

Love ONE ANOTHER

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEROME E. LISTECKI



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It was a stroke of pastoral genius by Pope Francis to declare 2021 the year of St. Joseph in his Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart). It is the 150th anniversary of when Pius the IX named St. Joseph the universal patron of the Church. During this time of the pandemic, social unrest and psychological uncertainty, we need the stability of a father's guidance. Joseph certainly demonstrated his trust in God's plan, despite the difficulties that confronted him. The Blessed Mother's unexpected pregnancy, the persecution by public authorities, the flight from his home to a foreign land and the loss of Jesus in the temple all demanded a father's response and his leadership.

During this time in our history, when the traditional family is under attack, St. Joseph and the necessity of a father emerges. His respect and love for Mary remind us of the respect required for all women, who are often neglected in this modern hedonistic era. His protection of Jesus during Herod's attempts to destroy the children, the Holy Innocents, reminds us of the destruction of the unborn sanctioned by legitimate authorities. He leads his family as an immigrant, seeking safety for his family in a foreign land. As a provider, he searches for Jesus when He was separated from his parents, finding Him in the Temple. St. Joseph reminds us of the responsibility to safeguard the young as they grow to maturity, recognizing their need for spiritual and educational formation.

Joseph's contribution has often been taken for granted. Pope Francis stated, "Joseph is the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence." During this pandemic, there are sacrifices made by so many in silence. How many of our first responders, our healthcare workers, and senior care workers and family members protect and support the infirmed and elderly with a discreet and hidden presence? Priests, deacons and religious continue to administer the sacraments daily and offer spiritual comfort during the height of the pandemic and beyond. Those in our parish communities who assist in sanitizing worship sites do so quietly and without any need for recognition. They, like St. Joseph, perform their tasks out of love for others, following God's direction.

Joseph resigned himself to the will of God. This was not a human resignation but a surrendering to God's design, especially in the way he dealt with the difficulties that confronted him. During this pandemic, following St. Joseph, we should not seek answers or look to blame. Instead, despite the contradictions that confront us, we accept God's presence. We embrace His love for us and share His love with those we are called to serve. St. Joseph exuded confidence that God was with him. This is our opportunity to witness our trust in God, demonstrating that God is with us.

Two important dates emphasize our celebration of St. Joseph: March 19, his patronal feast, and May 1, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. We have an opportunity to pray for the intercession of St. Joseph daily throughout the year, and Pope Francis has granted special indulgences for those seeking St. Joseph's assistance. As Pope Francis promotes devotion to St. Joseph during these turbulent times, Joseph becomes an example of care for God's Son, and we respond to His Son in the manner that we LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKI
Archbishop of Milwaukee

