



THE PASTOR'S POST

SLEEP ON IT!

Dear Parish Family:

This year, we pray with the Gospel of Matthew as we use the Cycle A readings in the lectionary (the book of readings we use at Mass). It is in this Gospel that we encounter St. Joseph most profoundly. Today, the Wednesday before this Sunday, we read the genealogy of St. Joseph and how he links the life of Jesus to the Old Testament.

I am a huge St. Joseph fan! Please forgive me if I have shared part of this story before but if I have, it's worth repeating!) I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph in some way or another for most of my life (they're still teaching me!) and I have come to admire St. Joseph's deep humility and response to God's call. I pray that I can grow in both of those areas.

A few years ago, I was asked to assist a young person in considerable need linked to the group home where I volunteer. It took a lot of time and energy, a lot of battles with legal authorities, court cases and the like. Linking him to a local university, helping him to resolve some issues with his birth and adoptive parents, supporting him as he worked through legal issues that were not his fault and assisting him in navigating how to deal with a priest and a social worker to name a few. It was emotionally difficult as I tried to navigate a number of roles while attempting to support this person through a difficult moment in his life - and at that point trying to get used to a new parish in Westbury!

I remember talking to a good spiritual friend - a Dominican sister, no less - telling her about what I was going through and the weight I was feeling. It was around this time of the year because the Gospel was the gospel of today (December 17). She listened so well and finally said, "You need to talk to St. Joseph." As she said it, a great peace came over me. He knows some of your feelings, she assured me. A moment of consolation, of grace, for sure. I started to light a candle by St. Joseph each day in the Church and still do to this day.

I laughed at myself because I have always had a place for St. Joseph in my prayer life. For a number of years, I have always made use of the Sleeping Saint Joseph. (I enclosed a picture from this morning.) The tradition is based on the Gospel we pray with today and on Christmas Eve. Joseph is ready to walk away, to give up. He goes to sleep and in a dream a messenger comes. He is able to get up and to respond to God's call. The story of our salvation continues.

The tradition of the Sleeping St. Joseph invites us to consider those moments when we feel like St. Joseph. It might involve something in our families or

someone we care about or even something in our own hearts. Then, place the paper under the statue of St. Joseph and say quietly, "Saint Joseph, sleep on this!" You can see some of my papers there and I have a basket full of many others. Each morning, usually, I write a few names or words down that are on my heart or for someone I'm concerned about or for someone I'm asked to pray. It



gives me a moment to talk to St. Joseph and to ask his help.

I cannot say that every intention or prayer was answered as I thought best, but there has never been a time where I have not looked back to see a string of God's consolation. It helps me, like St. Joseph, to get up again confident there is no reason to fear. Like God was so present to St. Joseph, he is present to you and to me.

So, there are four days left until Christmas. Maybe you are stressed? Maybe you are not? Maybe you can't wait for Christmas? Maybe you can't wait for Christmas to be over? Wherever you may be these days, turn to St. Joseph. How about this? Pray with the first two chapters of the Gospel of Matthew this and consider the ways Joseph had to respond again and again to God's call. See what God asked of Joseph and he responded...and let's pray that we can respond too.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Featherman 7

