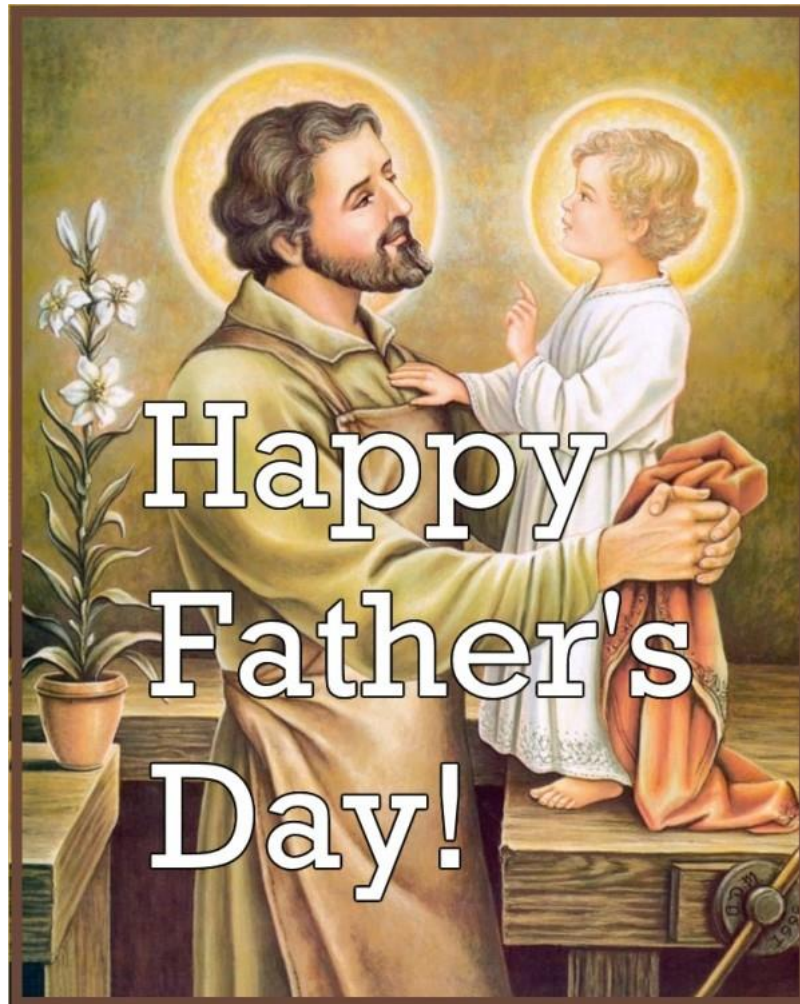


Happy Father's Day
Sunday 21st June 2020



To all the dad's in the parish – HAPPY FATHER'S DAY! One of the good bits of news that we have had in the last two weeks concerns the 'support bubble'.

'In England, if you live by yourself or are a single parent with dependent children – in other words, if there is only one adult in your home – you can expand your support network so that it includes one other household of any size. This is called making a 'support bubble' and means you are able to meet indoors or out, be less than 2 metres apart and stay overnight as you could if they were members of your own household.' (www.gov.uk)

I'm sure there are many families who have found this both comforting and healing. I'm looking forward to my mum's roast beef dinner – I've already put my order in! However, though the 'support bubble' initiative will be welcomed by many, others are still struggling despite the easing of lockdown restrictions. Loneliness, anxiety, depression and other mental health issues still abound in

many peoples lives at this moment in time. You may know a neighbour, a relative, friend or colleague who is going through a bad time. For a person who is suffering, just to know that there is somebody thinking and looking out for them can make a huge difference.

Our own Holy Father, Pope Francis, shared a beautiful devotion a few years ago with the Church about how he finds peace and reassurance during difficult times. He has this statue (below) on his desk in the Vatican.



This statue is known as '*Sleeping Saint Joseph*'. As we know St. Joseph faced many difficulties yet despite how overwhelming they seemed to be, he continued to trust in God. When he found out that Mary, his wife, had conceived by the Holy Spirit he felt unworthy to be her husband because she had been chosen by the Lord. Feeling unworthy to be near Mary, Joseph decided to divorce her informally. While silent in sleep God spoke to him.

'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus...' (Mt 1:20b-21)

His dilemma about leaving the woman he loved and cared for so much was resolved. The mental anguish of his decision was ended by God who soothed and calmed him through the vision in his dream. St. Joseph did not doubt or even err on the side of caution after God spoke to him. No. The carpenter from Nazareth trusted God so completely and unconditionally that he acted on the Lord's words immediately.

***'When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife home and, though he did not have intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.'* (Mt 1:24–25)**

The next difficulty that St. Joseph had to struggle with was becoming a refugee. King Herod, through fear and greed for power, ordered the murder of all boys age two and below. Again when St. Joseph was silent in sleep, God spoke to the foster father of His Son.

***'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.'* (Mt 2:13)**

Again St. Joseph's response to God was immediate. He did not question or try to compromise with God about leaving his homeland, his business, his friends and family. No. He just went. He just practised the Faith he professed. He lived those words that Jesus was to teach his disciples, ***'Not my will but Your will be done.'***

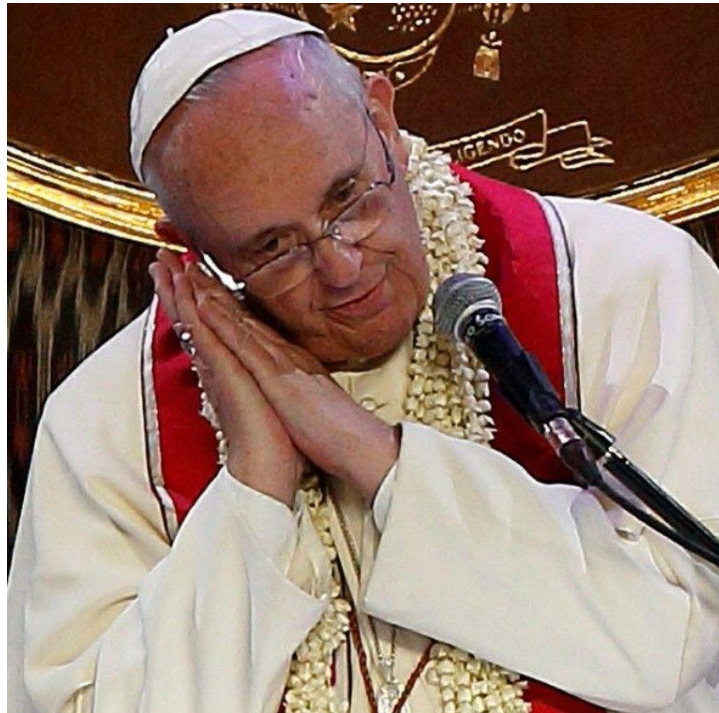
***'So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt...'* (Mt 2:14)**

When we worry, fret and are anxious sleep becomes disturbed and we feel restless. As we see from the Gospel, this never happened to Saint Joseph. Despite the dilemmas he was facing he still slept. He slept so soundly and undisturbed that he was able to hear God speak to him and reassure him about what his servant must do next. How on earth did St. Joseph, a man of flesh and blood, sleep so peacefully? Simple. His love, trust and knowledge of God permeated every fibre of his being. Faith was so deeply rooted in his heart that through suffering and daily challenges, God the steadfast rock and anchor of his life, gave him hope and certainty.



The Holy Father, when he has worries and concerns, simply writes them on a piece of paper and places that paper under the *'Sleeping Saint Joseph'* on his desk.

"I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church!" (Pope Francis)



God not only gave St. Joseph to be the foster father of His Son, but to be our spiritual father as well. He is the official patron saint of the Church. He is our protector and defender. He is our Heavenly Father's gift of what a dad should be. Brothers and Sisters if you are struggling and finding life difficult then pray to St. Joseph. He saved the lives of Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother from the evil of Herod, he looked after them and loved them so dearly and devotedly, he wills and wants to do the same for us as his adopted children.

Happy Father's Day Saint Joseph!

We have had the official news this weekend that our diocesan inspection for re-opening church for silent private prayer will take place on Thursday 25th June. I would like to say a big 'Thank You' to all those parishioners who have freely come forward and offered their time to help re-open church as volunteer stewards, cleaners and gardeners. You will be contacted by Jennifer, Karen and Navada once the inspection is completed and we will be able to engage more formally and practically with the government and diocesan directives and conditions.

Over these last three months of lockdown we have walked through Holy Week together, reflected on the Easter Gospel's, mediated with our online Rosary and prayed a parish Novena to the Holy Spirit. As our spiritual lives as Catholics is having to adapt and many people are exploring different ways of prayer I thought we could, as a parish, begin to look at the Bible. Though we are unable to attend Mass at the moment, God our Father still wants to speak to us through His Holy Word. For some people praying with the Bible will be second nature, for others it may have been a long time since they picked it up and read it. Many will approach it as a totally new experience. Whatever your knowledge of Scripture I hope over the next few weeks we all learn something new or a reminded of something forgotten. Whatever our past, present or future the Lord is waiting to speak to us personally.

God Bless and keep praying
Fr. O'Brien