

~ Saint Joseph ~



In Catholic traditions, Joseph is regarded as the patron saint of workers and is associated with various feast days.

The month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph. Pope Pius IX declared him to be both the patron and the protector of the Catholic Church, in addition to his patronages of the sick and of a holy death, due to the belief that he died in the presence of Jesus and Mary.

Several venerated images of Saint Joseph have been granted a decree of canonical coronation by a pontiff.

Religious iconography often depicts him with lilies or spikenard.

The first appearance of Joseph is in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, often dated from around 80-90 AD.

In the Gospel of Luke, Joseph already lives in Nazareth, and Jesus is born in Bethlehem because Joseph and Mary have to travel there to be counted in a census.

Subsequently, Jesus was born there.

The story emphasizes Jesus' awareness of his coming mission: here Jesus speaks to both Mary and Joseph of "my father," meaning God, but they fail to understand.

Joseph is not mentioned as being present at the Wedding at Cana at the beginning of Jesus' mission, nor at the Passion at the end. If he had been present at the Crucifixion, he would, under Jewish custom, have been expected to take charge of Jesus' body, but this role is instead performed by Joseph of Arimathea. Nor would Jesus have entrusted his mother to the care of John the Apostle, if her husband had been alive.

While none of the Gospels mentions Joseph as present at any event during Jesus' adult ministry, the synoptic Gospels share a scene in which the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, doubt Jesus' status as a prophet because they know his family.

In Luke 3:23 NIV: "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. In Luke the tone of the contemporary people is positive, whereas in Mark and Matthew it is disparaging.

The variances between the genealogies given in Matthew and Luke are explained in a number of ways.

One possibility is that Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' legal descent, according to Jewish law, through Joseph; while Luke's genealogy traces his actual physical descent through Mary.

The Gospel of Matthew asks about Jesus: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

Joseph's description has been traditionally translated into English as "carpenter", but is a rather general word that could cover makers of objects in various materials. The Greek term evokes an artisan with wood in general, or an artisan in iron or stone. But the specific association with woodworking is a constant in Early Christian tradition; Scholars have argued that *tekton* could equally mean a highly skilled craftsman in wood or the more prestigious metal, perhaps running a workshop with several employees, and noted sources recording the shortage of skilled artisans at the time. A description of Joseph as 'naggar' (a carpenter) could indicate that he was considered wise and highly literate in the Torah. At the time of Joseph, Nazareth was an obscure village in Galilee, about 81 miles from the Holy City of Jerusalem, it is estimated that the population was at most about 400, and is barely mentioned in surviving non-Christian texts and documents. Other scholars see Joseph and Jesus as the general village craftsmen, working in wood, stone, and metal on a wide variety of jobs.

Modern positions on the question of the relationship between Joseph and the Virgin Mary vary. The Eastern Orthodox Church, which names Joseph's first wife as Salome, holds that Joseph was a widower and betrothed to Mary, and that references to Jesus' "brothers" were children of Joseph from a previous marriage. A popular position held by many Catholics, derived from the writings of Jerome, is that Joseph was the husband of Mary, but that references to Jesus' "brothers" should be understood to mean cousins. Such usage is prevalent throughout history, and occurs elsewhere in the Bible. Abraham's nephew Lot, was referred to as his brother, as was Jacob's uncle Laban. Jesus himself frequently used the word "brother" as a generic term for one's fellow man. This custom has continued into modern times, with close friends, colleagues, and fellow churchgoers often called "brothers and sisters."

The perpetual virginity of Mary is a Christian doctrine that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin "before, during and after" the birth of Christ, the Catholic Church adheres to this doctrine. The term *kiddushin*, which refers to the first part of a two-part marriage, is frequently translated as "betrothal". Couples who fulfill the requirements of the *kiddushin* are married, until death or divorce.

The New Testament has no mention of Joseph's death, but he is never mentioned after the story of finding Jesus in the temple, when Jesus was 12.

A hypothesis has been presented that Joseph was assumed into Heaven with body and soul because he belongs to the few saints who left no bodily relics.