

2021 - Year of St Joseph – *Patris Corde*

God our Father, creator and ruler of the universe, in every age you call men and women to develop and use their gifts for the good of others.

With St Joseph as our example and guide, help us to do the work you assign us and earn the reward you promise;
This we ask through Christ our Lord.

At this time of the year we reflect upon the twelve months that are passing into the history of our lives. Memories, experiences, encounters; all part of who we now are and we bring into the New Year. We also look forward into the horizon that breaks forth as we enter this New Year, 2021.

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, (issued December 8 2020 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception), sought to “increase our love for this great Saint (Joseph), to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.”

As we begin this New Year, a further step on our journey of faith, it is a good moment to stop for a moment to reflect on what has passed and contemplate what is yet to be. In making our resolutions we need good spiritual inspiration, the grace of God the love of Jesus Christ and communion with the Holy Spirit, to sustain us in hope and faith. We need to be watchful and patient like the wise men who were led by the star to the manger in Bethlehem.

Pope Francis reminds us “We know that God’s truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us.” This is the message of hope we begin this New Year; God who welcomes each one of us, embraces us despite our frailty, faults and failings, sustains us with hope and joy and whose love is expressed not in condemnation but in forgiveness and mercy.

When Pope Francis states “Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand...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...” does this not sum up much of what we have faced during 2020. It is only in the mystery of God’s great love that acceptance and peace can be found, “Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.”

Did not St Joseph, St Francis and other saints also face contradictions, frustrations and disappointments but met these challenges with a deep trust in God. For St Joseph, the model of love for Mary and Jesus. Joseph became guardian for his little family and is now proclaimed as “Patron of the Catholic Church”... ‘protector’ because he is able to hear God’s voice and be guided by his will...” It was St Augustine who challenges each one of us when he said “What they could do, can you not also do?”

As we enter this New Year, 2021, let us step forward as a parish family dedicated to St Francis of Assisi with the example of these great saints, such as Joseph and Francis, to guide and watch over us. Let us be a people of hope, a people of creative imagination in our ministry, courageous in the face of doubt and confusion.

“The saints help us to be faithful ‘to strive for holiness and the perfection of their particular state of life.’ Their lives are concrete proof that it is possible to put the Gospel into practice.”

With such guides accompanying us individually and as a parish family let us journey into the New Year. Let us place all our trust and our hopes for the time ahead into the hands of God.

A Happy and Blessed New Year from the Franciscan fraternity.