

Sleeping St. Joseph

In vain is your earlier rising, your going later to rest, you who toil for the bread you eat: when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.

— Psalm 127:2

God loves sleep. He made it. Your Heavenly Father has designed you so that approximately one-third of your life should be spent asleep. He himself rested after creating the heavens and the earth (see Gen 2:2-3).

God is a father. He delights in his children when they sleep. God communicates with his children when they sleep. It's a biblical fact. In the life and mission of St. Joseph, God chose to speak to him as he slept. On four occasions, God communicated through an angel to St. Joseph very important messages in his dreams (see Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22).

Saint Joseph's sleep is so important and powerful that Satan fears it. Christianity has always held that Satan, a rebellious creature, chose not to serve God, arrogantly declaring, "*Non serviam*" ("I will not serve"; Jer 2:20). In contrast, the Virgin Mary utters her humble "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" ("Be it done to me according to your word" [Lk 1:38]). The great St. Joseph responds more with obedient action than with words: "*Fecit sicut praecepit ei angelus Domini*" ("He did as the angel of the Lord commanded" [Mt 1:24]). Saint Joseph's sleep is a game-changer!

According to the New Testament, St. Joseph's sleep is prayer. In heaven, St. Joseph no longer sleeps, of course, but in eternity he does "rest in the Lord." Is not the afterlife called "eternal rest"?

In recent times, a popular devotion to St. Joseph under the title "Sleeping St. Joseph" has developed in the Church. It involves obtaining a statue depicting St. Joseph asleep, asking St. Joseph's intercession for a particular intention, writing the intention on a piece of paper, and placing the piece of paper underneath the statue of Sleeping St. Joseph. In doing this, a person is asking St. Joseph to bring his or her intention to God. The Sleeping St. Joseph devotion is a wonderful way to stay connected to your spiritual father and ask him to pray (sleep) on your intentions.

The French poet Charles Péguy wrote about the importance of sleep in an incredible poem, titled *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*.

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The poem is written from God's perspective and is meant to remind modern man that God delights in his children when they sleep. Here's an excerpt:

Just sleep. Why don't people make use of it?
I've given this secret to everyone, says God. I haven't sold it.
He who sleeps well, lives well. He who sleeps, prays.
He who works, prays too. But there's time for everything. Both for
sleep and for work.
Work and sleep are like two brothers. And they get on very well
together.
And sleep leads to work just like work leads to sleep.
He who works well sleeps well, he who sleeps well works well.



And yet they tell me that there are men who don't sleep.
I don't like the man who doesn't sleep, says God.
Sleep is the friend of man.
Sleep is the friend of God.
Sleep may be my most beautiful creation.
And I too rested on the seventh day.
He whose heart is pure, sleeps. And he who sleeps has a pure heart.
This is the great secret to being as indefatigable as a child.



Yes, they tell me that there are men who work well and who sleep poorly.
Who don't sleep. What a lack of confidence in me.



I'm talking about those who work and who don't sleep.
I pity them. I'm talking about those who work, and who thus
in doing this are following my commandment, poor children.
And who, on the other hand, don't have the courage, don't have the
confidence to sleep.
I pity them. I hold it against them. A bit. They don't trust me.
As a child lays innocently in his mother's arms, thus do they not lay
innocently in the arms of my Providence.
They have the courage to work. They don't have the courage to do
nothing.
They possess the virtue of work. They don't possess the virtue of doing
nothing.
Of relaxing. Of resting. Of sleeping.
Unhappy people, they don't know what's good.¹

— Charles Péguy

The sleep of St. Joseph can teach modern man important lessons about life. One of the most important lessons it teaches us is that it is

okay to rest. Being a workaholic is never a good thing. Saint Joseph was not a workaholic. He liked to sleep. Sleep refreshed his soul. God communicated with St. Joseph when he slept, and he was a holier husband and father because of it.

You are not wasting time when you rest. Sleep is pleasing to God. God will speak to you and refresh your soul when you sleep.

If you are able, obtain a statue of "Sleeping St. Joseph" (see page 324 to order one from the Marian Fathers). Write down your intentions and place them in the care of St. Joseph. Let him communicate with God about you.

O Saint Joseph, you are a man greatly favored by the Most High. The angel of the Lord appeared to you in dreams, while you slept, to warn you and guide you as you cared for the Holy Family. You were both silent and strong, a loyal and courageous protector. Dear Saint Joseph, as you rest in the Lord, confident of his absolute power and goodness, look upon me. Please take my need into your heart, dream of it, and present it to your Son. Help me then, good Saint Joseph, to hear the voice of God, to arise, and act with love. I praise and thank God with joy. Saint Joseph, I love you. Amen.