

Ite ad Joseph:
Saint Joseph,
A Model for
Priests in Lent
and Always

Fr. Roger J. Landry
Lenten Day of Recollection
*For the Clergy of the
Archdiocese of Miami*
March 12, 2021



A Special Year

- Year of St. Joseph celebrates the 150th Anniversary of St. Joseph being declared the Patron of the Universal Church
- It's a special sesquicentennial that should influence everything the Church does this year, especially the way we prepare for and celebrated the Solemnity of St. Joseph on March 19.
- Throughout the first 1400 years of Christianity, St. Joseph was thought of as expendable accessory in a package deal for the young virgin to whom he was espoused.
- But Matthew's and Luke's genealogies show he was the penultimate piece in a divine cascade stretching back to King David, Abraham, even Adam.
- Joseph means "increase" and this year is an auspicious time for us to increase in devotion to him.

St. Joseph and Lent



- For those who live a rigorous fast, St. Joseph can occasionally be viewed as someone who rescues us from Lent rather than helps us to live it.
- His Solemnity is a day of feasting, not fasting; abstinence from meat is abrogated if it's on a Friday and, like on Sundays, Lenten fasting penances are lifted.
- The end result is that March 19 can be treated like an oasis rather than a day in the desert, and St. Joseph can come to seem an exception to Lent rather than a model.
- But he shows us how to live several Lenten virtues very well.



Lenten Silence

- St. Joseph first teaches us about the silence needed in Lent.
- The state of the desert is meant to be one of exterior and interior silence, when we remove ourselves from the distractions that crowd our lives with so much noise that we can't hear God and so much clutter that we can't see Him.
- St. Joseph is a man of silence, who didn't speak a word in Sacred Scripture except the name of Jesus, but his silence has a special eloquence.
- Silence is a form of asceticism. It's not so much an emptying but an active listening to the God who in silence speaks.
- In 2005, Pope Benedict stated that in a world like ours, which does not foster quiet and recollection, we all need to be "infected" with St. Joseph's silence so that we can hear God's voice.
- Priests need this silence in which God speaks.



Lenten Prayer

- His silence made possible his rich prayer life.
- His life was a constant *lectio divina*, meditating and contemplating Jesus' words, example, virtues; a life-long Rosary pondering the blessed Fruit of Mary's wombs in the various mysteries of his life.
- St. Joseph not only prayed with Jesus and Mary but, in accordance with Jewish tradition, had to lead them in prayer at home every day – morning, evening and at meals – and on the principal feasts.
- His prayer shows us how to focus on Mary and Jesus. It helps us, like him, to be “doers of the Word.” It makes it possible for us to lead in prayer even people much holier.

Lenten Conversion

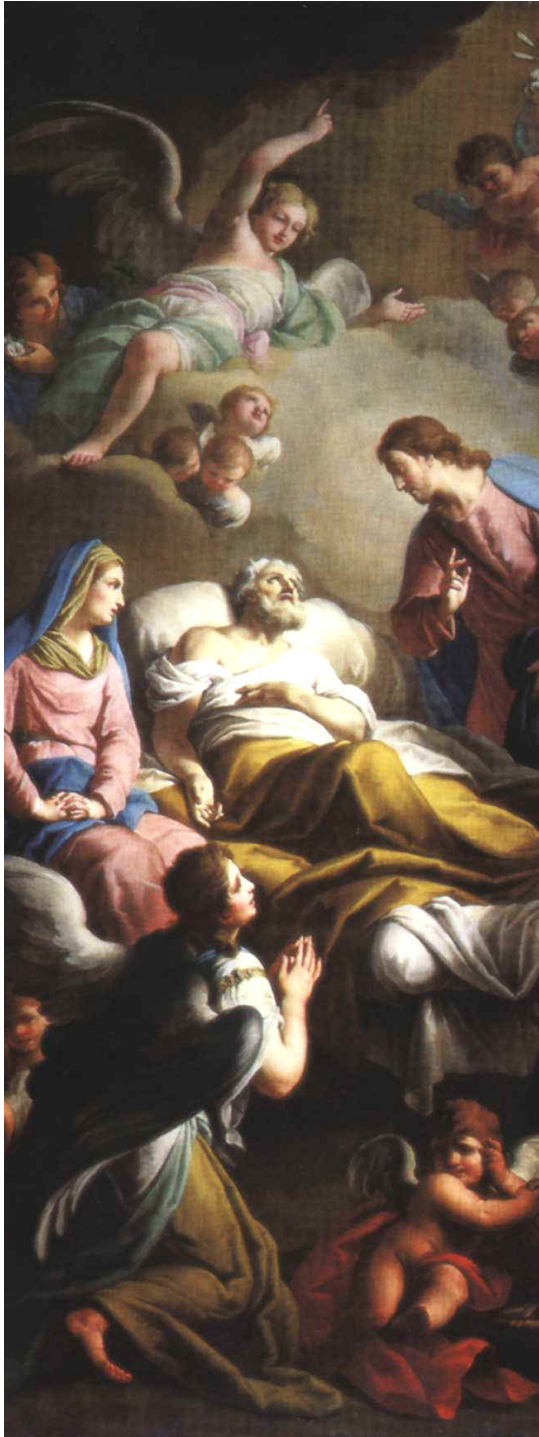


- Joseph clearly “converted” with regard to what to do with regard to Our Lady after the Angel appeared in a dream.
- He needed to turn away from fear and turn toward what God would make possible.
- His life became a continuous conversion (turning with) the impeccable Jesus and the sinless Virgin.
- Conversion is ultimately not about eliminating a bad habit or a few, but about a new life together with Jesus, about a death and resurrection. It’s about letting go of control and saying “Thy will be done.”
- Joseph shows all priests how to convert from their worldly ways to put everything they have at the service of Jesus.

Lenten Almsgiving



- St. Joseph's whole life was one of charity.
- St. Paul VI: St. Joseph made "a total gift of self, of his life and work; [he] turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house."
- St. Alphonsus: "On the last day our Savior will say to the elect, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me....' These will have fed Jesus Christ, lodged or clothed Him in the persons of the poor; but St. Joseph found food, shelter and raiment for Christ in His own person. Furthermore, our Lord has promised reward to whoever gives a cup of water in His name. St. Joseph can say to Jesus Christ that 'Not only did I furnish you with food, house and clothing: I saved you from death at the hands of Herod.' What then must be his reward?"
- St. Joseph shows priests how to care for others in concrete ways with the love with which we would be caring for the Lord Jesus. He helps us to make a vocational "superhuman oblation of self."



Lenten Preparation for Death

- On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded that we are dust and unto dust we shall return.
- As we prepare in Lent to enter liturgically into Christ's death on Good Friday, we are meant to prepare for our own, by losing our lives in order to save them (Mt 16:25).
- St. Joseph is the patron saint of a happy death because, Christian piety has always believed, he died in Jesus' and Mary's arms, entrusting them to God the Father's providence and receiving from them prayers and comfort.
- He shows us not just how to die in their arms but to live with them, as they seek to accompany us, as they did him, through death into eternity.
- St. Joseph helps us both as disciples, preparing for our own death, and as apostles, preparing others for that *transitus*.



St. Joseph and the Priesthood

- Joseph was not himself a priest. He was from the tribe of Judah, not a Levite.
- Yet he remains a model for priests.
- Pope Leo XIII: “Priests especially can find in St. Joseph's life examples of virtue fitting the holiness of their state.”
- Fr. Faber: “Look at the parallel between St. Joseph and the Catholic priesthood. Was he the steward of God's house? So are they. Was he the dispenser of God's gifts, as the Church calls him? So are they. Was he the keeper of the Bread of life? So are they.”
- We can focus on ten virtues that are particularly important for priests.

Like St. Joseph, Men of Faith



- Pope Benedict XVI: “Throughout all of history, Joseph is the man who gives God the greatest display of trust, even in the face of such astonishing news.”
- Like Abraham, he is a true “father in faith.”
 - Both left their country at God’s command without knowing the future. St. Francis de Sales: “St. Paul admired Abraham's obedience when God commanded him to go forth out of his own country; ... The perfect obedience of St. Joseph was no less excellent: the angel did not tell him how long he was to sojourn in Egypt, and he did not inquire.”
 - Both trusted that God could give a child outside of the laws of nature; Bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet: “The Bible commends Abraham to us as the pattern of perfect faith (Rom. 4:11), but Joseph's faith was greater: Abraham is praised because he believed that a barren woman would bear a child; Joseph believed the same of a virgin, and in simplicity accepted that inscrutable mystery of child-bearing maidenhood.
 - Both were willing to allow a chosen and beloved son to be sacrificed, knowing that God had the power to raise him.
- Priests above all are called to be men of faith, who trust God and entrust their whole life. Do we approach changes of assignment with faith like Abraham and Joseph?




Like St. Joseph, Just Men

- St. Matthew says that St. Joseph was a “just man.”
- “Just” or “righteous” means right with God and others, someone who faithfully fulfills God’s law. It’s a synonym for holy.
- Pope Benedict: “In Joseph, faith is not separated from action. His faith had a decisive effect on his actions. ... Joseph is a ‘just man’ (Mt 1:19) because his existence is ‘adjusted’ to the word of God.”
- He was the “good and faithful servant” whom the Lord placed in charge of his household.
- Priests are called to be, first, good men, right with God and others. Is that goodness obvious?

Like St. Joseph, Alert & Vigilant



- God the Father could speak to St. Joseph at night because St. Joseph was alert, vigilant and prompt.
- God waited until the last second to send the angel to awake him to tell him that Herod's assassins were approaching and to take Jesus and Mary into Egypt. He trusted him that much. St. Peter Chrysologos: "In such a way as though all Heaven were alarmed and that fear had spread there before it reached earth." He became the Savior of the Savior of the World.
- Leo XIII: "In the same way that he once kept unceasing holy watch over the family of Nazareth, so now does he protect and defend with his heavenly patronage the Church of Christ."
- John Paul II: "Is it not logical and necessary that he to whom the eternal Father entrusted his Son should offer the same protection to the Body of Christ which ... is the Church?"
- Priests are called to follow his vigilance for what could harm the Church and the people entrusted to us.



Like St. Joseph, Spiritual Fathers

- Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*: “Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child.”
- Joseph’s fatherhood was not grounded in biology but in his marriage to Mary, in his naming Jesus, and in the faithful and loving spiritual commitment he made with Mary to be at the service of Jesus’ life and growth.
- Jesus called him “Abba,” Mary referred to him as “Father,” and the crowds likewise knew him that way. He protected and provided for the Holy Family.
- Pope Benedict encouraged all dads to “take Saint Joseph as their model” since he shows the “deepest meaning of their own fatherhood,” adding, “To be a father means above all to be at the service of life and growth. Saint Joseph, in this sense, gave proof of great devotion.”
- The spiritual fatherhood of priests is essential. Are we at the service of life and growth? Do we sacrifice for our family the way dads of big families do? Are we dads or parish CEOs?

Like St. Joseph, Men of Humble Authority

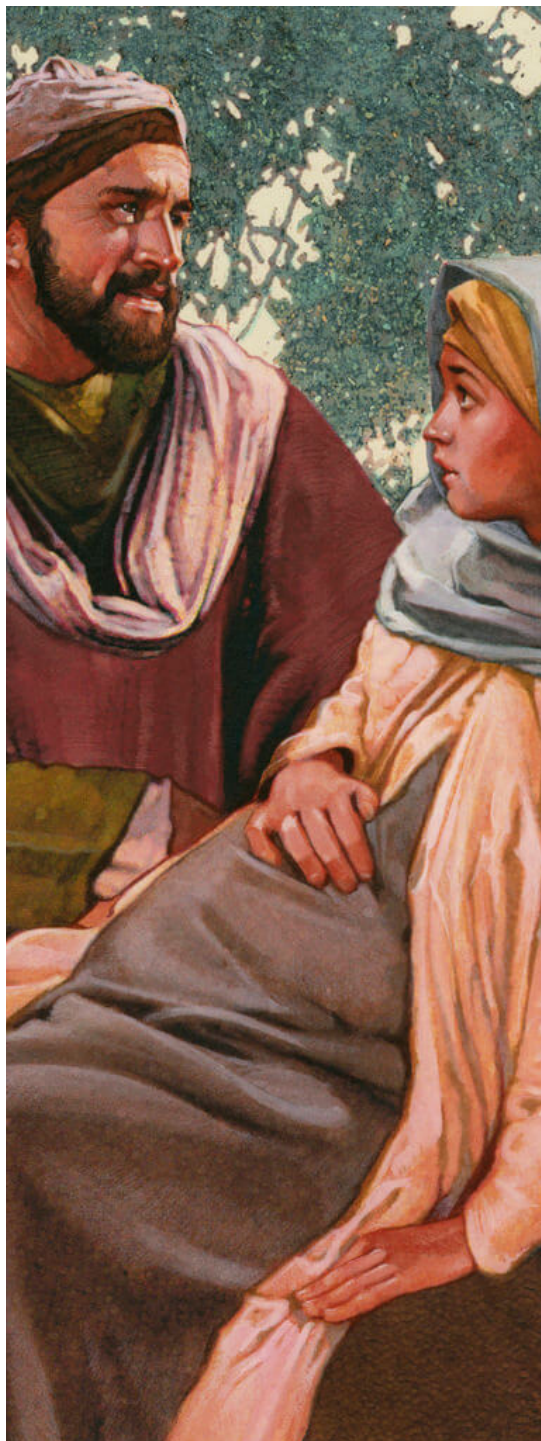


- Origen: “Joseph understood that Jesus was superior to him even as he submitted to him, and, knowing the superiority of his charge, he commanded him with respect and moderation. Everyone should reflect on this: frequently a lesser man is placed over people who are greater, and it happens at times that an inferior is more worthy than the one who appears to be set above him. If a person of greater dignity understands this, then he will not be puffed up with pride because of his higher rank; he will know that his inferior may well be superior to him, even as Jesus was subject to Joseph.”
- Joseph would have led prayers in the home; he would have trained the one through whom all things were made to be a carpenter. That was an awesome mix of humble authority.
- St. Francis de Sales: St. Joseph’s “humility and submission to God’s will were greater than in any other creature except the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Paul VI added: “Great things’ are not needed, but only common, human, simple, but true and authentic virtues.”
- Priests need this humble authority, even when others may be holier or more humanly competent. We cannot be teachers, sanctifiers and shepherds without such leadership.

Like St. Joseph, Most Chaste Men

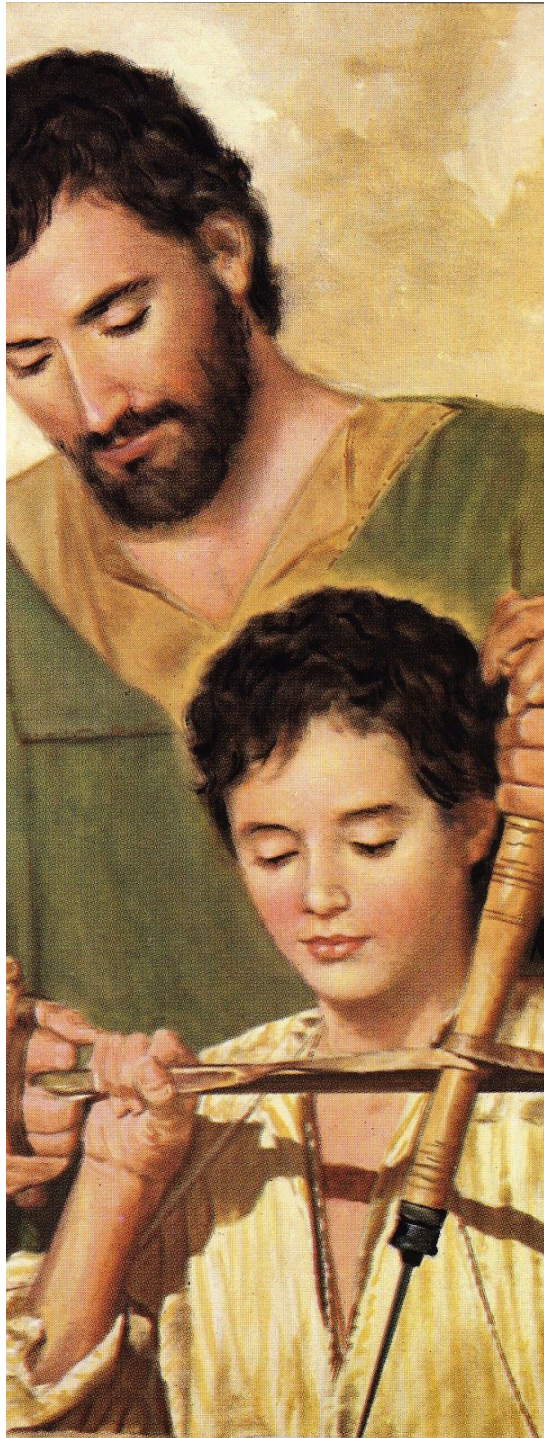


- Even though Mary was the most sublime creature God ever formed, and even though Joseph lived with her for twelve to thirty years, he protected her vocation to virginal maternity. His purity corresponded to hers.
- Some people like to imagine that Joseph was 250 years old and therefore well beyond the stage of physical attraction, but this just robs him of his virtue, not to mention infelicitously puts him in the category of really old men who marry really young women.
- He shows us that real love does not need to be expressed in genital relations.
- Chastity – tied not just to temperance but to love, purity and piety – is a precondition for the gift of self, because it keeps *eros* selfless.
- Priestly chaste celibacy, modeled on Jesus', is a scandal to the sexual revolution, which is why so many cheer for priests to fall, or to be married, or to give into unchaste lifestyles. Our chaste celibacy shows that God is worth it, the pearl of great price, and shows likewise that chaste love is possible and joyful.



Like St. Joseph, Love of Our Lady

- Pope Benedict: “Joseph agreed to be part of the great events that God was beginning to bring about in the womb of his spouse. He took Mary into his home. He welcomed the mystery that was in Mary and the mystery that was Mary herself. He loved her with great respect, which is the mark of all authentic love. Joseph teaches us that it is possible to love without possessing.”
- He shows us how to love our Lady with chaste passion.
- Our Lady in *In Sinu Iesu*: “To every priest who desires it and asks me for it, I will give the grace of living in my presence as Virgin Bride (this was the vocation given to St. Joseph) and of living in my presence as Mother (this was the vocation given to Saint John. ... I want you to model your own life after that of St. Joseph and St. John. Live in my sacred intimacy. Share all things with me. There is no need for you or any priest to remain alone.”



Like St. Joseph, Hard Workers

- Joseph was a *tekton*, a “builder,” a word that sums his entire life. He built things by callouses and sweat and traveled with tools.
- St. John Paul II said he was “the very epitome of the Gospel of work,” not only making things, but forming himself and building his family. He shows us how to sanctify our work.
- He taught Jesus human work. “If the Son of God was willing to learn a human work from a man, this indicates that there is in work a specific moral value with a precise meaning for man and for his self-fulfillment.” St. Joseph helps every man find that value and meaning.
- The priesthood involves hard work and building. Diligent priests have shone during COVID. Are we known as hard working men or as those who “delegate” the hard work?

Like St. Joseph, Men of the Eucharist



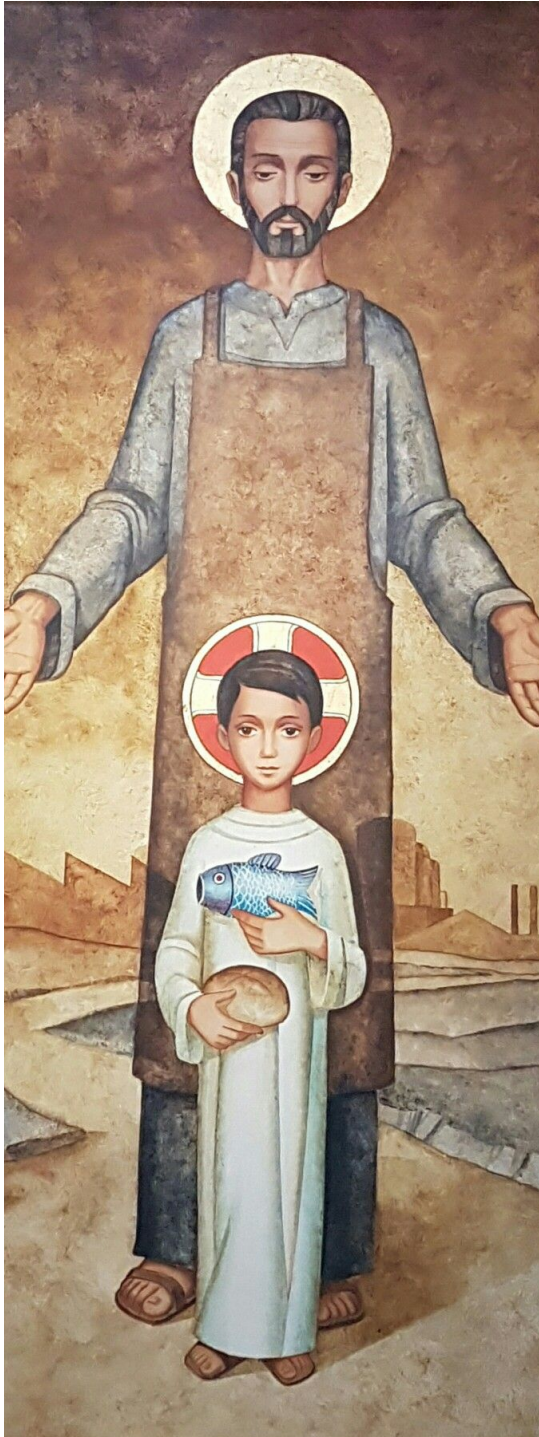
- Father Faber: “The priest, who has most reason to deplore the poverty of his attainments in humility, is humble at least when he comes to consecrate at Mass. For years Joseph lived in the awful sanctity of that which to the priest is but a moment. The little house at Nazareth was as the outspread square of the white corporal. All the words he spoke were almost words of consecration.”
- We could say that the cave in Bethlehem and the Holy House in Nazareth became tabernacles where he and Mary lived in the Real Presence with adoration.
- Before Jesus ever said the words of institution, he was offering his body and blood, sweat and tears, everything, for Jesus.
- It’s fitting that Pope Francis decreed that we need to mention his name in every Eucharistic prayer.
- St. Joseph shows us how to live Eucharistic lives, focused on the incarnation as well as making our lives commentaries on the words of consecration.

Like St. Joseph, Intercessors



- Isidore Isolani, who wrote the first great treatise on St. Joseph in 1522, said that after the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was the most powerful intercessor. Pope Pius XI: “The Church has commended to Joseph all of her cares, including those dangers that threaten the human family.”
- St. Teresa of Avila was cured through his intercession of a crippling illness at 26. She dedicated her first convent to him and two-thirds of all the others she founded. She said: “I do not remember once having asked anything of him that was not granted. I am full of wonder at the great graces God has bestowed on me... at the intercession of this blessed saint. ... I know from experience that this glorious St. Joseph helps in each and every need. ... Others, who have turned to Joseph on my advice, have had the like experience. ... All I ask, for the love of God, is that anyone who does not believe me will put what I say to the test, and he will then learn for himself how advantageous it is to commend oneself to this glorious patriarch Joseph and to have a special devotion for him. Prayerful persons, in particular, should love him like a father.”
- We are called to avail ourselves of his intercession and imitate it as priests.

Going to Saint Joseph



- A week ago, on Friday of the Second Week of Lent, the Church has us focus on Joseph the Patriarch (Gen 37-50)
- Saint Joseph has often been compared to him. Not only do they have the same name, but they exhibit similar chastity (the Patriarch with regard to Potiphar's wife, St. Joseph with regard to Mary), God spoke to both in dreams that they interpreted accurately and acted upon, one stored wheat, the other cared for the Living Bread. Pharaoh called the Patriarch Joseph, "Savior of the World," because of what he did foreseeing the famine. St. Joseph has been called by Christian tradition, "The Savior of the Savior of the World," because of what he did in response to Herod's envy against Jesus. And that has led the Christian faithful over the course of the centuries, as well as Blessed Pius IX a century and a half ago, to entrust the Church to his care.
- Just as in Egypt, where the Pharaoh would say, "Go to Joseph," so the Christian people still go to the patron of the Church. We turn to him as patron and ask him to intercede for us for the grace to become ever more like him as followers of Jesus and as other Christs.

Prayer of Pope Francis to St. Joseph

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*





Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.
Believe what you read,
Teach what you believe,
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,
Fr. Roger J. Landry



Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus Indicates, First Saturday of Advent, December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December 4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent, December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24, 2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23, 2020

Most Recent Articles

Our Duty and Salvation, The Anchor, November 27, 2020

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The Knights Our Age Needs, The Anchor, November 13, 2020

Remembering Andrew Walther, November 7, 2020

Just a Parish Priest, The Anchor, October 30, 2020

Coming to Know the Original Three-Dimensional Carlo Acutis, The Anchor, October 16, 2020

A Good Shepherd Full of Christian and Priestly Virtues, The Pilot, October 5, 2020

Returning to the Sacrament of Divine Love, The Anchor, September 18, 2020

The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

Most Recent Talks

Receiving the Lord Jesus as Mary and Joseph, Advent Day of Recollection for the Leonine Forum, December 5, 2020

Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28 to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and Accompanying Couples toward the Full Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization: Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back, New Zealand Evangelion's in his Name Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World, Leonine Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic Information Conference, July 24, 2020

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