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## **The best book on St. Joseph ever!**

A friend of mine invited me this year to join him in a 33 day consecration to St. Joseph. I'm generally not a fan of such, but because he asked, I decided to try it out. I came to learn he'd actually invited a good number of other friends. Last year he'd done the same with married friends of his, this year he invited those of us who were still single and searching - or "single and free to mingle" as we like to say.

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To finish on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we begun this journey on the 16th of February. Every day we have a short consideration to read, we have the Litany of St. Joseph to pray, and then a longer, more doctrinal text to read.

To make things easier for us moderns who are always rushing around, every day my friend would post a link to a YouTube video done by a parish in the States where they read out the consideration for the corresponding day and prayed the Litany. Then my friend would send us a recording of the doctrinal text. Sometimes this second text was short - 4 minutes; sometimes it stretched to 25 minutes. But the wealth of information it contains! I have no hesitation in declaring this book the

best book on St. Joseph ever! Our Lord's foster father was and is one of the most amazing men I've ever read about!

The book is called *Consecration to St. Joseph, The Wonders of our Spiritual Father*. It is written by an American religious priest called Fr. Don(ald) Calloway, (who himself has an amazing conversion story!). It took him three years to research and write it. (A letter Fr. Don wrote to Pope Francis requesting as much, and the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, are the reasons the Holy Father declared a Year of St. Joseph from 8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021.)

And what are some of the wonderful things I've learnt of the wonders of St. Joseph?

First and foremost, I've understood better why St. Josemaria referred to

him as "our father and lord". St. Joseph is a father, not just to Jesus, but to me as well! In a sense similar to how Our blessed Lady is mother of the head of the Mystical Body and thus mother of the rest of that same Body, St. Joseph as father of that same head, is also father of the rest of the Body - of you and I! The author quotes two saints in this regard.

First, St. Pope John Paul II who writes: *"Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, that is, the Church."*

The author then quotes St. Josemaria who wrote, *"There is something I do not quite like in that title of "foster father" which is sometimes given to Joseph, because it might make us think of the relationship between Joseph and Jesus as something cold*

*and external. Certainly, our faith tells us that he was not his father according to the flesh, but this is not the only kind of fatherhood.*" Fr. Don insists on this point by remarking that we can be sure that whenever Jesus spoke to St. Joseph, he did not exclaim "Foster father!" No. As a child, as a teen and as a young man, Jesus would joyfully have called him "Father!" or "Daddy!" or in his native Aramaic "Abba!".

And very much like Joseph of the Old Testament, that young man who fortuitously rose to be second in command after Pharaoh (that is, very much a lord with dominion or authority) and who kept stores of life-giving grain for a world that was starving in the time of famine, this equally young Joseph of the New Testament was also entrusted with the safe-keeping of the definitive Bread of Life, the Bread from Heaven (Jesus) for a world that is similarly

starving. But not only that, St. Joseph is also lord in the sense that as head of the family of Nazareth, he administered his own home. He provided for and protected this family. In fact, in the Litany of St. Joseph, we finish off with a response that speaks of this lordship: "*He [God] has made him [St. Joseph] lord of his household, and prince over all his possessions.*" And after Pentecost, when through the Holy Spirit Jesus inaugurated the new family of God, St. Joseph continues to provide for and protect it.

Another insight into the person of St. Joseph was what kind of man he must have been for the most beautiful woman ever created, (beautiful inside and out!) to fall in love with him and want to be married to him. "*With the exception of our loving Mother,*" the author quotes St. Maximilian Kolbe as saying, "*St. Joseph stands above all*

*the saints.*" And Blessed Bartolo Longo chimes in to assert "*Saint Joseph, after Mary, is the greatest saint and the most dear to Jesus!*" Amazing! Especially for a man from whom not a single word was recorded for us in Scripture. But as some of the other members of the Whatsapp group were saying (especially one young dad I recall), it is also tremendously encouraging for St. Joseph to have been so holy by doing nothing extraordinary - just loving his wife, raising his Son and working at his trade as best as he could, with what he had, till he could no more. And that is something we found tremendously relatable!

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