



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE CATECHUMENATE

THE YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH



Image from the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception

Introduction

On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, announced a Year of Saint Joseph in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the foster father of Jesus as Patron of the Universal Church. The Holy Father said, “The aim of this Apostolic Letter,” and one might also presume of this special year, “is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal” (*Patris Corde*, 7). The Year of Saint Joseph will conclude on December 8, 2021.

What follows is intended as a resource to help parishes celebrate the Year of the Saint Joseph.

Plenary Indulgences

During the course of the Year of Saint Joseph, the Apostolic Penitentiary, with the authority of Pope Francis, has made available to the faithful a number of special plenary indulgences throughout the course of this special year. These indulgences may be obtained in the following ways:

- Meditating for 30 minutes on the Our Father;
- Participating in a spiritual retreat that includes at least one meditation on Saint Joseph;
- Carrying out a corporal or a spiritual work of mercy in imitation of the example of Saint Joseph;
- Reciting the Holy Rosary together as a family or as an engaged couple;
- Entrusting one's daily work to Saint Joseph the Worker and invoking his intercession for those who are without work;
- Reciting the Litany of Saint Joseph for the persecuted Church and for Christians suffering persecution; and,
- Reciting a legitimately approved prayer or act of piety in honor of Saint Joseph, especially on March 19th, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary; on May 1st, the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker; on the Feast of the Holy Family; on the 19th of each month; and on each Wednesday.

In order to obtain the above plenary indulgences, the usual conditions apply, namely, sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, praying for the intentions of the Holy Father, and detachment from sin. These "may be carried out several days preceding or following the performance of the prescribed works. But it is more fitting that the communion and the prayer for the pope's intentions take place on the day the work is performed" (*Handbook of Indulgences*, Norms for Indulgences, 23.3).

The sick and those unable to leave their homes because of the current pandemic may obtain the plenary indulgences if they are detached from sin and intend to complete the usual requirements as soon as possible.

Those desiring to obtain an indulgence "must be baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace at least at the time the prescribed works are completed" (*Handbook of Indulgences*, Norms for Indulgences, 20.1).

What is an Indulgence?

Many misconceptions remain regarding indulgences, but the Church has never done away with them. Put simply, an indulgence is a gift the Church attaches to a pious work (to certain prayers and devotions, pilgrimages, carrying out the works of mercy, reading the Scriptures, etc.) to encourage such devout practices as aids to growth in holiness.

But this does not answer the question of what an indulgence does. *The Handbook of Indulgences* describes an indulgence as

the remission in the eyes of God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose culpable element has already been taken away. The Christian faithful who are rightly disposed and observe the definite, prescribed conditions gain this remission through the effective assistance of the Church, which, as the minister of redemption, authoritatively distributes and applies the treasury of the expiatory works of Christ and the saints (Norms for Indulgences, 1).

An indulgence can be either plenary (that is, full) or partial.

Votive Masses

The *Roman Missal* contains a Votive Mass in honor of Saint Joseph (#13 in the Votive Masses). The Votive Mass of Saint Joseph contains an Entrance Antiphon, Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, Preface, and a Prayer after Communion. In place of the Votive Mass, the *Roman Missal* indicates the Mass of the Solemnity on March 19th or of Saint Joseph the Worker on May 1st may also be celebrated. When any of these Masses are celebrated, white vestments are to be worn, although the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* also indicates the color of the day or season may also be worn (cf. no. 347).

A votive Mass of a Saint may be celebrated “on weekdays in Ordinary Time, even if an optional memorial occurs” (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 375). Votive Masses of a saint may not be celebrated “on obligatory memorials, on the weekdays of Advent up to and including December 16, of the Christmas season from January 2, and of the Easter season after the Octave of Easter” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 376). That said, “if, however, required by some real need or pastoral advantage, according to the judgment of the rector or the priest celebrant himself, a Mass corresponding to such a need or advantage may be used in a celebration with a congregation” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 376).

When offering a Votive Mass, “unless otherwise expressly indicated, it is permissible to use the weekday readings and also the chants between them [*i.e.*, the Responsorial Psalm and the Alleluia verse], if they are suited to the celebration (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 370).

For pastoral advantage, when permitted, offering a Votive Mass of Saint Joseph might be considered on each Wednesday and each 19th of the month, when allowed.

A Prayer to Saint Joseph

The following prayer, composed by the Holy Father Pope Francis, is taken from *Patris Corde*, 7:

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.

The Litany of Saint Joseph

The Litany of Saint Joseph has been approved for both public and private use. As such, parishes might consider publicly praying the Litany of Saint Joseph on Wednesdays and on the 19th of each month.

The Litany of Saint Joseph on the next page is in jpeg form so parishes can copy and paste it easily into handouts or bulletins. Simply right click on the litany and choose “save as picture” to download it to your device.

Resources

- Apostolic Letter [*Patris Corde*](#) of Pope Francis on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.
- [Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary](#) granting special indulgences for the Year of Saint Joseph (in Latin; an English translation is not yet available).
- Apostolic Exhortation [*Redemptoris Custos*](#) of Pope Saint John Paul II on the person and mission of Saint Joseph in the life of Christ and of the Church.
- Encyclical Letter [*Quamquam Pluries*](#) of Pope Leo XIII on devotion to Saint Joseph.
- [Year of Saint Joseph web site](#) made by the Diocese of Charlotte.
- [“St. Joseph: Why you should turn to Jesus’ foster father for help, especially this Christmas,”](#) *Catholic Times*, 13 December 2020, by Andrew Hansen.

Contact:

- www.dio.org/worship
- E-mail: worship@dio.org or dzehnl@dio.org