



A Novena to Saint Joseph

NINE DAYS WITH THE GUARDIAN OF THE REDEEMER
MARCH 10 TO MARCH 18 · HIS FEAST, MARCH 19

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How to Pray This Novena

A novena is nine days of the same asking. Not nine different prayers, but one request carried patiently, the way a friend is asked again.

Begin on March 10 and end on March 18, the eve of his feast. Each day has a page: a scene from Joseph's life in a great painting, a word of Scripture, a short reading, and the prayer of the novena. Say the prayer aloud if you can, and name your intention in the space the prayer leaves for it.

The nine days follow Joseph through the Gospels, from his betrothal to Mary to the workshop of Nazareth, and end with his death, which tradition places in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Each day takes one of his titles from the Litany of Saint Joseph, printed on the last page: add the litany to the prayer each day, or say it once at the end.

Saint Joseph is the patron of fathers, of workers and of families, of exiles and of the dying, and since 1870 of the whole Church. People pray this novena at every time of year, before a move, a new job, a birth or an operation: begin whenever you need him.

If you begin late, begin anyway. Nine days that end after the feast are still nine days.

Cover: Guido Reni, Saint Joseph and the Christ Child, about 1640, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Days: Raphael (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan); Philippe de Champaigne (National Gallery, London); Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels); Giorgione (National Gallery of Art, Washington); Andrea Mantegna (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin); Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (Palazzo Bianco, Genoa); William Holman Hunt (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery); John Everett Millais (Tate Britain, London); Francisco de Goya (Monastery of Santa Ana, Valladolid).



DAY ONE · SPOUSE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Betrothal

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

MATTHEW 1 : 18

Joseph was a carpenter of Nazareth, of the house of King David, betrothed to a young woman named Mary. In Israel a betrothal was already a marriage in all but the wedding feast. An old story, told long after the Gospels, says that each suitor laid a rod in the Temple and that Joseph's alone burst into flower. Raphael painted the wedding in 1504: Joseph slips the ring on Mary's finger, holding his flowering rod, while a disappointed suitor breaks his own over his knee.

Ask Saint Joseph today to bless the marriages you know, and to help you keep the promises you have made.

PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

O God, who in thy unspeakable providence didst choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of thy most holy Mother: grant that we who honour him as our protector on earth may deserve to have him for our intercessor in heaven.

Saint Joseph, guardian of the Redeemer, who didst hold the Child Jesus in thy arms and keep him safe on every road, take into thy care the thing I now name before thee:

.....
here name your request

Saint Joseph, most just and most faithful, pray for us. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Amen.

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DAY TWO · JOSEPH MOST JUST

A Just Man



hen Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

MATTHEW 1 : 19

Then Mary was found with child, and Joseph knew it was not his. The law allowed him to accuse her in public; the Gospel says only that he was a just man, and resolved to send her away quietly. Then an angel came to him in a dream: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. When he woke, he did as the angel had told him. Philippe de Champaigne shows him asleep in his chair, his tools at his feet, while the angel points to heaven and to Mary.

Joseph never says a word in the Gospels: he listens, and he acts. Ask him for the grace to obey promptly when God makes his will plain.

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DAY THREE · ILLUSTRIOUS SON OF DAVID

The Road to Bethlehem

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.

MICAH 5 : 2

Caesar Augustus ordered a census of the whole empire, and every man went to be enrolled in his own city. Joseph was of the house of David, so he went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, about ninety miles, with Mary, who was great with child, and there was no room for them in the inn. Pieter Bruegel set the scene in a Flemish village in the snow: among the villagers crowding to be counted, a man with a carpenter's saw on his shoulder leads a donkey, and on it rides a woman wrapped in a heavy cloak.

Ask Saint Joseph today for patience with the delays and the closed doors on your own road.

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DAY FOUR · FOSTER FATHER OF THE SON OF GOD

The Manger

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

LUKE 2 : 16

That night shepherds came running from the hills and found Mary, and Joseph, and the child lying in a manger. Joseph was not the child's father, and no one knew it better than he, yet God gave him a father's part: to find shelter, to keep watch, and to give the child his name, Jesus, as the angel had told him. Giorgione painted him around 1505 kneeling beside Mary at the mouth of a cave, an old man in a golden cloak, while two shepherds come forward to adore.

Ask him today to watch over the children in your care, and over every child who has no home.

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DAY FIVE · LOVER OF POVERTY

Two Turtledoves



nd Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

LUKE 2 : 33

Forty days after the birth, Joseph and Mary carried the child to the Temple to present him to the Lord, with the offering the law allowed to those who could not afford a lamb: a pair of turtledoves. There old Simeon took the child in his arms and foretold that a sword would pierce his mother's soul, and Joseph and his mother marvelled at what was said of him. Andrea Mantegna painted the scene close up around 1455: the swaddled child, his mother, old Simeon, and Joseph between them, silent, looking on.

Ask Saint Joseph for a heart content with little, and generous with the little it has.

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DAY SIX · PATRON OF EXILES

Into Egypt

Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word.

MATTHEW 2 : 13

After the wise men had gone, the angel warned Joseph in a dream that Herod would seek the child to kill him. Joseph rose that same night, took the child and his mother, and set out for Egypt, to find work and lodging among strangers. They lived there as exiles until Herod died. Murillo shows him walking beside the donkey in a wide traveller's hat, his eyes on the mother and the sleeping child.

Pray today for families who have had to leave their homes, and ask Saint Joseph to guide all who travel in fear.

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DAY SEVEN · MIRROR OF PATIENCE

Three Days of Searching

How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

LUKE 2 : 49

Every year Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem for the Passover. When Jesus was twelve, he stayed behind without their knowing. They searched for three days and found him in the Temple among the teachers. Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing, said his mother. Then he went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. Holman Hunt painted the moment they found him: Mary drawing her son close, and Joseph behind them, his long search over.

Ask Saint Joseph today for patience when God seems far away, and for the grace to keep looking for him.

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DAY EIGHT · MODEL OF WORKERS

The Carpenter of Nazareth



esus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

LUKE 2 : 52

Of the next eighteen years the Gospel says almost nothing: only that Jesus lived at Nazareth, subject to Joseph and Mary, and grew. When he began to preach, his neighbours asked, Is not this the carpenter's son? Joseph had taught him his trade, and they had worked side by side. John Everett Millais imagined their workshop in 1850: the boy Jesus has cut his palm on a nail, his mother kneels to comfort him, and Joseph leans over the bench to look at the wound.

Offer your work to God today, whatever it is, through the hands of the carpenter of Nazareth.

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DAY NINE · PATRON OF THE DYING

A Holy Death

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

REVELATION 14 : 13

After the finding in the Temple, Joseph disappears from the Gospels. He never appears in the public life of Jesus, and from the Cross Jesus entrusted his mother to Saint John, so the Church has always believed that Joseph died before the Passion, with Jesus and Mary beside him. That is why he is the patron of a happy death. Goya painted it in 1787 for a convent in Valladolid: the old carpenter on his bed, Mary at his head, and Jesus at his side.

Tomorrow is his feast. Bring back the request you have carried for nine days, and ask Saint Joseph to be with you at the hour of your death.

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The Litany of Saint Joseph

After each invocation from Saint Joseph onward, answer: pray for us.

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.*

Saint Joseph, *pray for us.*

Illustrious son of David,

Light of the patriarchs,

Spouse of the Mother of God,

Guardian of the Redeemer, *

Chaste guardian of the Virgin,

Foster father of the Son of God,

Watchful defender of Christ,

Servant of Christ, *

Minister of salvation, *

Head of the Holy Family,

Joseph most just,

Joseph most chaste,

Joseph most prudent,

Joseph most valiant,

Joseph most obedient,

Joseph most faithful,

Mirror of patience,

Lover of poverty,

Model of workers,

Glory of family life,

Guardian of virgins,

Pillar of families,

Support in difficulties, *

Comfort of the sorrowing,

Hope of the sick,

Patron of exiles, *

Patron of the afflicted, *

Patron of the poor, *

Patron of the dying,

Terror of demons,

Protector of Holy Church,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *graciously hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us.*

V. He made him lord of his house,

R. And ruler of all his substance.

Let us pray. O God, who in thy unspeakable providence didst choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of thy most holy Mother: grant that we who honour him as our protector on earth may deserve to have him for our intercessor in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Approved by Pope Saint Pius X in 1909. Invocations marked * were added by Pope Francis in 2021.

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