

WONDER 10

TERROR OF DEMONS

Saint Joseph is most powerful against the demons which fight against us.

— St. Alphonsus Liguori

Saint Joseph the Worker

Like all Christians at that time, I too was happy and grateful at the Church's decision to declare a liturgical feast in honor of St. Joseph the Worker. This feast, which ratifies the divine value of work, shows how the Church publicly echoes central truths of the Gospel which God wishes men to meditate on, especially in our own time.¹

— St. Josemaría Escrivá

The “time” St. Josemaría Escrivá mentions was the year 1955. It was the year the Church called upon her great protector to overcome a great evil: communism.

In the first half of the 20th century, communism had gained support from many leaders around the world, and entire nations had succumbed to its ideas. In 1937, Pope Pius XI realized the serious threat that communism posed to the common good and called upon St. Joseph to protect the Church from the many errors of communism. He wrote:

We place the vast campaign of the Church against world communism under the standard of St. Joseph, her mighty protector.²

As a result of Pope Pius XI's words, Catholics fervently began to pray to St. Joseph, specifically under the title “Terror of Demons,” to combat the atheistic ideas of communism. They also invoked the help of St. Joseph in the cause of workers' rights. Both of these issues were major topics of concern in the mid-20th century.

On a related note, did you know that in the mid-19th century, May 1 was celebrated by many countries around the world as a secular holiday? It was called “May Day” and was neither a religious nor a

political holiday. Sadly, in the mid-20th century, communists wanted to take over the secular holiday and re-designate it as “Communist Worker’s Day.” Renaming the holiday and emphasizing the ideas of communism were viewed as a way of influencing the masses. This development greatly concerned the Church because a celebration honoring the communist idea of work would have long-lasting effects on workers and negatively impact society and the family. At the time, the threat of worldwide communism was felt by everyone, including the pope.

The Vicar of Christ, Venerable Pope Pius XII, turned to St. Joseph, as his predecessor had done, and denounced the falsehoods of communism by elevating the dignity of workers in a very specific way.

On May 1, 1955, Pope Pius XII declared May 1 to be the liturgical feast of St. Joseph the Worker. He wrote:

We are happy to announce to you our determination to institute — as in fact we do institute — the liturgical feast of St. Joseph the Worker, assigning it as the first day of May. Are you pleased with this our gift, beloved workers? We are certain that you are, because the humble workman of Nazareth not only personifies before God and the Church the dignity of the man who works with his hands, but is always the provident guardian of you and your families.³

Saint Joseph is, indeed, a light in the darkness and the Model of Workmen. He brings to light the malice of the enemies of the family. He brings light into the darkness of erroneous movements that seek to strip people of their human dignity and eliminate God from the minds and hearts of families and nations. Whether he is confronting communism, fascism, or any other kind of political ideology, St. Joseph is the protector of human dignity. He is the Terror of Demons!

God our Father, creator and ruler of the universe, in every age you call man to develop and use his gifts for the good of others. With St. Joseph as our example and guide, help us to do the work you have asked and come to the rewards you have promised.

— Opening Prayer for the Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker