

Archbishop Smith: Taking After Saint Joseph

The Archdiocese of Edmonton certainly has a long tradition of devotion to St. Joseph. Every time one turns a corner, something named after him is encountered. The cathedral, our seminary, the Catholic college at the University of Alberta, an auxiliary hospital and our first Catholic high school all bear the name of this wonderful saint.

Far more important than naming an institution after Saint Joseph is taking after him in our daily living. As patron of the universal Church, Saint Joseph is a model for each of us to imitate as we live out our baptismal call to holiness.



St. Joseph College at the University of Alberta.

His example is always a timely one, yet it stands out in our present circumstances as especially important and helpful. Saint Joseph teaches us to trust that God is always at work guiding the events of our lives, particularly when occurrences escape our understanding. Beginning with the first angelic message to him, Joseph found himself having to surrender in trust, time and

again, to the plan and wisdom of God in very puzzling and often worrisome circumstances – the virginal conception of Jesus in the womb of his betrothed, the wondrous circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt following the nativity, listening to the startling prophecy of Simeon, and hearing Jesus speak in the Temple to the teachers of the Law. At no time did his trust waver. He knew that God was in charge, directing all things in accord with His perfect plan. He trusted, he surrendered, and he obeyed.



St. Joseph Seminary.

The past 12 months of pandemic have placed many of us in perplexing and frightening situations. Where is God in all of this? Is he hearing my prayers? Why is this happening? I just don't get it. These and other sentiments are frequently given voice in these unusual times. Our call in moments such as these is quietly and trustingly to place all things just as they are in God's hands and leave things to Him. This is the example given us in good St. Joseph. We need it right now, and so are especially grateful to Pope Francis for his intuition that this the time to honour the saint and draw inspiration and strength from his example.



St. Joseph's Cathedral Basilica in Edmonton.

Due to our long-standing love in the Archdiocese of Edmonton for this righteous man and spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we welcome the designation by the Holy Father of the Year of Saint Joseph. Launched on Dec. 8 of last year, it will conclude on the same date of this present one. At the level of the Archdiocese, we shall celebrate at St. Joseph's Basilica three solemn liturgies to mark this special Year: March 19, Solemnity of Saint Joseph; May 1, Feast of St. Joseph the Worker (our patronal feast as an Archdiocese); and Dec. 8, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, to mark then the official close of the Year. In addition, we have a novena to pray to Saint Joseph prior to March 19th or at any time during the year, as well as a special prayer that individuals and families can use on a daily basis. Many of our parishes have also initiated a number of activities at their local level to honour our patron saint.

I am delighted that many of our institutions are named after Saint Joseph. Real joy will arise in all of our hearts if we take after him. Let's make a concerted effort to do so, not only in this Year of Saint Joseph but also at all times, especially those that are filled with difficulty and dread. With the help of his prayers, may we, like him, trust God, surrender in faith, and follow wherever He leads.



St. Joseph High School in Edmonton.