



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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A FIRST LOVE

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

The first time I fell in love, I was eight years old. His name was Joseph. I did not know his last name. If you are speed reading and just want to know the ending of this story, this is it: I love this man even more today. It has been a solid relationship for a life time.

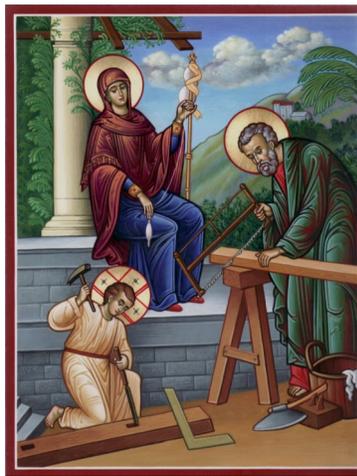
For those who are still with me, I got to know St. Joseph when I was preparing for my first holy communion. I had a new, little, prayer book in which I found this prayer which deeply attracted me.

PRAYER to ST. JOSEPH
Guardian of virgins, holy father
St. Joseph in whose custody Jesus
Christ, Innocence itself, and Mary,
Virgin of virgins, were committed.
I pray and beseech thee that, with
these dear pledges, I may with spotless
mind, pure heart, and chaste body
ever serve Jesus and Mary most
chastely all the days of my life. Amen.

I memorized this prayer so as to be able to say it as thanksgiving after communion when I received Jesus for the first time. I remember praying it fervently on that significant day, May 13, 1957. I promised Jesus I would say this prayer after daily communion for the rest of my life. Then I heard an evil voice say, "You do not even know what 'chaste' means." Always the practical person, I merely told the discouraging presence that when I was older I would know. I was content with that. Now decades later, I realize that this prayer was my first consecration to St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, and guardian of virgins.



St. Joseph is prominent in St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts of the events leading up to the birth of the Messiah. The other dramatic events in the life of Jesus as a baby and young child are equally memorable: the slaughter of the innocents, the flight into Egypt, losing and then finding Jesus in the Temple in the midst of the elders, "listening to them and asking them questions." (Lk. 2:46) "[Jesus] went down with them then, and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to



them." (Lk. 2:51) The Word of God was growing as a human child, learning, questioning, but also being obedient to his parents. It is beautiful to imagine the peace and contentment of the Holy Family in Nazareth, praying, eating, studying and working together daily. Joseph, of course, was teaching his putative son the carpenter's trade.

Tradition is clear that Joseph died before Jesus, at age 30, began his public ministry. Thus Joseph probably died with Jesus and Mary beside him. Could there be any better way to pass into eternity? This has led to the title of Saint Joseph as "patron of the dying".

The Litany of St. Joseph is a prayer of invocation listing many of his titles, roles and virtues. It is quite a meditation. In modern times, St. Joseph has been proclaimed by popes as "Patron of the Universal Church". If God the Father chose Joseph to be foster father of his Son and husband of Mary most holy, then by extension, the whole Church and the continuing work of the Savior are also entrusted to Saint Joseph's care, protection and prayers.

March 19 is the feast day of St. Joseph, under his

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A FIRST LOVE

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title of “Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary”. The feast on May 1 honors “St. Joseph the Worker.”

In the Old Testament, Joseph, one of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob, was sold into Egyptian slavery because of the jealousy of his older brothers. God used this cruel fate to place Joseph in a position to save his family when he had come into the favor of Pharaoh and been placed as viceroy over the whole kingdom. (Gen. 41:41-44) When asked for grain during the time of great drought and famine over the whole land, Pharaoh would say, “Go to Joseph”. (Gen. 41:55) This quote has been used by the Church and applied to the role of St. Joseph. St. Teresa of Avila has famously said that no one has ever gone to St. Joseph and not been helped. It was from her that I learned to ask his powerful intercession for me and Marymount and maintenance projects here. Now, after so much evidence of his love, care and help, I have Mass offered once a month to honor St. Joseph and thank him for all that he does for me.

On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter “Patris Corde” (“With a Father’s Heart”) and declared that from that day until Dec. 8, 2021 is the Year of St. Joseph. The letter is eminently readable, short and engaging. It develops over seven short sections with titles describing St. Joseph: a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father, a creatively courageous father, a working father, and a father in the shadows. I highly recommend it. It can be accessed online on the Vatican’s website.

In conclusion, let me offer some suggestions for how to observe this special Year of Saint Joseph.

1. **Get to know St. Joseph.** Read the Gospel passages in which he is mentioned. Pray over his example and virtues. Ask him to teach you his humble and silent obedience to the will and voice of God.
2. **Pray to St. Joseph.** Speak with him, tell him your spiritual desires and daily concerns. Ask him to intercede for you and trust in his powerful assistance. Trust St. Joseph to draw you closer to Jesus and Mary.
3. **Choose one approved prayer to St. Joseph and pray it daily during this year.** In his letter, the Holy Father shares the prayer he has prayed daily all his life and it likely is the one St. Teresa of Avila recommended. At the end of the letter, the Pope also offers a short, simple prayer he composed,

which you could easily memorize and use.

4. **Prayerfully discern and decide to make one new meaningful act of devotion to honor St. Joseph.** This can be putting an icon of him in your home, wearing a religious medal of him, adding the medal to your rosary or other devotional chaplet. Wednesday is the day to honor St. Joseph. Can you attend Mass that day? Or light a blessed candle in your home weekly?
5. **Consider a consecration to St. Joseph.** I have previously recommended the book by Father Donald Calloway, M.I.C. I have made this consecration, but it was not my first!
6. **“Go to Joseph!”** We can take this biblical admonition in a new way this year and learn to trust our most holy, loving, tender, powerful, spiritual father. If he could faithfully protect Jesus and Mary through the many dangerous and difficult trials in their life, St. Joseph can take care of us. Let us learn to know and trust the “Patron of the Universal Church”, Joseph, the “just man”. (Matt. 1:19)



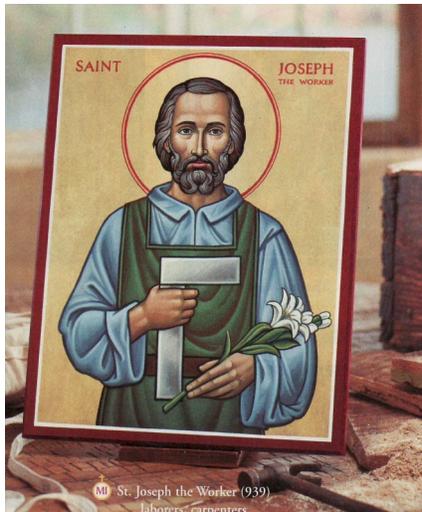
I began this article with a very personal story. I will close with another. Last year on August 15, I was having lunch with three close friends of mine. At the end of the meal, surrounded by the icons of the saints in Mercy House, one friend said to me, “Sister, you love the saints, but which one is your favorite?” I have spent my whole life getting to know the saints, making them my friends, and learning from them what it means to be holy and how to pray. I

have been asked this question often and have never been able to say honestly who is my favorite. I always thought it would offend the many saints who are my friends. So I answered: “Can a mother of ten say which child of hers is her favorite?” But then, since my friend’s question was sincere, I finally admitted for the first time, “St. Joseph is my favorite saint.” So now I have come clean with my life-long love. Are you surprised? Do you think Jesus and Mary are pleased?

The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the Rule of St. Benedict. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!

COMMUNITY NEWS

CHAPEL: I have three new icons for chapel. I will tell more of their stories when they are installed and blessed. In honor of the Year of St. Joseph, this is the icon of St. Joseph the Worker which will hang to the left of the tabernacle in chapel. This icon is from Monastery Icons. I scanned the image from their catalogue. **MonasteryIcons.com** is the website.



LENT RETREAT:

The Marymount Hermitage calendar has openings for anyone who wants to reserve some days for extra prayer and reflection before Easter. Please email me to request dates that are best for you.

WINTER: Last month I reported that the winter had been mild and we had not received a lot of snow, but now the season is going out with a roar. We had so much snow that the road had to be plowed two days in a row, which is a very rare event. It was supposed to rain today, but, as I write this, it is snowing. Fortunately, I like snow. I am grateful for the lingering beauty of snow-capped mountains and the abundant, life-giving gift of water for irrigation this summer.



Above: Al Duncan from Council, ID plows Hermitage Lane in front of chapel. Lower left: Tim Moyer, my maintenance man

from Mesa, ID prepares to do the hand-shoveling. Behind him and to the right: Renee Williams from Las Cruces, NM arrives for a two week retreat just in time to help with snow removal!

PENDING MAINTENANCE CHORES: When it is safe to do so, I will have a local workman do the fencing for the property. Last year he told me how dilapidated several sections were and that he needed to install new fence posts.

Secondly, I ask your prayers and support for the mystery of the water leak, which still needs to be discovered and repaired. Having the pump for the well work almost constantly is inviting trouble. This is an example of when I put St. Joseph in charge! He is my right-hand man who can solve difficult problems.

Lastly, the section of Hermitage Lane from the highway to the chapel needs serious repair. There are large rocks which stick up too high for Al to work safely with his plow and snow blower. Hopefully, this summer the road work can be done. This major project will involve more than one company and many contributions. If you are able to help with this, your charity would be greatly appreciated. As Bishop Peter Christensen has said in the past, "A better road is more welcoming." Prayers please for the success of these projects. God bless you!



Rays of sunlight filter through the snow clouds over the southern mountains. [Photo by Renee Williams.] Chapel and my house buried in snow on February 20, 2021.



MEMORIAL
 A donation has been made to Marymount Hermitage in memory of
Cornelius "Con" O'Keeffe
 by Sally Rose O'Keeffe