

Contents

Introduction To The Family	vi
Fathers	01
Louis IX of France	07
Thomas More	11
Frederic Ozanam	15
Mark Ji Tianxiang	19
Benedict Daswa	23
Mothers	26
Monica	31
Clotilda	35
Margaret Clitherow	39
Elizabeth Ann Seton	43
Marguerite D’Youville	47
Siblings	50
Peter and Andrew	55
Benedict and Scholastica	59
Clare and Agnes	63
Francisco and Jacinta	67
Gianna Beretta Molla and Alberto Enrico Beretta	71
Married Couples	74
Francis Choe Kyong-Hwan and Maria Yi Seong-rye	79
Charles of Austria and Zita	83
Luigi and Maria Beltrame	87
Karol and Emilia Wojtyła	91
Cyprien and Daphrose Rugamba	95
Families	98
Family of Basil the Great	103
Family of Boniface	107
Wenceslas and Ludmila	111
The Martins	115
The Ulmas	119
Friends	122
Paul and Barnabas	127
Maria and Flora	131
Jordan of Saxony and Diana d’Andalo	135
Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross	139
Óscar Romero and Rutilio Grande	143

Fathers

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Frederic Ozanam.	15
Mark Ji Tianxiang	19
Benedict Daswa.	23



As the morning sun crept above the horizon, Joseph pulled his donkey through the gates of Bethlehem. Mary sat on the donkey, cradling her newborn son wrapped in a blanket. An hour earlier, Joseph had hastily packed their meager belongings before waking his wife and telling her about his startling dream. The warning and order to flee to Egypt had been so clear that neither of them hesitated, and even before it was fully light, they had set out on their journey.

With each step, the small family left behind what was familiar and inched closer to Egypt, a place with strange gods, strange customs, and a strange language. Joseph would never have chosen to travel to Egypt, but now, hour after hour, he led his family there. He was their guide, their protector, and if need be, he would lay down his life to protect them.



The Gospels don't record a single word spoken by St. Joseph. Not one. And yet, his impact on the lives of Mary and Jesus is undeniable. A man of prayer, again and again Joseph received God's word delivered in dreams and was obedient. He accepted Mary as his wife when other men would have rejected or even stoned her. He faithfully guided his pregnant wife to Bethlehem where it was foretold the Messiah would be born. He then led his family away from the dangers of Bethlehem into Egypt. When they returned home to Nazareth, Joseph worked hard to provide for his family, and he taught Jesus the Jewish faith. His work as a father was remarkable and yet very ordinary. He did what all fathers are called to do. However, because he did this work united to God, St. Joseph has been raised to the altar of sainthood and given some incredible titles.

His work as a father was remarkable and yet very ordinary. He did what all fathers are called to do.

Today we venerate St. Joseph as the Diligent Protector of Christ, Head of the Holy Family, Mirror of Patience, and Glory of Homelife. He is also the patron saint of fathers, families, expectant mothers, travelers, workers, and the dying. Joseph's titles are proof that we can become holy right at home. But how? Just like St. Joseph, by loving and serving our families united with God.

We rarely fight temptation or defend our families from evil in big dramatic acts of bravery. Instead, we combat the forces of evil through small, repeated, often hidden acts of love, humility, and faithfulness.

St. Joseph has one more title: Terror of Demons. It might seem like demons would have nothing to fear from this quiet, humble carpenter, but that is not true. We rarely fight temptation or defend our families from evil in big dramatic acts of bravery. Instead, we combat the forces of evil through small, repeated, often hidden acts of love, humility, and faithfulness. St. Joseph teaches us to defend our families and strike terror in the hearts of demons through faithful prayer and sacrifice.

Like St. Joseph, fathers are important and irreplaceable in their families. Yet, God selects ordinary men to be fathers. Even St. Joseph had few remarkable traits that, on the

surface, set him above other men. But St. Joseph, and many other saintly fathers, model for us a father's duty to remain humble, teach the Faith, communicate God's love to their children, and, ultimately, lay down their lives for their families.

Each saintly father here challenges all fathers to embrace their vocation. May the fathers in our lives grow in virtue and love of Jesus, so that through their faithful witness, we can more fully experience God the Father's love for us.

St. Joseph, pray for us!

St. Joseph, pray for fathers!