



## Reflections for the Novena

Photo: Nathalie Dumas

On the way to the Feast of Saint Joseph, we propose a daily break for nine days. The reflections invite you to entrust your special intentions to Saint Joseph, Mainstay of Families. “Pray to Saint Joseph, I will pray with you,” Brother André used to say. We wish you a blessed Novena with good companions on the way!

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adapted in English by Charles Corso, CSC

### On the roads of exile



DAY 1

The child had hardly been born when the security of the new parents was disturbed. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt....” (*Matthew 2:13*) So begins the story of an uprooted family forced to set off to escape persecution.

It takes courage to survive in a violent world. Pope Francis speaks of Joseph’s “creative courage” to find solutions to protect the lives of his threatened family.

The scene of the flight to Egypt reminds us of a sad reality of today: the columns of emigrants who travel the roads hoping to find a place where they can live in safety.

In an address, Pope Francis said, “Life always holds adversities in store for us, this is true, and faced with them, we may also feel threatened and afraid. But it is not by bringing out the worst in ourselves, as Herod does, that we can overcome certain moments, but rather by acting like Joseph, who reacts to fear with the courage to trust in God’s Providence.”

***Joseph, you courageously commit yourself to God’s plan; pray for us!***

*(I entrust my special intentions to Saint Joseph and I continue my daily reflection with a time of silence followed by prayers on page 8.)*



DAY 2

## Where the child can grow and live his life

Joseph and Mary's daily life with their newborn child was like that of other families. "The child grew and became strong and full of wisdom" (Luke 2:40). Thus, under the watchful gaze of his parents, Jesus was awakening to the world.

"The family is the primary setting for socialization," writes Pope Francis, "since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one." For the past two years, what with the confinement, the telecommuting, the home schooling, "family bubbles" have had to learn—more than ever—healthy ways to live together.

And even if the current context makes social relationships more complicated than before, we need to find inventive ways to reach out to others "who are worthy of our concern, our kindness and our affection," says the Pope.

**Joseph, you had the unconditional love of Jesus and Mary; pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*



DAY 3

## In search of peace

There is an image on Pope Francis' desk of Saint Joseph sleeping. "Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church!" To this surprising statement, he adds an explanation. "When I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream on it! In other words I am telling him: pray about this problem!"

At Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, there are places for depositing prayer intentions, yet you'll also glimpse many tiny slips folded and tucked here and there, all over the shrine. The expression of the pilgrims' prayer is powerful, supported by their great faith in God and their unwavering confidence in Saint Joseph and Saint André, to whom they entrust the peace of their families.

We all hope to find a place of peace and harmony within our families. But these two are fragile things. An early harmony is too often shattered by divisions, tensions, misunderstandings, jealousies, quarrels. We need a lot of tenderness and love in this quest for peace.

"I may sleep, but my heart is vigilant," Saint Joseph seems to say to reassure us. (*Song of Songs 5:2*)

**Joseph, you taught Jesus to pray; pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*



DAY 4

## Transfigured by the presence of God

God was present in a very particular way in the home of Mary and Joseph; God intended them to make a family for His only Son. For a long time the presence was obscured from them because the humanity of Jesus took precedence. Yet a profound mystery transfigured the daily life of this family. Joseph, like Mary, treasured this mystery in his heart.

In our families, God is also present as an invisible force, a silent love. Do we know how to recognize it? Do we know how to make it real in our family by our acts of tenderness? Are we open to God's call? The concerns of our lives, the material preoccupations, too often take up all our attention.

Let us discover the presence of the Lord at the core of our families and our communities. Let us learn to recognize it in the small gestures of kindness, dedication, and mutual aid that we gift to one another. These are signs of God's presence in our lives. Let us be transformed, transfigured by this love.

**Joseph, an ordinary man yet transfigured by God, pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*

## On the way to conversion

“A father in tenderness” is how Pope Francis refers to Saint Joseph, adding that “tenderness is the experience of feeling loved and affirmed precisely in our poverty and misery, and thus transformed by God’s love.”

transforming each one of us into men and women capable of loving in this way.”

Inspired by Pope Francis’ words, let us pray, Saint Joseph, father in tenderness, teach us to accept that God loves us precisely where we are weakest. Grant that we may place no obstacle between our poorness and the depth of God’s love.

**Joseph, whose weakness was fortified by God, pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*



DAY 5

We are all too familiar with our weaknesses, but we can be confident of finding consolation in the tenderness of God, our Father. The Pope also says, “It does us good, then, to mirror ourselves in Joseph’s fatherhood, which is a mirror of God’s fatherhood.” He invites us to ask ourselves if “we allow the Lord to love us with his tenderness,

## An environment where parents promote an education toward freedom

After Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple, “He went down with them to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.” (*Luke 2:51*). In these few words, the evangelist concentrates an entire period in the life of the Holy Family. For Jesus, it was a time of learning, of awakening, of discovery. Painters have often illustrated this period with a family scene in Joseph’s workshop.

“To be a father means making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities,” writes Pope Francis. This is what Joseph did. Like a good father, he must have prepared Jesus for the mission entrusted to him by his heavenly Father by raising Jesus to be strong and free because he suspected that his son would not become Nazareth’s carpenter.

**Joseph, you participate in the mission of the Son of God behind the scenes; pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*



DAY 6

Parents have dreams for the future of their children. Certainly, they all want to see them succeed, to be happy in their life choices. Some would like their children to follow in their footsteps or take over the family business. Others encourage them to find their own direction in a free and adventurous journey.

## Opportunities for growth of a child

If you think about it, even if childhood is a limited stage of development in a human being, we remain “children” all our lives. At 20, 40, 60, 80, 100 years of age, we continue being the daughter of..., the son of.... We do not create ourselves. We are part of a history that others have begun to write before us. It was effective for Matthew to introduce his version of the gospel with the genealogy of Jesus: “...and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.” (*Matthew 1:16*)

of responsibility, underneath all of this is still the identity of child. We are all sons and daughters. And, this always brings us back to the fact that we did not give ourselves life but that we received it. The great gift of life is the first gift that we received.”

Despite the difficulties we face and regardless of our age, we are invited to give thanks for this great gift of life.

**Joseph, the man Jesus called “father”, pray for us!**

*(I extend my reflection...)*



DAY 7

Pope Francis points out, “Even if one becomes an adult, or an elderly person, even if one becomes a parent, or if one occupies a position



Photo: Nathalie Dumas

## Tested in the fires of crisis



DAY 8

Every day, the news features tragedy. Domestic violence, murder, racism, discrimination, abuse, exploitation. In a sort of echo of these acts, disasters strike the earth, leaving in their wake destruction and heavy losses. And, as if that were not enough, for the last two years, a health crisis has been raging globally. Our world is cracking. The human family is suffering. How do we stay the course in the face of all this?

There is a virtue called hope. It acts in us like a little light that leads us to move forward. Joseph is presented to us as a model of faith and hope. “Joseph, do not be afraid...”, “Arise, take the child and his mother with you”, “...set out on your journey”. To these dreamy messages from God, he responds with willingness, fidelity and action.

The crisis facing our planet calls for us to act. The members of our families and communities need our attentiveness and our care. Let us set out on these unknown paths with our lamp lit. From within the whirlwind, let us be bearers of hope.

***Joseph, whose soul puts its hope in the Lord, pray for us!***

*(I extend my reflection...)*

## Place of awakening and commitment to justice



DAY 9

As we walk through the Votive Chapel at Saint Joseph’s Oratory, we see some of the titles given to Saint Joseph: *Model for Workers, Consolation of the Afflicted, Hope of the Sick, Patron of the Dying, Protector of the Church, Mainstay of Families*, and more. Joseph the Just is the saint for all causes!

And what about us; what cause has been entrusted to us? What responsibilities do we accept and exercise? Whom do we look after? To whom do we offer a comforting presence?

The pandemic has taught us that every little thing counts: making a phone call, sending a card, greeting a neighbor, praying.... Every time we forget self to offer another person a moment of joy or comfort is worth its weight in gold. This ability is learned from the family, the first school of life and values. To commit oneself to justice does not mean to only demonstrate and denounce, it is above all a question of heart.

***Joseph, whose heart dances to God’s melody, pray for us!***

*(I extend my reflection and get ready to celebrate!)*

The quotes from Pope Francis are taken from *Patris Corde* (Letter about Saint Joseph); *Amoris Laetitia* (Exhortation about love in the family); and various catecheses given on Saint Joseph.



# Saint Joseph, Mainstay of Families

## Prayer from the Votive Chapel

Attentive Joseph, in Mary and you, the Word finds a nurturing environment; thus, you form a family to receive God's Son.

In your amiable life together, you experience Love daily. The unity of your hearts transforms life's harsh lessons into growing wisdom and grace.

Open ourselves to the Word that lives within us, that our actions may bear witness to our own connection to the family of God.

Sustain us in our emotional commitments, where giving and forgiving shape our identities. Grant us your gentleness in the things we do each day! Amen.

Prayers from Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal



## Prayer for the Novena 2022

Lord, what a great privilege you gave Joseph and Mary to create a home for Jesus where love and peace were paramount! Make of us a welcoming family circle where love creates a space for each one.

You asked Joseph to make Jesus his apprentice in charity, to prepare Jesus for the mission which you entrusted to him. Support all parents in their daily effort to guide their children into the ways of love and freedom.

You let distress and exile and hardship invade the life of Jesus' family. Come to the aid of families uprooted from their homes, living in uncertainty day in and day out: give them strength and courage! Instill within us a generous heart willing to provide them with the assistance they need.

You inspired Joseph and the Virgin Mary to create a green space where God's plan could authentically develop. Help our families to remain resilient in the face of difficult circumstances, remaining faithful witnesses to your love. Amen.