

## Feast of St. Joseph: Mass at Little Sisters of the Poor, Preston, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016



The Scripture readings chosen for the feast of St. Joseph highlight the theme of faith and its importance in the life of Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and guardian of the child Jesus. The model of faith the apostle Paul teaches is Abraham, for he believed in God's promise that Sarah and he would be the parents of a child, despite their old age and being long past the age of having children. Abraham, however, hoped against hope and his unwavering faith was pleasing in God's sight, and he was rewarded with the birth of Isaac, the child of promise.

Joseph followed in the footsteps of Abraham, for he too was called by God to walk the road of faith. Joseph's generous response in faith meant that he cooperated with God and gave a home to Mary and cared for her and her son, who was also the Son of God. The gospel story relates how Joseph had to accept in faith things he did not understand. Believing means that we have often to be in the dark and place our trust in God. Joseph had to accept in faith that the child Mary was carrying had been conceived mysteriously through the power of the Holy Spirit. He had to make a leap of faith.

His faithful response in faith allowed God's plan for the salvation of the world through the humanity of Jesus Christ to unfold and eventually come to fruition. Joseph's behaviour and attitude can be an inspiration to all of us, for like him we have to walk the often lonely road of faith. There is so much that we cannot understand, we suffer disappointments and setbacks, yet just as Joseph knew in the certainty of faith that God is never far away, so we have the assurance of faith that the Son of God constantly reaches out in love and mercy towards us. This we know and believe.

Joseph, we read in the preface of today's Mass, was **'that just man, that wise and loyal servant whom you placed at the head of your family.'** We salute Saint Joseph today, paying him the honour and respect due as the chosen spouse of Mary and protector of the child Jesus. We ask him to watch over the Church, the family of God, and to keep us strong in the ways of faith, and with Mary may he pray for us now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

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Bishop of Lancaster