

# JOSEPH

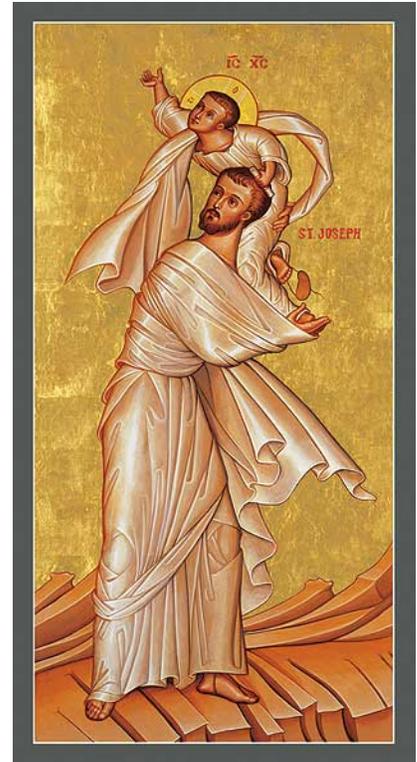
## Earthly Father of Jesus

**Feast Day: 19 March**

**Collect:** O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### Facts:

- Jesus' earthly father, House of David
- Traditionally portrayed in art as significantly older than Mary, but there is no Biblical evidence for this
- Traditionally called a carpenter, but the Greek word *tekton* could have also meant stonemason or ironmonger
- Patron saint of working people
- Honored for not casting Mary out when she was found to be pregnant before they were married
- Clearly open to mystical experience—responded obediently to instructions given him in dreams to marry Mary, to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape the agents of Herod trying to kill Jesus, and to bring them home to Nazareth
- Lived at least until Jesus was 12 years old, as he appears in the story of Jesus being left behind at the Temple, but it is assumed that he died before Jesus reached age 30, since Mary appears throughout Jesus' years of ministry, up to and through the crucifixion and resurrection, but Joseph does not
- Joseph does not appear in the Gospel of Mark, or anywhere in the Pauline epistles
- Further evidence of Joseph's death is Jesus entrusting Mary's care to John at the crucifixion



## **Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy**

- Connected in the Gospel of Matthew (the gospel most concerned with Jesus as the royal Messiah of Israel) with the Joseph of the Hebrew scriptures:
  - Infant Jesus is in peril from a cruel king, like Moses
  - Jesus has a (fore)father named Joseph who goes down to Egypt
  - Both Josephs receive their direction from God in dreams, rather than waking revelations (like Mary or Elijah)
- Joseph, although relatively low profile in the gospels, is a hugely important figure to study spiritually
- He acted directly against societal and gender norms by marrying Mary and raising a child not his own. He accepted what would no doubt be a lifetime of cruel and mocking gossip about himself (Nazareth had a population of 400), and a commitment to shield his wife and son from that cruelty
- He trusted his dreams as true communication from God, and based major life decisions on them! Does that reflect rare spiritual sensitivity or pure recklessness? Maybe both?

## **Questions Raised by Life & Work**

- What spiritual resources and groundedness does it take to willingly accept a role of littleness, insignificance, being made fun of, and serving only as the caretaker of greatness rather than the vehicle of greatness oneself? To what extent do you think Jesus' teachings such as "The last shall be first," and "If you want to save your life, you must lose it," were influenced by the quiet and powerful example of his earthly father, Joseph?
- What do you think it was like for Joseph in daily life living with possibly the two greatest spiritual powerhouses of all time, Mary and Jesus?
- How do Joseph and his life speak to you?

**My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:**