

MESSAGE FROM + NOËL SIMARD, BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD, FOR THE YEAR DEDICATED TO SAINT JOSEPH
THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY

In writing an apostolic letter on St. Joseph entitled "Patris Corde (PC) (A Father's Heart)" and in dedicating the year 2021 to St. Joseph, Pope Francis wanted "to foster love for this great saint, to be moved to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his drive" (PC, n.7). Declared patron of the universal Church on December 8, 1870 by Pope Pius IX, St. Joseph has been the object of great devotion and fervor by the people of Quebec. Why this deep veneration? It is undoubtedly because the people recognize themselves in St. Joseph, "this man who goes unnoticed, the man of the daily presence, discreet and hidden, an intercessor, a support and a guide in difficult times" (PC, introduction). Close to us and to our human condition, he can be called the patron saint of the ordinary. In a world that craves achievement, extravagance and eccentricity, and that acclaims the gods of the stadium, the rich and famous, we are called to rediscover the value of simple, everyday gestures and to recognize how "our lives are woven and sustained by ordinary people, often forgotten, who do not make the headlines or appear in the big shows" (PC). No wonder Pope Francis invites us to express our gratitude to all those people who, in this time of pandemic crisis, provide health and essential services, demonstrating exceptional generosity and self-sacrifice every day.

Noble and chaste husband of Mary, St. Joseph lived the ordinary in an extraordinary way by being a beloved father who put his whole life at the service of Mary and Jesus. He thus participated in the mystery of the Incarnation and in Jesus' mission of salvation. He was a tender father who teaches us to accept our weakness with deep tenderness and to trust God, especially in the midst of the storms of life. He was an obedient father, seeking to discern and fulfill the will of the Father manifested in his dreams. He was a father who welcomed and was open to the mystery, to the unseen, to the unexpected. He teaches us to accept life as it is and to search for the meaning of our existence with its shadows and lights. Without resigning himself, he knew how to face reality and show creative courage, especially during the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and the flight into Egypt. He teaches us to go through crises by abandoning ourselves to Providence and to transform our problems into opportunities for growth in faith and love. He teaches us to care for all those who face enormous problems, such as migrants who leave their countries because of violence, persecution or poverty.

An extraordinary figure in the ordinary, St. Joseph was a hard-working father who passed on to his son the value, dignity, and joy of work, also providing his family with all the support they needed to live and fulfill themselves. He teaches us to help poor, broken or precarious families, and to ensure that "no young person, no person, no family is without work". As guardian of the Church, he challenges us about our love and commitment in the Church. Are we always ready to love and defend our mother Church, especially in her most vulnerable, needy and deprived members?

An extraordinary figure in the ordinary, St. Joseph was "the shadow on earth of the heavenly Father" (PC, n.7). He fulfilled his fatherhood by protecting and keeping constant vigil over the Child and his Mother. Knowing that "this Child was not his own and was simply entrusted to his care", he accepted to fulfill this role of adoptive father in trust, humility and silence. He teaches us all to be fathers, "to take responsibility for the life of another", and to do so in a spirit of gratuity, freedom and detachment.

Throughout this year dedicated to St. Joseph, this great saint is proposed to us as a model and "patron" to stimulate our following of Christ and under the loving gaze of Mary, to strengthen our commitment in the Church and to develop our concern for a more just and fraternal world. To this end, a diocesan committee, headed by Mrs. Cynthia Crevier, has been set up. I invite you to consult the website to learn

about the program that this committee has put in place and to be creative in proposing activities and projects. St. Joseph will also help us to create happiness, a simple and daily happiness, through a word that consoles and a heart that gives. May we begin this year with an open, tender and loving heart, asking St. Joseph to guide us along the path of life so that, following his example, we too may know how to live the ordinary in an extraordinary way, and thus exercise that "fatherhood" necessary to the proclamation of the Good News and the building of the Kingdom.