



## St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus

Birth and death dates unknown; traditionally, died about AD 18 in Nazareth

Feast Days: March 19 (Joseph, Husband of Mary) and May 1 (Joseph, the Worker)

**Prayer:** *Lord, help me to provide for and protect all those in my care.*

*When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. (Matthew 1:24, NAB)*

**Action:** Spend a few minutes today listening to a child, spouse, or other family member. Listen and ask questions rather than redirecting the conversation to yourself. Pray together with Joseph for the person's concerns.

**About St. Joseph:** Joseph may have come from a royal lineage, but that didn't mean he was blessed with worldly goods. We know from Scripture he was a carpenter, and we know that when Jesus was presented at the temple for circumcision, the Holy Family only had the means to sacrifice two turtledoves, rather than the traditional lamb.

But then, worldly goods weren't what Jesus needed. He needed a father who would love and protect him and his mother. And Joseph did just that. He married Mary despite his initial thought about quietly divorcing her when he learned she was pregnant. He took the family to Egypt when he was told in a dream about the coming massacre of the children of Bethlehem. And surely, he worried and searched with Mary when Jesus went missing at the temple.

We imagine Joseph as a gentle, elderly man who according to tradition had the blessing of dying in the arms of his beloved family when Jesus was twenty or so, the man who likely took Jesus to temple and prayed with him. It's a peaceful picture. But it's also important to consider Joseph as parent and spouse, as an integral member of the domestic church. Joseph listened to the Lord, despite chatter in the community about Mary's "predicament." He didn't worry about having to rebuild his carpentry business when the family had to relocate. Joseph concerned himself with obedience to the Lord and his messengers—and with the protection of his family. To Joseph, family was family, regardless of how it was formed. He shows us the important role that all parents—biological, adoptive, foster, or spiritual—can play in the lives of all children, including those that may consider less than worthy due to the circumstances of their conception or their socioeconomic status. — *Melanie Rigney*