



Joseph

*Mercy in Action -
Prayer and
Discernment*





The one thing that she did and does is the one thing that we all have to do, namely, to bear Christ into the world. Advent is the season of the seed: Christ loved this symbol of the seed. The seed, He said, is the Word of God sown in the human heart.

The Advent, the seed of the world's life, was hidden in Our Lady. Like the wheat seed in the earth, the seed of the Bread of Life was in her. Like the golden harvest in the darkness of the earth, the Glory of God was shrined in her darkness.



Advent is the season of the secret, the secret of the growth of Christ, of Divine Love growing in silence. It is the season of humility, silence and growth.

Caryll Houselander, the Reed of God, pp xi, 28





"Mercy" as hesed - Mercy through response to God's blessings, helping others, giving generously to the poor

Acts of mercy are closely related to the concern for "justice" in the Scriptures.

Those who despise their neighbours are sinners, happy are those who are kind to the poor.

Prov 14:21

Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake. Deut 14: 28,29

Observe the sabbath day...you shall not do any work, you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey or the resident aliens in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm...

Deut 5:12-15

Corporal Works of Mercy

- acts of kindness that help our neighbours
in material and physical need.

feed the hungry

give drink to the thirsty

clothe the naked

shelter the homeless

visit the sick

visit the imprisoned

bury the dead



Spiritual Works of Mercy

- acts of compassion to help our neighbours in emotional and spiritual need.

counsel the doubtful

instruct the ignorant

admonish sinners

comfort the afflicted

forgive offenses

bear wrongs patiently

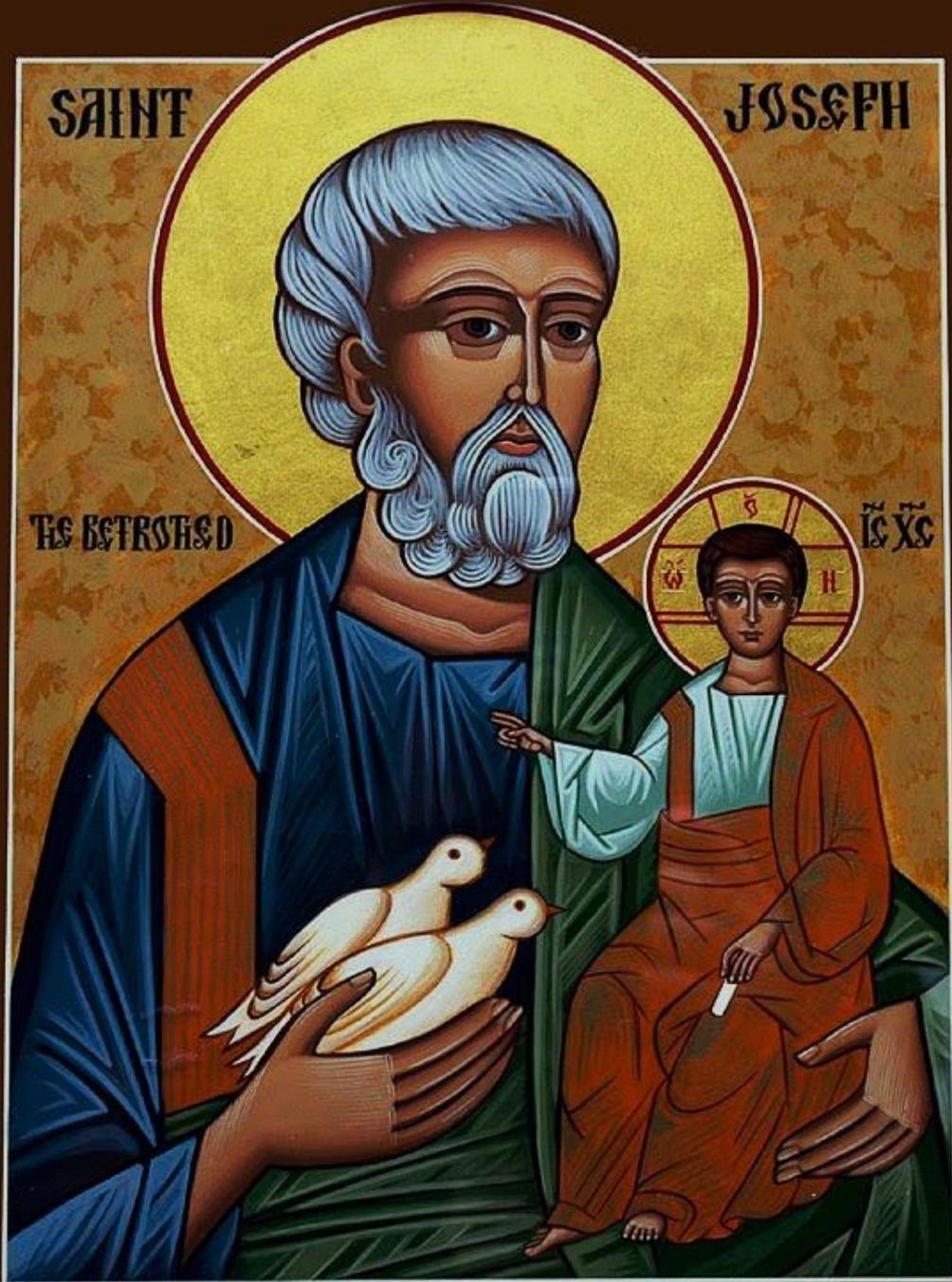
pray for the living and the dead



"Is this not the
carpenter's son?"

(Mt 13:55)







Ps 1

If you want to be open
to God's blessing
do not follow those
whose hearts have no
place for God. Do not
linger in the way of
sinners,
or sit and scoff with
cynics.



Find your delight in the
law of the Lord.

Meditate on it night
and day.

If you do that, you will be
like a tree planted by
running water,
bearing fruit in season,
its leaves always green,
its yield always abundant.
All that you do will
prosper.



Not so for those
whose hearts are
closed to God.
They are like chaff
scattered by the wind.
It will go ill with
them at the
judgment.



They will have no
place among the just.
The Lord looks with
love on the way of the
just. The way of
sinners leads only to
destruction.



Joseph does not embody the form of externalised legalism that Jesus denounces in Mt 23 and that Paul opposes strenuously.

He lives the law as gospel. He seeks the path that brings law and love into a unity. And so he is inwardly prepared for the new, unexpected and humanly speaking incredible news that comes to him from God.

Jesus of Nazareth, The Infancy Narratives,
Pope Benedict XVI, pp39,40

An empty spirit is one that is confused by nothing, has not attached its best to any fixed way of acting, and has no concern whatever in anything for its own gain, for it is all sunk deep down into God's dearest will and has forsaken its own. No one can perform any work, however humble, without gaining strength and power from this.





We ought to pray so powerfully that we should like to put our every member and strength, our two eyes and ears, mouth, heart and all our senses to work;

and we should not
give up until we find
that we wish to be
one with the one
who is present to us
and whom we
entreat, namely God.

Meister Eckhart

1260-1327



Only profound and quiet concentration can out us on the track of our heart and of the prayer within it. Andre Louf (1929-) French Cistercian Abbot





Listen
to the Angel...

and
to your
dreams...

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Mt11: 18-20





The Escape to Egypt

“Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” Mt 2:14









Joseph's discernment

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:2



Discernment

- safeguards the health of the spiritual journey.
- together with prayer and inner contemplation reveal the most suitable spiritual path.
- is a gift that we pray God would grant us, but it is also a gift honed with experience.

- permeates our way of thinking, our thoughts and our approach to life
- We cannot be discerning in one aspect of life and not in another.
- opens our hearts to discern and receive the word of God.

Balance of the Heart – Desert Spirituality for
Twenty – First Century Christians, Lois Farag,
pp 173 - 186



Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit and applies to all things, all actions.

- sign of a renewed mind
- practise with moderation and guidance





