

Consecration the St. Joseph

Part 13

Foster Father of the Son of God, Pray for Us

The position of St. Joseph as husband and foster father gives witness to the dignity of fatherhood. – Venerable Joseph Mindszenty

Christians use many terms to describe the fatherhood of St. Joseph. He is called the legal, putative, spiritual, virginal and foster father of Jesus. While none of these titles are found in the New Testament, they are all legitimate ways of describing St. Joseph's fatherhood. Of these titles, foster father is the most common. The reason it is the most common title is that the naming of a child in ancient Jewish custom was the legal responsibility of the father.

Although you [St. Joseph] are not necessary for the [child's] conception and birth, nevertheless you will be necessary for [his] sustenance; and your first care will concern his name. – St. Albert the Great

St. Joseph's legal responsibility of naming the Christ child was given by God when the angel revealed to St. Joseph that he was not to be afraid to take Mary – and the Child in her womb – into his home and under his care. St. Joseph's role of naming the Savior is an extremely important one. It is meant to signify to the world that St. Joseph is the legal father of Jesus.

St. Joseph's dignity springs from his privilege of being the legal father of the Incarnate Son of God. Here, then, is a man whom the Son of God calls father, one whom he [Jesus] serves and obeys and before whom he kneels for a paternal blessing. – St. Peter Julian Eymard

St. Joseph's role as the "Foster Father" of Jesus might come across as something merely contractual, but the Latin provides us with a deeper insight into St. Joseph's role. In Latin, the title given to St. Joseph to signify his role as foster father is *Filii Dei Nutricie*. Literally, it means "Nurturer of the Son of God." As you can see, the title foster father is a very poor translation from the Latin original. Calling St. Joseph the foster father of Jesus is valid, of course, but he needs to be emphasized that St. Joseph's fatherhood was more than a legal fatherhood; St. Joseph's fatherhood was an authoritative, affectionate, faithful and everlasting fatherhood.

St. Joseph's spiritual fatherhood is forever. The loving relationship between a spiritual father and child endures forever. In other words, Jesus continues to be the Son of Joseph in heaven. In Paradise, St. Joseph no longer exercises a "legal" fatherhood over Jesus, but his relationship of love, affection and faithfulness toward Jesus, as well as the Mystical Body of Jesus, remains. Unlike marriage, where the relationship does not remain into eternity (see Matthew 22:30), St. Joseph's spiritual fatherhood over Christ and his Mystical Body endures forever.

Spiritual fatherhood, like spiritual motherhood, endures forever. Were this not the case, the Church would need to cease invoking Jesus as the "Son of Joseph." The Church would also be required to cease invoking Mary, who is in heaven, as our spiritual mother.

St. Joseph will always be your spiritual father. What is valid for Jesus is valid for you. St. Joseph is forever your spiritual father. As he took care of Jesus while on earth, St. Joseph will take care of you on your earthly pilgrimage. St. Joseph is your loving provider, educator and protector. When your life on earth is over, St. Joseph will continue to be your father, not on an earthly level, but on a spiritual level. In heaven, you will forever be known as a child of St. Joseph.

No one will ever be able worthily to praise Joseph, whom thou, O true only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, has deigned to have for thy foster father. – St. Ephrem the Syrian

Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us
St. Joseph,
Noble scion of David,
Light of the Patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste Guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-father of the Son of God,
Sedulous Defender of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,
Joseph most valiant,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of all who labor,
Glory of family life,
Protector of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Consolation of the afflicted,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of the demons,
Protector of Holy Church,

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

V. He made him the lord of his household.
R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray. God, Who, in Thine ineffable Providence didst vouchsafe to choose blessed Joseph to be the Spouse of Thy most holy Mother; grant, we beseech Thee, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in Heaven whom, on earth, we venerate as our protector. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen

