



## **The Seven Sundays devotion to St. Joseph**

*The statue of St. Joseph in the Convent of the Incarnation, Avila - the statue which spoke to St. Teresa of Jesus*

A devotion to St. Joseph involving seven Sundays leading up to his feast day on 19th March has been written by María Pilar de la Iglesia, a Spanish theologian with a doctorate in Spiritual Theology from the Carmelite Pontifical faculty of the Teresianum in Rome. Though this devotional exercise began on 30<sup>th</sup> January this year, there will be another opportunity to begin on 15<sup>th</sup> March in time for 1<sup>st</sup> May, Feast of St. Joseph, the Worker.

The Seven Sundays to St. Joseph comprise for each Sunday a biblical reading and a passage taken from St. Teresa of Jesus' writings.

St. Teresa of Jesus' had great devotion to St. Joseph to whom she dedicated her first foundation in Avila and of the seventeen foundations fifteen bear his name Ávila, Medina del Campo, Malagón, Valladolid, Toledo, Pastrana, Salamanca, Segovia, Beas de Segura, Seville, Caravaca,, Villanueva de la Jara, Palencia, Granada and Burgos. (The exceptions are Alba de Tormes, dedicated to Our Lady of the Anunciation, where St. Teresa of Jesus is buried and Soria, dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, though originally dedicated to Our Lady of the Villas).

Her devotion to St. Joseph, though recorded with hindsight in Chapter 6 of the *Book of her Life*, began long before the foundations were made as she recounts 'how she took the glorious St. Joseph for her mediator and advocate, and of the great good he did her' (L 6, 8) and a little later recommends that 'those who cannot find a master to teach them prayer should take this glorious saint for their master, and they will not go astray' (L 6, 8).

Her desire is for all to know the great good this glorious Saint can do in our lives 'Because of my impressive experience of the goods this glorious saint obtains from God, I had the desire to persuade all to be devoted to him. I have not known anyone truly devoted to him and rendering

him special services who has not advanced more in virtue. For in a powerful way he benefits souls who recommend themselves to him. It seems to me that for some years now I have asked him for something on his feast day, and my petition is always granted'.

We can have no better injunction to seek the help of Jesus' own father on earth, who is the very first person in St. Matthew's Gospel to welcome the Virgin Mary and Christ into his life, becoming the Earthly Trinity: 'An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife' [...]. When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him' thus showing utter faithfulness to the Word of God through his angels now and later.

Thus, Teresa tells us 'It is an amazing thing the great many favours God has granted me through the mediation of this blessed saint [...]. For with other saints it seems the Lord has given them grace to be of help in one need, whereas with this glorious saint I have experience that he helps in all our needs and that the Lord wants us to understand that just as He was subject to St. Joseph on earth — for since bearing the title of father, being the Lord's tutor, Joseph could give the Child command — so in heaven God does whatever he commands' (L 6, 8).

St. Teresa is told that 'St. Joseph would keep watch over it (the convent) at one door and Our Lady at the other, that Christ would remain with us and that it would be a star shining with great splendour' (L 32-11).

Following the Year dedicated to St. Joseph, this devotion may help us to call on this 'glorious saint' and seek his help in the spiritual life in all the trials we face, for testing tribulations as well as joys were not unknown to him.

This devotion completes a cycle of Novenas in preparation for the great feasts in the liturgical calendar, which María Pilar de la Iglesia began with the Novena to St. Teresa of Jesus in October, 2016. Fr. Miguel Márquez, Superior General, who was Father Provincial for the Iberian Peninsula at the time, granted it the nihil obstat.

The work as a whole can be seen as a gift which the Most Blessed Holy Trinity has bestowed on the whole Order, completed on the Feast of Epiphany of this year, in order to contribute to each

one of us being able to prepare in the best way possible for the great celebrations of the liturgical year (Christmastide, Easter, Pentecost, the Blessed Trinity) or for the principal feasts days of the Order of Mount Carmel (Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Joseph, St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross and St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus). Preparation is based on meditation on the Word of God, and the passages from the principal works of our Saints, so that we may be nourished and strengthened in the charism.

As the summit of our vocation is union with God, the Trinity, the novenas to our Doctors of the Church, St. Teresa, St. John and St. Thérèse, the texts chosen reveal the spiritual journey they followed until they entered into the life of the Most Blessed Trinity, so that we may be encouraged to journey with resolute determination to be good soil so that the Lord will bring us into the mansion wherein dwells the Trinitarian God. The best way for this to happen is by imitating our holy Mother, St. Teresa of Jesus, by calling on and allowing ourselves to be formed by the Virgin and St. Joseph for they will prepare us in the best possible way so that life in the Holy Trinity may become a palpable reality in our lives, ‘a star shining with great splendour’ (This and the preceding paragraphs are taken from a letter María Pilar de la Iglesia sent to the friars, nuns and seculars to accompany the Devotion to St. Joseph).

St. Teresa tells us that ‘If the request is somewhat out of line, he rectifies it for my greater good’ and in case we had any hesitation in seeking his help, she continues ‘For I don't know how one can think about the Queen of Angels and about when she went through so much with the Infant Jesus without giving thanks to St. Joseph for the good assistance he then provided them both with’ (L 6, 8) and Our Lady told her that ‘I made her very happy in serving the glorious St. Joseph’ (L 33, 14).



***The altar statue of St. Joseph in Segovia.***

*‘On the feast of St. Joseph, we reserved the Blessed Sacrament... I did not want to enter except on the eve of the feast, secretly, and at night’ (Foundations, 21, 5).*

*The only foundation where **four** Masses (the first by Julián de Avila and the second by St. John of the Cross) were said on the day of the foundation - **19<sup>th</sup> March, 1574 - Feast day of St. Joseph** (Monasterio de San José del Carmen, p. 14).*

The complete devotional book can be found in this link in various languages: <https://carmeloteresajuan.wordpress.com/devocionario-con-textos-biblicos-liturgicos-santos-del-carmelo/>

Each document will print as an A5 booklet by choosing the booklet print option.

St. Teresa of Jesus, pray for us.

Glorious St Joseph, pray for us.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

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