



# MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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## A MAN FOR MEN: ST. JOSEPH

*By Father Bill McCann,*

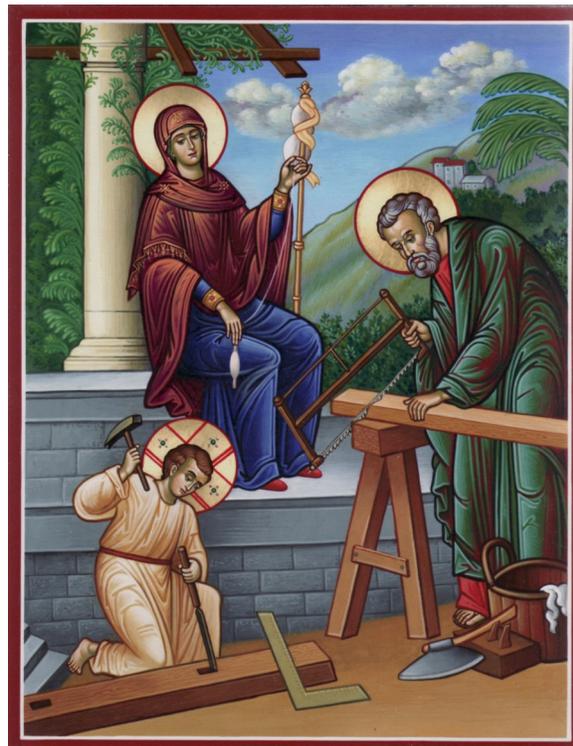
*Rector of Immaculate Heart of Mary Cathedral, Las Cruces, NM*

The gospel today speaks about Joseph. Jesus and Mary, of course, are central figures in the story about Jesus' birth, but Joseph also plays an important part. I remember from my first year of seminary, a professor made a prediction. He said that at different times in the history of the Church a certain aspect of the faith comes to the foreground for reflection because of its importance for that particular time. This professor believed that Joseph would get more attention and perhaps more honor than he had received in the past. It is interesting that a few years ago, Pope Benedict XVI added the name of St. Joseph to the Eucharistic prayer at Mass.

The Scriptures do not say a lot about St. Joseph but what is said is that he was a righteous and honorable man who guided and protected his family. In today's gospel you have to wonder what was going through Joseph's mind. He was betrothed to Mary and yet she was pregnant and he knew the child was not his. How could this be? He knew Mary was a virtuous young woman. He must have been puzzled. His response though does not give any indication that he was angry or hurt by some kind of betrayal. Instead the Scriptures say that he intended to divorce Mary quietly in order to protect her from shame and scandal. His focus seems to be on protecting her, rather than acting out of some personal self-interest.

Then God appears to him through a dream and indicates that all of this is part of his plan and that the child within Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit. In later events, God continued to direct the family through Joseph by means of dreams. When Herod was trying to put to death the male children, God directed Joseph to take his family to Egypt. When it

was safe to return, God again directed the family through Joseph. It is interesting that although his wife was Mary, the Queen of Heaven, and his son was Jesus, the Son of God, Joseph was used by God as a conduit to guide and protect his family. I think this gives us an opportunity to reflect a bit on the role of a husband and father in a family.



*House of Nazareth icon from Monastery Icons.com*

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in men's spiritual movements both in the Catholic Church and in Protestant circles. There have been Promise Keepers rallies organized by evangelical Christians. They rent huge football stadiums where tens of thousands of men gather for prayer and discussions about the roles of men as fathers and husbands. There is a similar movement for Catholic men

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called St. Joseph's Covenant Keepers. Here in Las Cruces there is a program called "That Man is You". I have been told that about 70 men regularly meet for Saturday morning breakfast and to pray and encourage one another to embrace the role to which God is calling them.

I have noticed that when men take their proper role intended by God for their families, there is good order and so many blessings come to these families as a result. I believe that we live in a particular society at this time that actually discourages men from taking God's intended role for them. There is a common belief, for example, that religious and spiritual matters should be handled by the wife and mother in a family.

We know that the current divorce rate is extremely high. Many children are now being raised by a single parent, usually the mother. Even though these single mothers are often heroic in their efforts to provide for and protect their children, we can still say at the same time that this is not the ideal. This is not what God intended. When either the father or the mother is absent, there is something lacking. The Church teaches that men and women have equal dignity but equality does not mean sameness. There is a complementarity between the man and the woman. Each of them in their nature as man and woman brings something essential to the family. The family is enriched by both the masculine and feminine influences. When one is lacking, the family suffers.

I think of the example of my grandparents. My grandmother, who died at the age of 101, was perhaps the most saintly person that I have personally known. She attended daily Mass and in her everyday conversation, she would often express her joyful confidence in God. She was kind and generous. Her husband, my grandfather, I thought was kind of gruff. He died when I was in grade school and I did not know him quite as well. One time though, my grandmother said that her husband was her salvation. She said that, as a young woman, she was full of vanity, but the faith of her husband influenced and changed her.

One time my aunt told me that there was a family custom to always kneel around the table after supper and pray the rosary. My grandparents were farmers in

North Dakota and when guests would come to the home, whether they were Catholics or not, my grandfather would tell them that it was the family custom to pray the rosary after supper. They were invited to join in or, if they preferred, they could wait in the living room until after the rosary had been prayed.

That's the kind of boldness he had regarding his faith.

What then is the role of a man as a father and husband? What did God intend? God's intention is that he will guide and protect a family through the husband and father in much the way he did so with the Holy Family. The man is called upon by God to encourage his family to always be close to God and to always seek his will. He will, of course, encourage them to always be at Sunday Mass, and he will oversee the faith formation of his children. His family will know that he is a man of prayer. In his relationships with the outside world, he will be known as a man of integrity, that he is honest and fair and other people can depend on his word. He is chaste and sober. Such a man will always protect his family from influences that would weaken them in their faith and their moral fiber.

To the men who are listening, I encourage you to embrace God's role for you in your families. God wants to use you to guide and protect your family in the same way that he used St. Joseph to guide and protect his family. (Homily preached on Matt. 1:18-25)

### EPILOGUE

*By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM*

The Solemnity of St. Joseph, the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is normally celebrated on March 19. This year, that date is a Sunday so the feast day is transferred to March 20. The gospel for Mass is Matt. 1:18-25. As patron of the universal Church, St. Joseph has a powerful, prayerful role in our day, as in all past ages. I recall a quote from St. Teresa of Avila who stated that she had never appealed to St. Joseph and not received help. She recommended him to everyone and so do I. When I am teaching a class or conducting a retreat, people often ask who is my favorite saint (other than Our Lady, of course). I have always had a hard time answering that question directly. But the longer I live as a her-

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mit, the more I realize that St. Joseph has proved his powerful intercession and help for me so many times that he is now undoubtedly my favorite.

I have been wanting to buy an icon of St. Joseph both for the chapel and the new library. I finally selected the one you see on page one, but when it was delivered, I realized that the 8"x10" size is too small for either building. So I put the new icon in my living room where I could look at it and pray with it and try to decide what I should do with it. It was a no-brainer! I am now installing this small icon in my living room where I can look at it and pray with it.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

*By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM*

My manual work during the winter time has been making the sale items I will need for my inventory this year. Making real flower cards when the snow is so high and the temperatures are so cold outside is a rare kind of pleasure. I have also been assembling medals and crucifixes on chains and making rosaries with wooden beads and cords. Next week I will be transplanting aloe vera and gearing up for the first parish sale of the year. For those of you living in the greater Boise area, this list of parish sale dates might be of interest:

March 18 & 19 Holy Apostles, Meridian  
April 28-30 ICCW Convention, Boise  
May 13 & 14 Our Lady of the Valley, Caldwell  
June 24 & 25 St. Mary's Boise  
July 22 & 23 St. Paul's Nampa  
August 5 & 6 Sacred Heart, Boise  
Sept. 16 & 17 Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mt. Home  
October 14 & 15 Risen Christ, Boise  
November 11 & 12 Corpus Christi, Fruitland

For those of you reading this but who are not in the Treasure Valley, please pray for the success of my efforts. Please visit the website and look at the items in the Gift Shop. In particular, the section of print cards has been greatly expanded and the pages updated. Thank you, web master, Mike Nourse! Mail order purchases are shipped in a timely way for gifts any time of year.

Look for a post card in early April. I want everyone on the mailing list to know that there have been two changes to the stated plans for 2017. Bishop Peter F. Christensen, Bishop of Boise, will offer Mass for me on August 23 on the occasion of my 50th Jubilee of consecration to the Lord. Mass is at 2 PM and all are welcome. See the new section on the website

with pertinent details if you plan to attend. Secondly, since ground-breaking for Mercy House will possibly be somewhat delayed due to weather, I cannot be sure that the construction of the new building will be completed by August 23. Certainly, it will not be furnished or functional. Hence, I am asking Bishop Peter to come in 2018 to bless the new library and to have a public Open House at that time. More on this as plans develop. I trust in your prayers for me to be faithful to my vocation and to thank the Lord for his graces with regard to the new library. May Mercy House be a mercy for many.

Now that spring is making its soft and slow approach and Lent has already begun, please prayerfully consider making a retreat at Marymount Hermitage. One of the disciplines of Lent should be greater prayer and an active seeking of the Lord in silence and solitude to encounter him more deeply.

Lastly, I have three recommendations. The movie entitled Courageous is a beautiful meditation on what a father and husband's role should be in a Christian family. It is a drama completely in line with what Father Bill McCann spoke of in his homily. St. Paul writes that an athlete denies himself all sorts of things so as to win a crown of leaves which withers. So how much more should we train to win a crown that lasts? This reference to sports and training never made too big an impact on me because I have never participated in any sport. My sister Lucille recommended a book to me which I just finished reading and I now have a deeper understanding of the discipline that any sport takes. The book is entitled The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown. It is the story of Joe Rantz who, with 8 other American men, won the gold Olympic medal in crew racing in Berlin in 1936. It is a compelling and poignant story about Joe and his team mates and an excellent window into the U.S. and world-wide major historical events of that time. It is meticulously researched and a real page-turner. The other book I just began is called Fire From Above by Dr. Anthony Lilles on contemplation. The author is a John Paul II generation man with the fire of that saint. Need I say more?

God bless you and let us pray for each other daily.

## MEMORIAL

In the charity of your prayers, please remember  
the soul of our former chaplain  
who died recently:

**FATHER EUGENE ESCH, OSB**  
**Monk of Ascension Monastery, Jerome, Idaho**