

at they are free to do whatever they desire
asc. However, this is not true. Chastity is
ell, in order for couples to truly love one
unity and respect for each other.

A GENTLEMAN. Saint Joseph is the first
to Jesus, he is the greatest example of
married to the most beautiful woman in
her with respect, dignity, and reverence. If
Joseph — protectors and defenders of
of the feminine mystery — what

to St. Joseph. He is the *first* Chaste
will be called to marriage, while
Both vocations are necessary.
Without priests, there are
be chaste in marriage; priests
in their chaste love for the
and protectors of the beauty
of the sacred mysteries.

ward of the mys-
of the sanctuary,
He [Joseph] thus
is betrothed;

Pope Benedict XVI

DAY 13

Foster Father of the Son of God, *Pray for Us*

The position of St. Joseph as husband and foster father gives witness to the dignity of fatherhood.¹

— Venerable Joseph Mindszenty

Christians use many terms to describe the fatherhood of St. Joseph. He is called the legal, putative, spiritual, virginal, and foster father of Jesus. While none of these titles is found in the New Testament, they are all legitimate ways of describing St. Joseph's fatherhood. Of these titles, foster father is the most common. The reason it is the most common title is that the naming of a child in ancient Jewish custom was the legal responsibility of the father.

Although you [St. Joseph] are not necessary for the [child's] conception and birth, nevertheless you will be necessary for [his] sustenance; and your first care will concern his name.²

— St. Albert the Great

Saint Joseph's legal responsibility of naming the Christ Child was given by God when the angel revealed to St. Joseph that he was not to be afraid to take Mary — and the Child in her womb — into his home and under his care. Saint Joseph's role of naming the Savior is an extremely important one. It is meant to signify to the world that St. Joseph is the legal father of Jesus.

Saint Joseph's dignity springs from his privilege of being the legal father of the Incarnate Son of God. Here, then, is a man whom the Son of God calls father, one whom he [Jesus] serves and obeys and before whom he kneels for a paternal blessing.³

— St. Peter Julian Eymard

Saint Joseph's role as the "Foster Father" of Jesus might come across as something merely contractual, but the Latin provides us with a deeper insight into St. Joseph's role. In Latin, the title given to St. Joseph to signify his role as foster father is *Filii Dei Nutricie*. Literally, it means "Nurturer of the Son of God." As you can see, the title foster father is a very poor translation from the Latin original.

Calling St. Joseph the foster father of Jesus is valid, of course, but it needs to be emphasized that St. Joseph's fatherhood was more than a legal fatherhood; St. Joseph's fatherhood was an authoritative, affectionate, faithful, and everlasting fatherhood.

SAINT JOSEPH'S SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD IS FOREVER. The loving relationship between a spiritual father and child endures forever. In other words, Jesus continues to be the Son of Joseph in heaven. In paradise, St. Joseph no longer exercises a "legal" fatherhood over Jesus, but his relationship of love, affection, and faithfulness toward Jesus, as well as the Mystical Body of Jesus, remains. Unlike marriage, where the relationship does not remain into eternity (see Mt 22:30), St. Joseph's spiritual fatherhood over Christ and his Mystical Body endures forever.

Spiritual fatherhood, like spiritual motherhood, endures forever. Were this not the case, the Church would need to cease invoking Jesus as the "Son of Joseph." The Church would also be required to cease invoking Mary, who is in heaven, as our spiritual mother.

SAINT JOSEPH WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER. What is valid for Jesus is valid for you. Saint Joseph is forever your spiritual father. As he took care of Jesus while on earth, St. Joseph will take care of you on your earthly pilgrimage. Saint Joseph is your loving provider, educator, and protector. When your life on earth is over, St. Joseph will continue to be your father, not on an earthly level, but on a spiritual level. In heaven, you will forever be known as a child of St. Joseph.

No one will ever be able worthily to praise Joseph, whom thou,
O true only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, has deigned to
have for thy foster father!⁴

— St. Ephrem the Syrian

Read "Virginal Father of Jesus" (page 127)
Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (page 233)