



# JOSEPH, Strength and Tenderness of the Father

What role Saint Joseph can play in today's society? What can he teach us? During this time of great suffering due to the pandemic, why should we turn to Saint Joseph?

To these questions, Pope Francis provided us with clear answers in his Apostolic Letter *Patris corde*, which means "With a Father's Heart," issued on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. At the same time, he also proclaimed a "Year of Saint Joseph," which will extend until December 8, 2021.

The Pope's message, both in content and in tone, came at the right time for the pastoral team of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal that had already chosen "Joseph, Strength and Tenderness of the Father" as its theme for the Novena.

The ORATORY magazine met with the three priests who will be preaching the Novena to Saint Joseph, from March 10 to 18: Fr. Jean-Baptiste Vérité, Fr. Jérôme José, CSC, and Fr. Michael DeLaney, CSC.

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By **Nathalie Dumas**

Interview and photos

## Joseph, today

“Joseph represents all those who are ordinary, unknown or little known, but who write the most essential and most relevant pages of our contemporary history,” explains Father Jean-Baptiste Vérité. “The true heroes,” he adds, “are most often ordinary people who are little known, but who do a lot of good in a quiet way.” The preacher and the Holy Father have used the same words to sketch a portrait of Saint Joseph, as a reading of the most recent Apostolic Letter reveals.

In his preaching, Father Vérité will emphasize that Joseph was deeply rooted in his people and demonstrate how this strength and tenderness remain true today. For his part, Father Michael DeLaney, CSC, will highlight the contemporary nature of Joseph. “Saint Joseph is alive even today. The example of his life, faith and prayer is relevant to all of us today. His life and our life are part of the same history.”

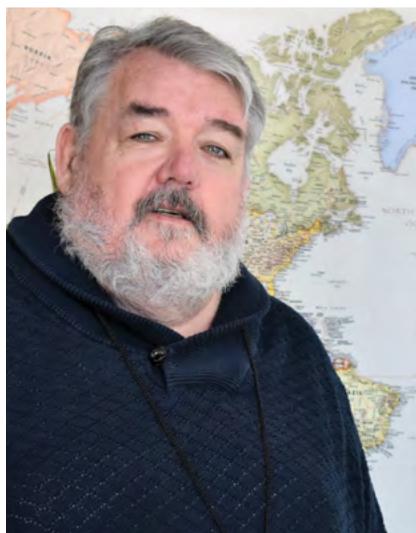
“Those who worry for their family, about their financial situation, their responsibilities as parents, can recognise themselves in Saint Joseph,” says Father DeLaney. “He

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Joseph can teach us to do what we have to do and to do it with heart! Simply. – Jean-Baptiste Vérité

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knew what it was to suffer, to be worried, to feel the responsibility of taking care of Mary and Jesus; to face the unknown. He saw the question without knowing the answer; accepted the challenge without foreseeing where it would lead him. Joseph acted out of trust. He is clearly a man who can understand the realities of today and support us as we face them.”



**Michael DeLaney, CSC**, is Rector of Saint Joseph's Oratory. Ordained a priest in 1987, he has served in Portland, Chicago and Chile. He was Director of the Holy Cross Mission Center, an international apostolate of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

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## Attentive to God's will

Struck by “Joseph's singleness of heart,” Father Jérôme José, CSC, sees in him “a quiet man, a just man, a man of action whose heart and soul remained open to God's will,” he says. “The Gospels that recount Joseph's dreams show us how he listened to God. It's a theme that I will be exploring to present Saint Joseph,” he adds.

Father Vérité also points out the importance of “remaining attentive, open and ready to accept the inspirations of God who speaks to all human beings, without exception.” And he adds these words of wisdom: “What is most important is that we constantly nurture within us a desire to seek out what is just, good, true and beautiful.”

Father DeLaney underscores that “Joseph exemplifies the fatherly spirit, both for men and for women. What has traditionally been attributed to paternal benevolence is the current reality of many women and many men.” In *Patris corde*, Pope Francis writes: “Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being over-protective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities.”

## In these uncertain times

“Saint Joseph is the emblem of all things,” says Father Jérôme José, CSC, who reminds us that Saint Joseph is invoked under all these titles: *Hope of the Sick, Our Consolation in Suffering, Model of Workers, Protector of the Church, Mainstay of Families, Patron Saint of the Dying*, as can be seen in the Oratory's Votive Chapel. “During this pandemic, we are experiencing illness, unemployment, death; we are dealing with conditions of poverty and loneliness. For all of these reasons, we can go to *Saint Joseph*.”

“The future is full of uncertainty,” adds Father José, “just like what Joseph experienced while in exile and trying to find a place to protect

# Joseph's heart and soul remained open to God's will.

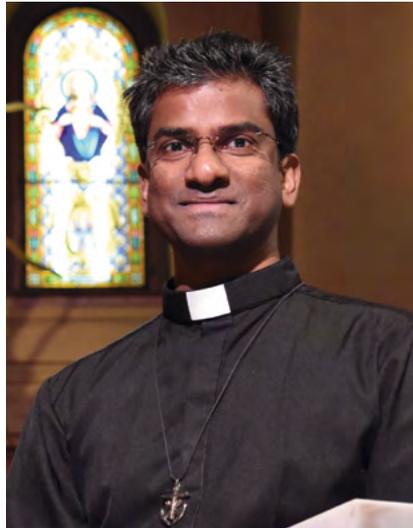
– Jérôme José, CSC

Mary and Jesus. And like him, we must keep ourselves open to God's providence."

While the Novena is a Christian tradition that allows believers to deepen their devotion to Saint Joseph, Father Vérité makes it a point to invite everyone to find solace in him. "You don't need to be a Christian, to believe in Jesus or in God to take comfort in Joseph, this ordinary man who lived in an extraordinary way." All three preachers emphasize the need for



**Jean-Baptiste Vérité** has been serving in pastoral ministry for the past four years at Saint Joseph's Oratory, where "Brother André was waiting for me," says the priest from the Archdiocese of Lomé in Togo, who is now on his second extended assignment in Montréal.



**Jérôme José, CSC**, is originally from southern India. He took his first vows as a religious of Holy Cross in 1995 and was ordained a priest in 2006. At the Oratory since 2010, he is also a member of the General Council of the Congregation.

openness to and unconditional acceptance of everyone, just as Saint Brother André did.

Father Michael DeLaney, CSC, who officially assumed his duties on November 22, 2020, is overjoyed with the "Year of Saint Joseph" proclaimed by Pope Francis. "This is a unique opportunity to shine a new light on Saint Joseph and to make our voice heard as a sanctuary dedicated to him," concludes the new Rector of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal. ✱



## What word best describes Saint Joseph?

When asked this question, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Vérité answered "Trust"; Fr. Jérôme José, CSC, "Just" and Fr. Michael DeLaney, CSC, "Faithful." And what word would you use?

**Please write to us! We'd like to know your answer!**

## God Our Father,

You entrusted Joseph with the mission of being the foster father of Jesus, your Beloved Son. Faithful to this call, he remained strong in trials, full of tenderness and attentiveness, by taking care of the Child of the Promise and his mother Mary.

You call us to be like Saint Joseph, strong and courageous in difficult times, attentive to the needs of the people around us, and tender to those who suffer.

Following the example of his friend, Saint Brother André, help us listen to others. Inspire us with words of hope, which through your Father's heart reveal full love and mercy.

Keep us strong in faith, faithful in our commitments, confident in the face of the unknown, and joyful in welcoming life.

Amen.