

2021 – The Year of St. Joseph

“Joseph in Scripture”

1. Overview

- In this “Year of St. Joseph,” I wanted to offer a few words on how Joseph is presented in Scripture. He is not mentioned a lot, but we can learn from his role as the foster-father of Jesus.

2. Son of David

- The Messiah was expected to be in the line of King David. Jesus is called “Son of David” 17 times in the New Testament.
- Joseph is the only other person to be called by this title: “An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, *son of David*, do not fear to take Mary your wife into your home’” (Matthew 1:20).
- Saint Joseph was in the line of kings. Although Jesus is not the biological son of Joseph, he is the Son of Joseph by law. So, because of Joseph, Jesus has a legal right to be called a descendant of King David (an expectation of the Messiah).

3. Silent, but Obedient

- There are no recorded words of Joseph in Scripture, but his actions speak louder than words—he does the will of God with complete trust.
- Joseph is given instructions through angels and dreams that he does without questioning: “*take Mary your wife into your home*” (Mt 1:20), “*name him Jesus*” (Mt 1:21), “*take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you*” (Mt 2:13), and later “*take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel*” (Mt 2:20).

4. Absent, but Not Forgotten in Jesus’ Public Ministry

- Joseph is last seen when the twelve-year-old Jesus is found in the Temple (Lk 2:41-52). He is absent from Jesus’ public ministry.
- We may assume that Joseph died before Jesus’ public ministry (he is the patron saint for a “happy death”). Joseph is not mentioned with Jesus’ living mother and “brothers” (cousins). If Joseph were living, Jesus would not have entrusted Mary to the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:27).
- Even if Joseph was dead, he was not forgotten. Jesus is known to be the son of Joseph (Lk 3:23, 4:22; Jn 1:45, 6:42) or “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55). Jesus himself followed in his father’s footsteps to become a carpenter (Mk 6:3).

5. Foreshadowed in Joseph of the Old Testament (OT)

- Angels of God spoke to Joseph of the OT through dreams as God spoke to St. Joseph of the New Testament.
- As an Egyptian slave Joseph of the OT interprets a dream for the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen 40-41) allowing him to store up grain that would be used to *feed* the world (Gen 41:57). St. Joseph went to Egypt to protect the “Bread from Heaven” that would *save* the world (Mt 2:13).
- In the Old Testament people were told to “*Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.*” (Gen 41:55) for Joseph of the OT had been “put in charge of (Pharaoh’s) household and all his possessions” (Gen 39:5). In Catholic piety, we are told to ‘go to St. Joseph’ as a powerful intercessor for he cares for the household of Mary and Jesus – God’s most prized possession.

6. Conclusion

- We can imitate Joseph’s virtues. He was a “just man” (Mt 1:19), a quiet man, an obedient man, and a hard-working man. We can also “Go to Joseph,” seeking his help as a powerful intercessor.
- I invite you to look up these references and read for yourself about Joseph, especially in Mt 1-2 and Lk 1-2.