

St. Joseph Consecration

# Joseph the Nazarene

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Throughout this preparation for consecration, we'll ground our reflections in Scripture and Biblical history. We'll begin today by rediscovering Joseph's background - his hometown, his parents, and his work.

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Hello and welcome back to the St. Joseph Consecration. I'm so excited to be joining you for this second day of preparation. Here's something about St. Joseph that I find so interesting: if you walked into a room with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, whom would you relate to the most? While we'd probably want to worship the Son of God and be completely in awe of His Mother, we'd probably find St. Joseph to be the most like us. We'd find a man who had plenty of challenges, weaknesses, and failings, but also one who continually sought after God and strove to become holy. Seems like a pretty good person to learn from, right?

But, many times people don't turn to St. Joseph. I wonder why? My guess is that people don't know much about him. To most, St. Joseph isn't a real person. He's a statue in front of the church. Someone from the past who seems to have little to do with us today. This week we want to change that. I want to invite you to consider the beauty and the power of St. Joseph. We're going to look at the history, culture, and the time period of St. Joseph so we can better understand who he is and how he can help us in our relationship with God right now.

Today, we'll focus on Joseph's hometown because knowing the place where Joseph was born and raised can open his world to us and help us learn more about him. Before we dive in, let's begin with a prayer. We'll begin the next few days with the same opening prayer to help us pause and prepare. Our prayer this week comes from Fr. John J. Dougherty. Let's begin –

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit. Replace the tension within us with a holy relaxation,

Replace the turbulence within us with a sacred calm,

Replace the anxiety within us with a quiet confidence,

Replace the fear within us with a strong faith,

Replace the bitterness within us with the sweetness of grace,

Replace the darkness within us with a gentle light,

Replace the coldness within us with a loving warmth,  
Replace the night within us with Your day,  
Replace the winter within us with Your spring.  
Straighten our crookedness, Fill our emptiness, Dull the edge of our pride,  
Sharpen the edge of our humility, Light the fires of our love.  
Let us see ourselves as You see us, That we may see You as You have promised  
And be fortunate according to Your word, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall  
see God." In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

The Gospels tell us that Joseph grew up in Nazareth, a village in Northern Israel about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. Nazareth would have been considered a backwater town, an obscure and out of the way place. This is why Nathanael mockingly asks Philip in the first chapter of John's Gospel: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 1:46). Archaeological evidence suggests that Nazareth would have been a village of just 120-150 people around the time of Joseph. Chances are you live in a neighborhood or went to a grade school much larger than this. In a village like Nazareth, you would have known everyone really well and shared in life's events together, big and small, from festivals to weddings to funerals and everything in between.

Joseph would have grown up like many other Jewish boys in his day. Eight days after he was born, he would have been circumcised according to Jewish law. At the age of five or six, he would have been sent to school which consisted of learning how to memorize Scripture from a local rabbi. Eventually, at the age of 12 or 13, the rabbi would determine whether a child was talented enough to study to become a rabbi as well, or if he was to take up his family's trade. For Joseph, he was called to take up his family's trade.

The Gospels use a Greek word called 'tekton' to describe his occupation. A 'tekton' is someone who works with wood, stone, or metal. In the New Testament, it's commonly translated as 'carpenter'. As we'll learn more tomorrow, Israel had many construction projects going on in Joseph's lifetime. It was possible that he would have been hired to help on job sites in the area as well. Many times, workers would wake at dawn and walk several miles to the work site. They would complete a full day's work, walk home in time for supper, and do it all over again the next day.

Because it was a family trade, Joseph would have learned this work from his father. In the genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, we learn that Joseph's father was named Jacob. But in the Gospel of Luke, we are told that his father is Heli. You might be wondering, is one of the Gospels wrong? Fortunately for us, an early Church historian provides a very interesting answer that solves this puzzle and sheds light on Joseph's life. The historian Sextus Julius Africanus tells us that Joseph's mother was left a childless widow when her husband Heli died. Then, in accordance with Jewish law, Heli's brother Jacob was required to marry his brother's wife. Jacob's children

would, of course, be his own, but their lineage would also by law include his brother. In this way, both Jacob and Heli would be considered Joseph's fathers. So this should give us a good understanding of Joseph's early life – a boy born in a tiny village in an obscure place.

He wasn't talented enough to be a rabbi, and he took up his father's trade and lived a seemingly normal life. Joseph's life could be described as ordinary, but he didn't live in ordinary times. As we'll discover next time, Joseph's culture and world were anything but normal. A ruler would rise up who would force each person, including Mary and Joseph, to make a crucial decision.

But, before we finish today, let's take some time to reflect on Joseph's ordinariness. It holds a key element that can draw us closer to Jesus. Let's pray together –

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As we discussed St. Joseph's background today, what stood out to you? Is there anything new that you learned?

In many ways, Joseph was a very ordinary person. Ordinariness is not something that's often celebrated in our culture today. And yet, Joseph's ordinariness makes him very relatable. There's something about saints who were seemingly ordinary that can give us hope. We think, if they can be ordinary and holy, maybe I can, too! If Joseph can have a close and personal relationship with Jesus and Mary, despite his ordinariness, maybe it's possible for you and I as well!

Considering this – How does St. Joseph help you think about your own relationship with God?

Let's close our time today with a prayer to St. Joseph: Hail, Joseph, filled with divine grace, in whose arms the Savior was carried and under whose eyes he grew up: blessed are you among men and blessed is Jesus, the Son of your dear Spouse. Holy Joseph, chosen to be a father to the Son of God, pray for us in the midst of our cares of family, health, and work, and deign to assist us at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank you so much for joining us today. God bless you.