

Liturgical Celebrations for the Year of Saint Joseph

At the heart of this year devoted to the honor of Saint Joseph lies the liturgical celebrations which are offered in his honor, especially as the Sacred Liturgy “is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). The Year of Saint Joseph commenced on December 8, 2020 and concludes on December 8, 2021.

Two principal celebrations commemorating Saint Joseph lie within this particular time period. **The Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, is celebrated on **Friday, March 19**, and the **Optional Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker**, is celebrated on **Saturday, May 1**. Proper Masses and readings are assigned to both of these commemorations.

As a solemnity, the March 19 Mass includes the Glory to God as well as the Creed, and the Lectionary includes two readings before the Gospel reading. An ideal parish celebration will include music (within the parameters of the directives associated with the present pandemic) as well as appropriate decoration of the image of Saint Joseph in the church. Flowers are also permitted in the sanctuary. Because the Year of Saint Joseph in part emphasizes his role in protecting the Holy Family, the blessing of families could take place, either as the concluding prayer of the Universal Prayer or at the end of Mass (cf. *Book of Blessings*, esp. 64-67).

Additionally, on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, “it is the custom in some places to bless bread, pastries, and other food and give a large portion to the poor” (*Book of Blessings*, 1679). Especially during this time of pandemic, such a gathering of food for both local celebration (within best practices for a pandemic) as well for the poor would be a fitting manner in which to honor the justness of Saint Joseph. The blessing prayer options for this rite are found at numbers 1690-1700 and are applicable for various circumstances.

Although an optional memorial, the occasion of St. Joseph the Worker on a Saturday provides an excellent opportunity for the parish to gather together as possible to celebrate the gift and dignity of human work. In the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 24 is dedicated to the rites associated with the blessing of tools and other equipment used in work, and these may be properly incorporated into the Mass.

Besides these two dedicated feasts, the Votive Mass in Honor of Saint Joseph (*Roman Missal*, Votive Masses, Number 13) may be used on any permitted days during the liturgical year as given by the Ordo, and is especially appropriate, when possible, for celebration on ferial Wednesdays, the day traditionally dedicated to Saint Joseph among the days of the week. While the Mass has its own proper prayers and preface, the *Roman Missal* indicates that “if appropriate, the Mass of the Solemnity, as on March 19, or of Saint Joseph the Worker, as on May 1” may also be used on the days where the Votive Mass is permitted. For the Votive Mass for Saint Joseph, the readings are taken from the March 19 solemnity or the May 1 memorial (cf. *Lectionary for Mass*, 1004).

Appropriate hymns for these celebrations include “By All Your Saints Still Striving” which has an alternative verse 2 dedicated to Saint Joseph; “Those Who Love and Those Who Labor” and “Lord of All Hopefulness” especially for the May 1 memorial; as well as other hymns in honor of the saints in general (e.g., “For All the Saints” and “Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones”) and also those which speak of the particular virtues associated with the Guardian of Mary and Jesus and Patron of the Universal Church.

The following text, held in the Public Domain, is a traditional hymn text in honor of Saint Joseph, and may be sung to the tunes listed below.

Good Saint Joseph

Tunes: BEACH SPRING, HYFRODOL, HYMN TO JOY, NETTLETON, PLEADING SAVIOR (and other tunes in 8.7.8.7.D)

Good St. Joseph, pure and gentle,
Guardian of the Savior child,
Treading with the virgin mother,
Egypt's deserts, rough and wild.
He who rested on your bosom
Is by countless saints adored;
Prostrate angels in His presence
Sing hosannas to their Lord.

Good St. Joseph, kind and loving,
Stretch to us a helping hand;
Guide us through life's toils and sorrows
Safely to the distant land.
You have known a pilgrim's sorrows,
But your day of toil is o'er;
Help us while we journey onward
Lead us to the peaceful shore.