

## **Saint Joseph Father's Day**

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by

The Very Reverend Christopher R Armstrong, KCHS

Judicial Vicar

*Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA*

When I was pastor, I asked a parishioner, a forensic psychologist, if I could accompany her to the maximum security prison where she worked. All of the prisoners were boys under 18 years of age. All of the prisoners were Caucasian. All of the prisoners had committed horrific crimes. Among other things, my parishioner told me that not one of the boys knew who his father was. Not. One.

I began my Father's Day homily that year with the above story and added a few other details of the prison. But I wanted to emphasize the important role fathers play in rearing their children. It seems to me that the very notion of fatherhood is under attack today and yet according to most reports children, who have a father who truly cares for them and is involved in their development, flourish.

That made me recall that I had read somewhere that St. Joseph was the "Shadow of the Father," "...the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name." [Ephesians 3:15]. It also made me recall the devotion for St Joseph which our present Holy Father, Pope Francis, has toward that very same foster father of Jesus. I searched his homilies and found the following which I think is rather timely for this Father's Day. I hope you will as well, as "St. Joseph is the model...for dads."

"We look at Joseph - as the model of the educator, who safeguards and accompanies Jesus in his journey of growth "in wisdom, years and grace", as the Gospel of Luke tells us. "He was not the father of Jesus, the Father was God, but he was a father to help him grow in years, wisdom and grace.

"Let's start with his age, which is the most natural dimension, physical and psychological growth. Joseph, together with Mary, took care of Jesus, first of all from this point of view, he 'raised him', worrying that he had all he needed for a healthy development. Let us not forget that the faithful care of the life of the Child also led to the flight into Egypt, the harsh experience of living as refugees to escape the threat of Herod. Then, once they returned home and settled in Nazareth, there is the long period of the hidden life of Jesus within the Holy Family. During those years, Joseph also taught Jesus his work, Jesus learned to be a carpenter.

"Let's move on to the second dimension of Christ's education, that of "wisdom". Scripture says that the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord. Joseph was an example and teacher of this wisdom for Jesus, which he nourished by the Word of God. We can imagine how Joseph taught the child Jesus to listen to the Holy Scriptures, especially accompanying him on the Sabbath to the synagogue in Nazareth. Joseph accompanied Jesus so he would listen to the word of God in the synagogue.

“And finally, the dimension of "grace". Again St. Luke tells us referring to Jesus: "The grace of God was upon him". Here certainly the part reserved to St Joseph is more limited than in the areas of age and wisdom. But it would be a grave mistake to think that a father and a mother do nothing to educate their children to grow in the grace of God.

“The mission of St. Joseph is certainly unique and unrepeatable, because Jesus is unique. However, in his guarding Jesus, educating him to grow in years, wisdom and grace, he is a model for all educators, especially for parents. **St. Joseph is the model educator and father, the model for dads. Therefore I entrust all parents, priests - who are fathers - and those who have an educational role in the Church and in society to his protection.** ... May St. Joseph bless you and be with you.” March 19, 2014 <https://www.apostolatestjoseph.org/pope-francis-and-st-joseph.php>

With such a recommendation from Our Holy Father, may all fathers help their own children to grow in age, wisdom and grace, before God and man, through the powerful intercession of the foster-father of Jesus, Saint Joseph.