 Reading time: 6 min.

St Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, is a not a well known saint, Little has been written about him because there are not too many testimonies about him. However, devotion to him has seen a steady increase in recent times, a sign of the powerful intercession that this hard-working and silent saint has with God.

Already from ancient times several Church Fathers showed a tender devotion to St Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. In Italian he is called the *padre putativo di Gesù.* The Latin word "puto" means "I believe", i.e. he was the one "believed to be" his father (cf. Lk 3:23). Devotion to him is also found among other saints of the Church. The most famous expression is found in St Teresa of Jesus (of Ávila) when she says: "Until now I do not remember ever having asked him for a favour that he did not grant me. It fills me with awe to think of the extraordinary graces bestowed on me by God and the dangers from which he has delivered me, both material and spiritual, through the intercession of this blessed saint. While it seems to other saints that the Lord has granted us succour in a single need, I have experienced that the glorious Saint Joseph comes to our aid in all of them. Therefore, the Lord wants us to understand that in the same way that he was subject to him on earth – where Saint Joseph, who was his father, having custody of him, could give him orders – also in heaven he does what he asks of him. Other people, to whom I used to tell them to entrust themselves to him, have found this to be true, and there are now many who have become devoted to him, because they have experienced this truth." (Book of Life).

The spread of devotion to him saw steady progression. In 1726, his name was included in the Litany of the Saints. In 1833, the little office of St Joseph to be prayed on Wednesdays was approved. In 1844, the Saint's name was included among the invocations in the prayers to be recited after Mass. In 1847 Pope Pius IX extended the feast of the Patronage of St Joseph to the whole Church, a celebration that was to be replaced in 1956 with that of St Joseph the Worker, assigned to 1 May. However, the one that would give him greater prominence would be the declaration of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, which took place on 8 December 1870 by Blessed Pope Pius IX with the decree *Quemadmodum Deus*. Thus began this decree:

"As almighty God appointed Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, over all the land of Egypt to save grain for the people, so when the fullness of time had come and He was about to send to earth His only-begotten Son, the Savior of the world,

He chose another Joseph, of whom the first had been the type, and He made him the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures.
Indeed, he had as his spouse the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of whom was born by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord, who deigned to be reputed in the sight of men as the son of Joseph, and was subject to him.
Him whom countless kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed. He most diligently reared Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.
Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble."

On 15 August 1889, Pope Leo XIII wrote the Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries*, in which he recommended devotion to Saint Joseph. With this Encyclical, the now classic prayer "To you, O Blessed Joseph" was also spread.

In 1909, the Holy See approved a litany in honour of Saint Joseph proposed to the whole Church, sanctioned by Pope Saint Pius X and published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

On 9 April 1919, Pope Benedict XV inserted a Preface proper to St Joseph into the Missal. Later, Pope John XXIII wanted to include the name of St Joseph in the Roman Canon. And on 1 May 2013, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments established the inclusion of the name of St Joseph in all the Eucharistic Prayers (II, III, IV) of the Roman Missal, through a decree approved by Pope Francis.

On 25 July 1920, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Benedict XV issued a *motu proprio*, *Bonum Sane*, in which he confirmed the devotion to St Joseph.

Popes Pius IX and Pius XI dedicated the month of March to St Joseph.

On 7 March 1958, Pope Pius XII had a prayer to St Joseph published in the

Acta Apostolicae Sedis and enriched it with a partial indulgence. We present it below.

"*O glorious Patriarch, Saint Joseph, humble and just artisan of Nazareth, thou hast given to all Christians and particularly to us an example of a perfect life through diligent labor and admirable union with Jesus and Mary.*

Assist us in our daily work in order that we, Catholic artisans, may also see in it an effective means of glorifying God, of sanctifying ourselves, and of being a useful member in the society in which we live. These should be the highest ideals for all our actions.

O dearest Protector, obtain for us from the Lord humility and simplicity of heart, love for our work and kindness towards our fellow-laborers; conformity to God's will in the unavoidable trials of this life together with joy in bearing them; recognition of our specific social mission and a sense of responsibility; the spirit and discipline and prayer; docility and respectfulness towards superiors; the spirit of brotherhood towards our equals; charity and indulgence with our dependents.

Accompany us in times of prosperity when the opportunity is given for an honest enjoyment of the fruits of our labors; sustain us in our hours of sadness, when Heaven seems to be shut in our regard, and even the very tools with which our hands toil appear to rebel against us.

Grant that, in imitation of thee, we may keep our eyes fixed on our Mother, Mary, thy dearest Spouse, who as she spun silently in a corner of thy shop would let the sweetest smile course over her lips. Besides, may we never take our eyes off Jesus, Who was busily occupied with thee at the carpenters bench, in order that we in like manner may lead on earth a peaceful and a holy life, a prelude to the life of eternal happiness that awaits us in Heaven for ever and ever. Amen. "

On 19 March 1961, the Supreme Pontiff John XXIII asked for St Joseph's protection for the Second Vatican Council in the Apostolic Charter "The Voices".

On 15 August 1989, St John Paul II published the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, on the occasion of the centenary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December 2021, the Holy Father Francis sent an Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church and dedicated the year 2022 as the 'Year of St Joseph'.

On 1 May 2021, in a letter addressed to the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments requested the inclusion of new invocations in the Litany in honour of St Joseph.

All these official interventions by the Church are in addition to many other devotions that have taken root among the Christian people, such as the practice of the Seven Sorrows and Joys of St Joseph, the Litany of St Joseph, the Girdle or Cord of St Joseph, the Chaplet of St Joseph, the Scapular of St Joseph, the Sacred Mantle in honour of St Joseph, the Nine Wednesdays, the Perpetual Novena, the Perpetual Crown, the Perpetual Court.

But not a word is preserved about St Joseph in the Gospels. Instead, we are reminded of his actions, his fidelity to God, from which the practice of the Seven Sorrows and Joys also derives: the acceptance of Mary as Mother of the Messiah (Mt. 1:18-25), the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2,4-7), the circumcision (Lk. 2,21), the presentation in the Temple (Lk. 2,22-33), the flight into Egypt (Mt. 2,13-15), the return to Galilee (Mt. 2,19-23) and the finding of Jesus in the Temple (Lk. 2,39-51). This silence and this action of St Joseph remind us that witness is borne first and foremost by works of faith, before words. And it reminds us that the Tradition of the Church is not only formed by words delivered in writing, but is first and foremost a living communication that comes from the Holy Spirit, who may or may not make use of written texts.

The intercession of St Joseph continues even today, most often in silence, as was also his life. A documentary film, called 'Father's Heart', launched in the year 2022 dedicated to him, comes to highlight this mediation with God. The director Andrés Garrigó, who searched various countries for traces of this saint's devotion, discovered that "… Joseph of Nazareth, the giant of silence, is more active than ever, attracting thousands of people every day and acting in their lives in an extraordinary way".
It is a film that presents historical and theological aspects, but above all the intercession of Saint Joseph in people's lives, even in those who are initially distrustful: conversions, failed marriages, assistance to the dying, etc. It turns out that Saint Joseph is not just a man who lived more than 2000 years ago or a figure from the crib, but a saint who acts in the lives of the people who invoke him, a saint

who is worshipped all over the world.

The film is primarily aimed at a believing audience, but is suitable for all age groups, without restrictions.

Here is also the film’s fact sheet.

Title: Father’s Heart
Original title: Corazón de padre
Year of release: 2022
Cinema release: 18.03.2022
Running time: 91 min
Genre: Documentary
Suitable audience: Everyone
Country: Spain
Director: Andrés Garrigó
Main actors: Paco Pérez-Reus, María Gil
Screenplay: Josepmaria Anglés, Andrés Garrigó
Photography: Ismael Durán
Production company: Andrés Garrigó
Cinema distribution: Goya Producciones
Official website: https://www.saintjosephthemovie.com/
Rating: 7/10 (tens21)

Trailer: