

## THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH by Rev. Gregory A. Rapisarda

Today we celebrate the solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of Mary. Joseph is the patron saint of the universal Church.

Joseph was chosen to be the stepfather of Jesus and the husband of Mary. Joseph is referred to in scripture as a righteous man, i.e., someone you can count on to make the right decisions and do the right things. (Matt 1:19). Of course, if God the Father was going to select someone to be the father of His son on earth, and wanted a husband for Mary, you would know that Joseph was very reliable and trustworthy, a good example, a good husband, and a good father. Remember the Fourth commandment, "honor thy father and thy mother" is the right of a child to have an honorable mother and father. Joseph was an honorable step-father.

Scripture tells us that Joseph did not want to embarrass Mary when the community found that Mary was pregnant. But Joseph willingly listened to the angel- "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife." (Matt 1:19-21). Of course, we traditionally think of Joseph pulling the donkey with Mary on board. Imagine how disappointed he might have been when they told him that there was no room at the inn. That meant that Joseph had to go a little farther. But Joseph never complained. He was there when all the angels cried, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." Joseph was there when the shepherds arrived. (Luke 2:16).

Joseph was there when Jesus was presented in the temple. (Luke 2:22), and Mary and Joseph were amazed when they heard Simeon refer to Jesus as the Messiah.

Joseph proved himself to be a good father and husband when Jesus was two years old, the angel again appeared to him to tell him to take the Child Jesus to Egypt. (Matt 2:13). Herod was going to kill all the two-year-olds and Herod was going to search for Jesus "and destroy him." (Matt 2:13). So God needed Joseph to act as a protector. Once again Joseph listened. He took Mary and Jesus to Egypt, and stayed there until the death of Herod. The angel again appeared to Joseph. Mary would have had to place great trust in Joseph to travel to Egypt by night. We often overlook the fact that Mary and Joseph lived in fear, the fear that Herod was going to kill Jesus. This is not something you easily forget - that the all powerful Roman government was going to kill your child. After Herod died, then Mary and her good husband, Joseph, returned to Nazareth where Jesus "grew and became strong."

In today's Gospel (Luke 2:41-52), Luke states that each year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for Passover. This means that Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews who complied with the Jewish custom. On the return, Jesus was lost. Mary and Joseph were once again fearful. They "journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances." When they found Jesus, Mary said, "Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." Mothers and fathers have anxiety over their children. This is good news for us. It shows that anxiety is not a sin. It was perfectly natural to wonder what happened to Jesus, especially since they knew that Jesus was a target for death.

If anyone should get an unsung hero award, it should be Joseph. He was faithful and did all that he was told. He didn't seek any credit. He raised Jesus just as he knew how to do. He taught Jesus to be a carpenter.

Thank you, St. Joseph- a good husband, a good step-father, a carpenter, a righteous man, patron of workers, and, as he is referred to in the Church- the Guardian of the Redeemer.

For all families, for all the good mothers and fathers-St. Joseph, pray for us.

Please forward to all good mothers and fathers.