

# SPRINGTIME

## A Prayer Guide

for the Season of Lent  
in a Time of Pandemic

2021

## What is Lent?

The word “Lent” is a shortened form of the Old English word *Lencten*, meaning “the Spring”. Lent is one of the most significant seasons of the Liturgical Year. It originated from the period of preparation embarked upon by those preparing for the new life of baptism at Easter. Eventually, it became a time for the whole Christian community to seriously review and renew their lives in advance of the annual celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Consisting of forty days (Sundays excluded), the season of Lent is modelled on the forty days spent by Jesus fasting in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry. (Mt. 4)

“Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father”. (*Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2021*)

## Fasting, Prayer and Giving to the Poor

Traditionally, fasting, praying and giving to the poor are considered as important tools to help us on our Lenten Pilgrimage of renewal. Fasting is the reduction of one’s intake of food or the giving up of something we would normally do. It reminds us that at times we must sacrifice ourselves in order to put God and others first in life. Linked to fasting is the idea of abstinence, which is the abstaining from meat. In Ireland, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are traditionally days of fast and abstinence. Nowadays, some people take on things for Lent. They spend more time in prayer, more time caring for others or giving to the poor. Prayer deepens our relationship with God while giving to the poor reminds us that to love and care for others, especially those most in need, is a central part of being a Christian.

## Lenten Traditions

Over time, different traditions have developed as a means of making the most of the Lenten season. The Fridays of Lent are seen as special days for additional fasting and acts of penance. Prayer practices such as praying the Stations of the Cross, making a Holy Hour or joining a prayer or Bible study group are also important traditions. In Ireland, the Trócaire Lenten Box has become a means of giving to those less well off. What Lenten traditions will you take on this year?

## Finding New Ways of Praying at Home

The restrictions in place because of Covid-19 mean that as a Christian Community we cannot gather for our usual religious services. This situation challenges us to find new ways of reflecting on our faith and praying in our homes as the “Domestic Church”. It is hoped that this guide will assist you in doing just that. When we gather again in Church, let us not forget to enrich our spiritual lives by continuing to pray at home.

## Sacred Space

Catholicism has a long tradition of using images and symbols to help us to pray. One way of doing this is to set up a prayer space in a prominent place in your home. There, each day, you can place different symbols or things of meaning to you and your family. You might start by placing in the prayer space a Bible, which contains God’s Word.

## For Younger Family Members

At various points throughout this guide there are places for the younger members of a household to get involved. Art materials – paper, pens, and paints would be helpful at these times. So too would a guiding hand from an adult.

## Broadcast Masses



While nothing can substitute for gathering in person, we are blessed to live in an age where the celebration of the Eucharist can be broadcast on radio or television or by means of the internet. This guide is also designed to help deepen your participation in those broadcasts and to assist you in getting the most out of them spiritually.

## Call to Action

The followers of Jesus are called to be a people of action. During each of our days of prayer there will be a call to action. To do something different or significant that puts the message of that particular day into practice.

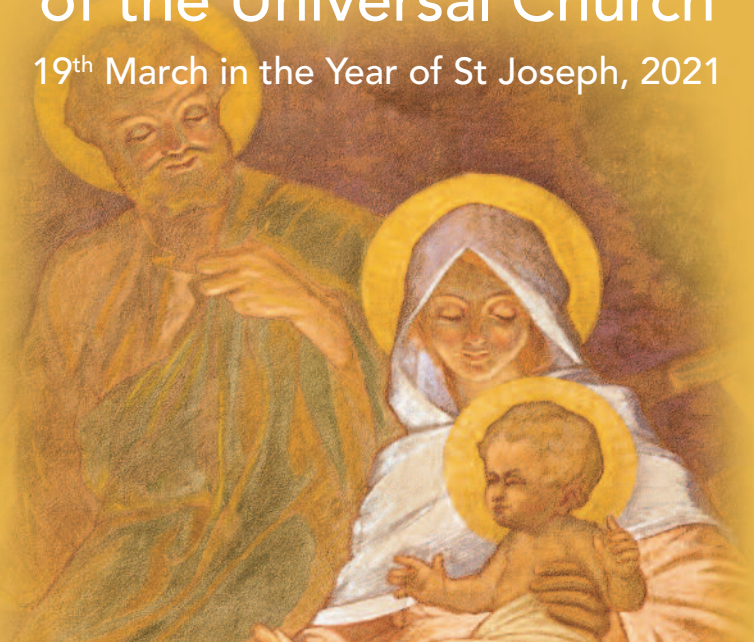
## Safety

This guide is designed for use by a single household. All health and safety advice should be adhered to. When using candles, please do so safely.



# Solemnity of St Joseph, Husband of Mary and Patron of the Universal Church

19<sup>th</sup> March in the Year of St Joseph, 2021



On the 8th of December 2020, Pope Francis declared that 2021 would be a special Year of Saint Joseph. Therefore, this year's celebration of his Feast Day takes on an extra significance. Although descended from the royal house of David, Joseph was an ordinary manual labourer. Scripture tells little of his story except that he was husband of Mary and "Foster-Father of Jesus". Nonetheless, his modest presence as part of the Holy Family is constant. Tradition holds that Joseph died sometime before Jesus began his public ministry. In 1870, Pope Pius IX declared him patron and protector of the universal family of the Church. Announcing the Year of Saint Joseph, Pope Francis said: "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". (*Patris Corde*)

## A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Trócaire Lenten Box nearby. Have to hand a picture or statue of Saint Joseph.

### As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, today we celebrate Saint Joseph, that quiet man who with your help opened his heart to Mary and Jesus. We bring before you our families and in particular, all Fathers. We ask your help when times are difficult and give you thanks when times are good. We pray for our Christian Family, the Church, scattered throughout the world. Bless us all that we may respond more faithfully to our calling and be a light to the nations. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

### Let us listen to God's Word ... Matthew 1:16. 18-21, 24

Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins'. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

### Let us reflect ...

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow. [...]



Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments [...]. Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground. (*Pope Francis, Patris Corde*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

## Children's Activity

Draw a picture of Saint Joseph with Mary and Jesus. Use thought bubbles to imagine what they might be saying to each other.

## Ritual Action

Place the picture or statue of Saint Joseph in the prayer space. As you do so, think about the things in your own life that turned out differently from what you had expected but in the end became a blessing. After a brief period of silence, pray this short litany to St Joseph:

St. Joseph of the House of David  
Open to God's will  
Husband of Mary  
Foster-Father of Jesus  
Hope of the Sick  
Patron of the Dying  
Protector of the Church

**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**  
**Pray for us**

## Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray for our families. **Name those you wish to pray for (pause)**

**Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.**

We pray for Fathers. **(pause)**

**Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.**

Through the intercession of Saint Joseph, we pray for the Church – the people of God scattered throughout the world. That our lives may be an example to all who do not believe. **(pause)**

**Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.**

**Add your own intercessions here. (pause)**

**Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.**

## Our Father ...

### Prayer to St Joseph by Pope Francis

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**



## Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

## Call to Action

Read more about Saint Joseph. What about downloading and reading Pope Francis' Letter – Patris Corde announcing that 2021 will be a year of Saint Joseph?





# Online Celebration of the Eucharist



## Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Add to it a picture or statue of Saint Joseph or a picture of your family.

## During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **white or gold vestments** as a symbol of celebration.
- A **picture or statue of Saint Joseph** may be decorated in the sanctuary.
- During the Season of Lent the **Alleluia** is omitted.
- In the **First Reading** from the book of Samuel we will hear of God's promise to David that his house and his throne will always stand secure. **The Psalm** takes up this idea and proclaims in reference to David: "His dynasty shall last for ever". The **Second Reading** from the Letter to the Romans centres on the idea of faith and hope in God. In the **Gospel**, the figure of Joseph, that descendant of David, has his life thrown into confusion by the news that his betrothed was with child through the Holy Spirit. With God's help he accepts the situation. He faithfully takes Mary as his wife and Jesus as his son and that great promise made of old for the house of David finds its fulfilment.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time, make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Speak to him about those times in life where, like Saint Joseph, things happened that you did not expect or plan. Things that you have had to, and might still have to, struggle to see God's hand in.

## Take away ...

During the week reflect on what it means to be a Mother or a Father or a member of a Family and ask yourself has the story of Saint Joseph any wisdom to add to your thoughts?



Prepared by the Diocese of Clonfert and the Diocese of Elphin  
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