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Year of St. Joseph Proclaimed

Pope Francis

Marking the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal church, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to the foster father of Jesus. In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, "Patris Corde" ("With a Father's Heart"), the pope said Christians can discover in St. Joseph, who often goes unnoticed, "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble." As Mary's husband and guardian of the Son of God, St. Joseph turned "his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home." Despite being troubled at first by Mary's pregnancy, St. Joseph was obedient to God's will "regardless of the hard-

"St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

ship involved," the pope added. St. Joseph's unconditional acceptance of Mary and his decision to protect her "good name, her dignity and her life" also serves as an example for men today, the pope added. "Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence toward women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man," he wrote. As a carpenter who earned "an honest living to provide for his family," Christ's earthly guardian is also an example for both workers and those seeking employment and the right to a life of dignity for themselves and their families, the pope said. The year dedicated to St. Joseph will end Dec. 8, 2021. The apostolic letter follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

With a father's heart: That is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as "the son of Joseph."¹

Matthew and Luke, the two evangelists who speak most of Joseph, tell us very little yet enough for us to appreciate what sort of father he was and the mission entrusted to him by God's providence.

We know that Joseph was a lowly carpenter (cf. Mt 13:55), betrothed to Mary (cf. Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27). He was a "just man" (Mt 1:19), ever ready to carry out God's will as revealed to him in the law (cf. Lk 2:22, 27, 39) and through four dreams (cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22).

continued on page 502



contents

- 501 Year of St. Joseph Proclaimed
by Pope Francis
- 508 Speech to Special Session of U.N. General Assembly on COVID-19 Pandemic
by Cardinal Pietro Parolin
- 509 Catholics and Muslims at the Service of Fraternity in the World
by Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot
- 512 Homily at Interreligious Appeal for Peace Gathering
by Pope Francis
- 513 Speech at Interreligious Appeal for Peace Gathering
by Pope Francis
- 515 Appeal for Peace
by Religious Leaders
- 516 Datebook
- 516 On File

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