

Lent Midweek 3/ St. Joseph Guardian of Jesus – March 19, 2025
Text: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Theme: As Faithful as Joseph

Today is St. Joseph day. Joseph is one of the relatively unsung heroes in the Bible. We hear of him in the opening pages of St. Matthew and St. Luke and that's about it. Many commentators think Joseph must have died sometime between when Jesus was 12 and when He began His ministry at 30. That would not be unusual since Joseph was probably 30 when he married Mary and the average life expectancy at that time was 35-40 years of age. Joseph was a humble carpenter. Though he had regal roots in his ancestry from King David, he was in no way an important person. Yet look how God used him in the plan for salvation.

It was Joseph, a humble carpenter, who protected the Christ. You might think that God would send legions of angels to protect His son, but no, He sent Joseph. The first thing to consider here is if a humble carpenter who never even learned to run an electric saw was called upon to protect the Christ, what is God calling you to do?

The second thing to consider is Joseph's faith. That is what gave him real power in this world. We think of power coming from weaponry, money and position, but that is false, unpredictable, unreliable, worldly power. King Herod commanded a Roman army and he could not beat Joseph, the humble carpenter. Why? Because

Jospeh had faith. When God sent him a message, he believed. He did what God said and God held up His end of the deal.

I think it is easy to talk about having faith. But for someone who questions how strong their faith really is, it's more difficult than just saying that they have strong faith. While it is quite easy to have strong faith, the kind of faith that can defeat kings and armies, people often doubt that anything attained so easily could really work. Sometimes I wonder if the hardest challenge to our faith is that it is freely given. It is counterintuitive to rely so heavily on something that was free. When I get my new do dad from TEMU for \$1.85, I fully expect it to break within the week. If it lasts a month, I'm shocked. We are conditioned to believe that anything for free cannot be that good. So, when God gives us faith, we are suspicious as to whether it will really work.

Joseph had great faith. When God sent the angel to tell him to take Mary as his wife even though she was pregnant, Jospeh complied. When the angel told him that the child Mary carried was the Son of God, the Messiah for whom they had been waiting, Jospeh believed. That powerful faith saw him through the birth and the childhood of Jesus. Being responsible for the Messiah is no small thing.

So, do you want faith like Jospheh? Do you want to be able to confidently stand in the face of overwhelming odds and know that God is with you and you will overcome anything and everything? Faith like that is already yours. It was given to you in your baptismal waters. The hardest part is overcoming the worldly idea that anything that powerful cannot be free. God created faith in you when you first heard His Word or when you were baptized. Then he offered His Word and Sacrament to feed that faith and grow it into epic proportions. But you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Likewise, it is hard to convince a peripheral Christian that their faith could be so much stronger if they would just eat.

I hate going to the gym in January because it is always packed. Everyone who has been eating with wild abandon all year plans to fix everything by working out in January. But, by mid-February, the crowd has thinned and we won't see most of the folks again until May when they try on their swimsuits. It's hard to stick with a diet and exercise plan because the results are so slow in coming. Faith is no different. You can't go to church one week and move mountains the next. Faith grows little by little and the growth is almost imperceptible, until one day, faith is called upon, and it is there in all its power and glory. Then you know that, like Jospheh facing the

armies of King Herod, your faith has been quietly growing in preparation for the moment you face your army, whatever that army might be.

I often say that I pay attention to my weight and exercise habits not because I want to live longer. We all have an expiration date pre-determined. You're going to die when God says you're going to die. Psalm 139:16,

"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." So, the number of my days is preset, but I want to be as healthy as I can be for as long as I can be to have a more enjoyable life and to be able to better serve God. Faith is very similar. I don't read the Bible and receive the Sacrament because I'm trying to get saved. That's done. Jesus died on the cross and suffered Hell to pay for all my sins. I feed my faith because I know that the stronger my faith is, the better I will be able to handle the trials of life. The stronger my faith is, the better I will face the armies that come against me, and the stronger my faith is, the more peace and contentment I will have while I am still in this life.

Joseph did amazing things by the faith that God gave him. But, I doubt that he thought of what he did as all that amazing. He was

just like us. He lived his life using his faith and serving God the best he could. In the end, that is that for which we all strive. We seek to serve God all our days and eventually walk through the gates of Heaven where we will hear our Father say, "Well done good and faithful servant. Receive your reward."