



ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM WITH ST JOSEPH

For each day

- Simply bring yourself into the presence of Our Lord and St Joseph in church, or may be in a quiet 'prayer corner' at home, perhaps with a candle and a statue, or image of St Joseph. Start with the sign of the Cross.....
- Is there a particular intention, grace or need that you want to bring into this time of prayer? Where am I seeking a change in my life, or where might I need to pray for someone else?
- **OPENING PRAYER:** We ask for the intercession of St Joseph to help us recognise the ways in which we, as followers of Christ, have reflected his gentle witness and example of faith in this time of global crisis.

'A tradition I treasure is that of always having a statue of St Joseph in the kitchen, so often the heart of the home. I recommend this to you. Bring St Joseph into your kitchen. Then he will be before your eyes each day, as protector and guide in these difficult times.' – Cardinal Vincent Nichols

'Everyone can find in Saint Joseph, the man who goes unnoticed, the man of daily presence, of discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of difficulty. He reminds us that all those who are seemingly hidden or in the "second row" are unparalleled protagonists in the history of salvation' – Pope Francis General Audience 24th November 2021

The scripture translation used each day are taken from The New Testament by Nick King, Kevin Mayhew 2004

If you would like to read the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter Patris Corde (With a Father's Heart) please go to <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/Patris-Corde.pdf>



DAY ONE: JOSEPH, WITH A FATHER'S HEART

SCRIPTURE: Jesus Messiah – his birth was like this. When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, before they got together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Her man Joseph, because he was a just man, and reluctant to make an example of her, wanted to let her go secretly. When he had made this plan, look! (Matt 1:18-19)

REFLECTION: The name Joseph is Hebrew for “may God increase, may God give growth” and we notice that Joseph is a man full of faith, one who has faith in God’s providence. How do these words speak to us? Have there been moments this year, when we started with one idea about a difficult situation and the Spirit has gently guided us to a new insight? What did we discover?

PATRIS CORDE ‘Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all’.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen. (Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Do you know a father or grandfather who would appreciate a phone call, and some empathy and affirmation?



DAY TWO: JOSEPH, PROTECTOR, OF THE REDEEMER

SCRIPTURE: The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for it is by the Holy Spirit that the child has been conceived in her. (Matt 1: 20)

REFLECTION: The angel speaks to Joseph in a dream. Although we do not hear Joseph speaking in the scriptures, we notice that he is one who listens and acts. Where do we reflect the 'apostolate of the ear' and what does it help us to notice? How has the Lord spoken to us in our dreams and times of prayer on the journey of faith?

PATRIS CORDE 'As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples, were considered a way for him to make his will known'. (Cf. Gen 20:3; 28:12; 31:11.24; 40:8; 41:1-32; Num 12:6; 1 Sam 3:3-10; Dan 2, 4; Job 33:15).

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Light a candle and pray for all those who wait, and are losing hope; ask for the grace to be able to help and accompany anyone you know.



DAY THREE: JOSEPH, SERVANT OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE: She will bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

REFLECTION: Joseph does what is asked of him. Again, in response to the message of angel he also will take the Holy Family into Egypt to escape Herod. In our life we often question, or put-up barriers to doing what our faith asks of us. If so, what do you want to be free of this Advent? How can we help someone in need?

PATRIS CORDE 'In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God: "As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him" (Ps 103:13).'

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Think of the people around you – to whom can you show extra tenderness and love today? Or who do you most hope and pray will experience this from someone else in their life?



DAY FOUR: JOSEPH, SUPPORT IN DIFFICULTY

SCRIPTURE: All this happened in order that the word spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: “Look! The virgin will be pregnant and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel” (which translated “God with us”). (Matt 1:22-23)

REFLECTION: In the New Testament we see the awesome, creative and life-giving power of the Spirit. In Jesus, we have the one who cast light on the Scriptures. As Joseph’s life was illuminated by the Spirit and scriptures, how is our life being shaped, formed and transformed in the same way?

PATRIS CORDE ‘Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses’.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Today, how can we consciously show our appreciation to those who render us a service?



DAY FIVE: JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE POOR

SCRIPTURE: Joseph awoke from sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord ordered him. And he took his wife; and he did not have intercourse with her until she bore a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1:24-25)

REFLECTION: Joseph fulfilled every 'jot and tittle' (Matt 5:18) of the prophets and the Law, serving as a worthy example to a son, who would insist on the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. In what ways do we feed and grow in our faith? How do we bear witness in the home, work, church and society?

PATRIS CORDE 'The greatness of Saint Joseph is that he was the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus. In this way, he placed himself, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, "at the service of the entire plan of salvation"'.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Light a candle and pray for anyone you know in need of the gifts of inner strength and perseverance.



DAY SIX: JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE AFFLICTED

SCRIPTURE: As the Magi were going away, look! The angel of the Lord appears in a dream to Joseph, saying, 'Up you get; take the little child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and be there until I tell you'. (Matt 2: 13)

REFLECTION: Joseph is someone who hears God's word and acts accordingly, a powerful expression of total trust in God. Looking at our experience of the pandemic is there something we can learn from Joseph?

PATRIS CORDE 'In the second dream, the angel tells Joseph: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (Mt 2:13). Joseph did not hesitate to obey, regardless of the hardship involved: "He got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod" (Mt 2:14-15)'.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Do you know someone struggling to keep these new rules? How can you support them?



DAY SEVEN: JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE POOR

SCRIPTURE: He got up and took the little child and his mother by night; and he went up to Egypt. (Matt 2: 14)

REFLECTION: After the long journey to Bethlehem, the expected return is set aside as Joseph, once more responds with obedience to what is asked. Our journey in the pandemic has not seen a return to the time before. Instead, a different landscape is emerging. In our time of exodus are we listening for the voice of the Lord and finding a new path?

PATRI CORDE 'In Egypt, Joseph awaited with patient trust the angel's notice that he could safely return home'.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: What can you do to welcome the strangers in your midst?



DAY EIGHT: JOSEPH, FOSTER FATHER OF THE SON OF GOD

SCRIPTURE: And he was there until the death of Herod, that the (word) spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'out of Egypt I called my son'. (Matt 2: 15)

REFLECTION: In this time of global crisis Joseph provides an example of support, consolation and guidance. Where have we noticed God's providence in the last year and the ways in which he has sustained our 'little' domestic church? Perhaps we have simply been the listening ear to someone who is struggling, or allowed another to share from the heart. How do we said 'yes' to God?

PATRIS CORDE 'In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane'.

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Light a candle, and pray for anyone who especially needs courage and the gift of fortitude at this time. Give thanks for all those whose quiet courage sustains us.



DAY NINE: JOSEPH, PROTECTOR OF THE HOLY CHURCH

SCRIPTURE: When Herod had died, look! The angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, in Egypt saying, 'Up you get, take the little child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel'. (Matt 2: 19 - 20)

REFLECTION: 'Fathers are not born, but made' says Pope Francis, a useful reminder that fatherhood is actively worked on. In taking responsibility for a child, we learn more about ourselves, grow as a person and discover the beauty of self-sacrifice. Just as the little child watched Joseph at work as a carpenter, what memories do we want to pass on to those we are given to love?

PATRIS CORDE 'Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion. It becomes an opportunity for the fulfilment not only of oneself, but also of that primary cell of society which is the family.'

CLOSING PRAYER: Saint Joseph, you who always trusted God, and made your choices guided by His providence teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on His plan of love. You who come from the peripheries help us to convert our gaze and to prefer what the world discards and marginalises. Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

(Prayer to St Joseph offered by Pope Francis)

ACTION: Look back over this Novena. Has any person, any need, remained in the shadows? How can you bring them into God's light – through prayer, a phone call, or some other way?