

## Pope Francis Announces Year of Saint Joseph for 2021



*Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that by Saint Joseph's intercession  
your Church may constantly watch over  
the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation,  
whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

On December 8, 2020, the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as patron saint of the universal Church, Pope Francis issued the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* as an extended reflection of the holy foster father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. According to the Holy Father, Saint Joseph was a father in varied ways: beloved, tender and loving, obedient, accepting, creatively courageous, working, and "in the shadows." He concluded his letter with a short prayer to Saint Joseph as a synthesis of his teachings.

The Holy See announced separately that day the Pope's decision to celebrate a special "Year of Saint Joseph," which takes place from December 8, 2020 to the same date in 2021. Unlike a formal Jubilee – also called a Holy Year – the Pope's initiative is similar to other years that are given a focus for the Church's prayers and activities. Recent special years include Marian Years (1954, 1987), the Year of the Eucharist (2005), the Year of Saint Paul (2008-09), the Year for Priests (2009-10), and the Year of Faith (1967-68, 2012-13). Nations and individual dioceses are also able to dedicate special years as the need arises.

As the universal Church embraces with renewed strength the spirituality of its patron, Saint Joseph, in the coming year, she prays for his intercession and to follow his example, along with the tenderness of his beloved Spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the merciful love of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Saint Joseph, pray for us!*

## Plenary Indulgences Available for the Year of Saint Joseph

The Apostolic Penitentiary issued a decree on December 8, 2020, formally announcing the decision of Pope Francis to celebrate the Year of Saint Joseph through December 8, 2021. Special opportunities to receive a plenary indulgence were also included, subject to the usual conditions: sacramental confession, reception of Holy Communion, prayer for the intentions of the Pope, and total detachment to all sin, including venial sin.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Holy See made provision in its decree that persons who are currently unable to go to Mass or confession because of public health restrictions may defer reception of those two sacraments until they are able to do so. Those who are sick, suffering, or homebound may also receive the plenary indulgence by fulfilling as much as they are able and by offering their sorrows and sufferings to God through Saint Joseph, consoler of the sick and patron saint for receiving a good death. The following prayers and activities have been enriched with a plenary indulgence:

- meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father") or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on Saint Joseph;
- perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, inspired by the life and example of Saint Joseph;
- pray the Rosary together as a family or a couple, modeling the virtues of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph;
- dedicate with confidence their daily work to the protection of Saint Joseph the Worker, including the efforts of those who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking more dignified work;
- devoutly recite the Litany of Saint Joseph (from the Latin Church; available at [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/litanies/litany-of-saint-joseph](https://USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/litanies/litany-of-saint-joseph)),<sup>1</sup> some or all of the *Akathistos* hymn to Saint Joseph (from the Byzantine Churches), or another suitable prayer in each liturgical tradition, especially for the intentions of persecuted Catholics in the Church and around the world, and for the relief of all Christians who suffer persecution; or

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<sup>1</sup> See *Manual of Indulgences*, concession 22; usually a partial indulgence.

- devoutly recite an another approved prayer to Saint Joseph, for example the “To you, O blessed Joseph” (available at [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-to-st-joseph-after-rosary](https://USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-to-st-joseph-after-rosary)),<sup>2</sup> especially on various feasts of Saint Joseph: March 19 (his solemnity), May 1 (St. Joseph the Worker), or on the 19th day of each month, or each Wednesday, traditionally dedicated to honor his memory with pious devotions.

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Committee on Divine Worship, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Newsletter, Volume LVI, November-December 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Manual of Indulgences*, concession 19; usually a partial indulgence.