

--AMEN

ACT OF CONSECRATION

On this day, before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I, a repentant sinner, consecrate myself, body and soul, to you, St. Joseph.

I turn to you as my spiritual father and place my life and my salvation into your hands. Confident in your goodness, I place myself under your paternal cloak and ask you to protect me from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

St. Joseph, you are the virginal husband of the Mother of God! Help me to love her with tender affection and filial devotion. Mary is my spiritual mother and the surest, fastest, and easiest way to Jesus. Keep me close to her and, together with her, bring me closer to Jesus.

Never depart from me, St. Joseph. Nourish me with the Bread of Life, instruct me in the wisdom of the saints, help me carry my cross, and keep me always in the Catholic Church. When I die, take me to the Kingdom of Heaven to see Jesus and Mary.

From this day onward, I will never forget you. I will speak of you often, spend time with you in prayer and, with your help, earnestly strive to sin no more. Should I fall, help me to repent and go to Confession. Should I go astray, guide me back to the truth.

Before heaven and earth, my soul cries out: Praise to the Holy Trinity who has made you prince over all their possessions! Praise to the Virgin Mary who loves you and longs to see you loved! Praise to you, my spiritual father, the great St. Joseph.

Praise to the Holy Trinity who has blessed you and raised you to be the greatest saint after Mary. Praise to the Virgin who loves you and wants souls to love you. Praise to you, St. Joseph, my father, my guardian, and my all! Amen!