

## **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION:**

### **The Confraternity of Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph**

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**Holiness, Purity, Reparation**

## **THE CONFRATERNITY OF INTERCESSORS FOR PRIESTS IN THE HEART OF ST. JOSEPH**

### **What is the Confraternity of Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph?**

Priests are in desperate need of prayer. Like all Christians, priests too need on-going conversion. Without a priest's personal prayer life a priest will be unable to persevere in grace and achieve the kind of interior conversion that brings authenticity to his witness of Jesus. In fact, Blessed Antonio Rosmini, an Italian priest and philosopher of the nineteenth century, wrote: "If all priests were men of prayer the entire world would be converted. . . Grace is lacking because the prayer of priests is lacking" (*Talks to Priests*, pg. 31). The people of God must assist priests with their own prayers so that priests will persevere in grace and virtue and their vocation; that priests will respond generously to holiness of life and therefore attain deeper conversion. Priests must be men of prayer. Priests must be men of deep conversion and interior holiness. Our world desperately needs this for without priests "grace is lacking."

Prayer is essential to salvation and praying for each other is an obligation incumbent upon all the baptized by virtue of baptism. This obligation is intensified in the case of priests. Given their vocation, they are particularly the object of demonic attacks. Prayer calls down God's grace and protection. The Intercessors for Priests seeks to be a community of Catholics dedicated to regular intercession for the priests of the Church in the Heart of St. Joseph. Priests give us Jesus in the Eucharist. Regular prayer for them is the least we can do to show our gratitude.

The particular prayer the Intercessors are committed to is prayer in union with St. Joseph. After Our Lady, there is no more powerful or holier person than St. Joseph. The Intercessors place themselves and entrust all priests to the pure Heart of St. Joseph, confident that he will assist priests in growing in holiness of life and purity of mind, body and spirit.

### **Are there particular intentions one must pray for to be a member of the Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph?**

There are Three Intentions every member must pray for regularly, especially on Wednesdays:

1. Pray for the holiness of priests
2. Pray for purity of mind, body and spirit for priests
3. Pray in reparation for sins of priests

These Three Intentions form the very soul of the Intercessors. It is the reason for the creation of this Confraternity. In order to become a member one must be committed to pray for these intentions on an on-going basis.

## **Are there certain activities that accompany the Three Intentions?**

There are Four Activities every member must practice:

1. On Wednesdays entrust priests to the heart of St. Joseph and pray for priests' holiness and purity of life. Pray the Litany of Reparation for Sins of Priests. (These prayers are contained in the "Manual of Prayer.")
2. Pray the Rosary on Wednesday for the Three Intentions.
3. Make some sacrifice on Wednesday for the Three Intentions.
4. If possible, make a holy hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament during the week for the Three Intentions; if a holy hour is not possible, then one should pray as long as possible in the Eucharistic Presence for the Three Intentions.

### **Please explain further about the Three Intentions.**

*The First Intention is for holiness of life for all priests.* Priests are entrusted with the administration of the sacraments and assisting in the salvation of souls. Sacraments are gifts from the Sacred Heart of Jesus for our salvation. Every sacrament confers sanctifying grace. Priests though are not to be mere "dispensers of grace." They themselves are called to holiness of life, to the perfection of charity. Hebrews reminds us that without this holiness it is impossible to see God (Hebrews 12.14).

The efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on the personal holiness of the priest. This was a heresy in the early Church called Donatism; the ordained priest serves as His instrument. Christ Jesus Himself is the principal Priest. It is His grace coming from the Cross that He imparts to souls through the sacraments.

But the holier the priest is the greater Jesus can use him in the economy of salvation. We must assist priests with our prayers and sacrifices that they may correspond more generously to the grace Jesus offers them.

*The Second Intention is for purity of life for priests.* It follows from the first intention for a priest cannot advance in holiness of life if he is not at the same time pure in mind, body and spirit. Jesus tells us in His Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5.8). Purity therefore is that virtue that disposes the heart to see God more clearly in others and in creation and it is the precondition upon which we can see Him face-to-face. Through a pure heart, persons are appreciated as icons of the Living God and not objectified. Purity, through the gift of understanding, penetrates the mysteries of God and thereby draws us more intimately into union with God. The fruit of a pure soul is a joyful soul (cf. Galatians 5.22).

Priests are called to purity of mind, body and spirit, so they can excel in holiness and in joy. The pure priest is a priest centered on Jesus; his heart is not divided or distracted. To the degree a priest is pure his ministry will be more effective. He is called to witness to Gospel joy and can do so only in purity of heart.

*The Third Intention is to pray in reparation for the sins of priests.* St. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12.26 that if one member of the Body of Christ suffers, then the whole Body suffers. There is such an interior solidarity to the Mystical Body of Christ that we are all truly interconnected. Venerable Pope Paul VI made this same point in his Apostolic Constitution, *The Doctrine of Indulgences*: “There reigns among men, by the hidden and benign mystery of the divine will, a supernatural solidarity whereby the sin of one harms the others just as the holiness of one also benefits the others” (*The Doctrine of Indulgences*, 4).

Whenever a priest sins, especially against the sixth commandment, tremendous harm is done to the Mystical Body of Christ. Sin causes a disorder in the Mystical Body and this disorder must be addressed; reparation is a matter of justice. We, as members of the Mystical Body, can help by praying in reparation for sin. Prayer draws down God’s grace and that grace can act as a salve in the wound of sin.

### **Why St. Joseph?**

Saint Joseph’s fatherhood is an appropriate model for priests today. His fatherhood is grounded, not in a physical relationship with Our Lady, but in a spiritual relationship. Being the true spouse of the glorious Mother of God, St. Joseph, by divine providence, is intimately associated with the Son of God and the Mother of God and therefore with the economy of salvation.

It can be said that St. Joseph is a father to Jesus in every sense of the word, except for physical generation. He loved Him with a father’s heart and this heart is no doubt beating with perfect love for Jesus and for those men who are sacramentally configured to Him by virtue of ordination. Since St. Joseph was a father to Jesus, then by extension he is a father to all priests who are “other Christs.”

Fathers model fatherhood to their sons. And St. Joseph did this perfectly. He can do so even now for priests, his spiritual sons. St. Joseph was faithful, consumed with love for his Son and his spouse, Our Lady. Because St. Joseph was the spouse of Our Lady and the legal father of Jesus, he was therefore the head of the Holy Family and the provider for this Family. As prefigured by Joseph the Patriarch, who was given charge to protect the wheat for the time of famine (see Genesis 41.35), so St. Joseph protected with the greatest care the One who is the Bread of Life, so we can be fed unto eternal life (see John 6.35ff). St. Joseph, with his own two hands, held Jesus, and offered thanksgiving to God the Father for the privilege of being entrusted with the Word-made-flesh. St. Joseph excelled in humility, that virtue that is necessary for the other virtues to flourish. St. Joseph was a man of silence and contemplation. As Our Lady did, he cherished in his pure heart the communion of love he had with his spouse and his Son (cf. Luke 2.19 and 2.51).

All of these qualities are vital to the spiritual life of a priest. St. Joseph is therefore the perfect model for all these virtues and a perfect model for the fatherhood of priests.

### **Please explain further this idea that St. Joseph is the spiritual father of priests.**

As Catholics we hold as a cherished belief that Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is our own Mother in the order of grace. Jesus gave Our Lady to St. John as his own Mother (see John 19.26). In this instance St. John represents all followers of Jesus.

Also, because of our baptism into Jesus, His Mother becomes our Mother. Baptism causes Jesus to be “born” into our souls. Just as Our Lady was instrumental in conferring her humanity upon the Divine Word, so that the Word was made flesh (John 1.14), Our Lady must be involved in this process whereby the Word comes to birth in every baptized person. We become by grace what Jesus is by nature! She truly is our Mother in the order of grace.

By extension we can say that St. Joseph is the father of all the baptized and in a special sense the father of all priests. Providence chose St. Joseph and predestined for him a significant role in salvation history; there is no greater vocation possible other than to be the Mother of God. St. Joseph was a real father to Jesus, with the sole exception he did not physically generate Jesus. And since priests are uniquely configured as “other Christs”, so St. Joseph enters into a particular relationship with all priests as their spiritual father. Priests are thus spiritual sons of this great father; what St. Joseph did for Jesus, he desires to do for the priests of His Son.

### **Why do all this on Wednesdays?**

According to a long standing tradition, Sundays are dedicated to Our Lord’s glorious resurrection; Mondays are dedicated to the holy souls in purgatory; Tuesdays to the holy angels; Wednesdays to St. Joseph; Thursdays to the Holy Eucharist; Fridays to Our Lord’s Passion; Saturdays to Our Lady.

In keeping with this tradition, we turn to St. Joseph especially on “his day.” If Wednesday does not work out for performing the Four Activities for whatever reason, any other day of the week would be suitable.

### **Are there any other requirements?**

Though not required and certainly not binding under pain of sin, it is highly recommended that members prepare themselves for the principal feasts of St. Joseph with a fast on the day before the feast.

The principal feasts in honor of St. Joseph are as follows:

1. March 19 – St. Joseph, Spouse of Mary
2. May 1 – St. Joseph the Worker
3. The Sunday after Christmas – Holy Family

The fast preceding the feast is left to the discretion of the individual member. One may seek to fast as the Church counsels on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. One may seek to fast from meat or from something else on that day.

The nature of a fast is to deprive oneself of something that is in and of itself good. Jesus Himself taught that prayer combined with fasting is even more powerful (see Mark 9.29, RSV).

### **Can I do this on my own or do I need to affiliate with a group in my parish or surrounding area?**

One may become a member and fulfill all the requirements without belonging to a group *per se* other than becoming a member of the Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph. (For information on how one officially becomes a member, see below.)

It is desirable, however, for groups within a parish to form. Hopefully priests will see the value of this confraternity and encourage the formation of a prayer group in his own parish.

A group within a parish is considered a “chapter,” when there are at least 3 registered Intercessors and the Pastor of the parish requests recognition as a chapter from the Confraternity. (For Information on how a parish creates a chapter, see below.) A chapter takes the name of the parish, such as the St. Joan of Arc Chapter.

Members, whether in a chapter or as individuals, are called “Intercessors.”

### **Is there any cost to become an Intercessor for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph?**

There is no cost at all, except for the commitment to pray regularly for the Three Intentions and practice the Four Activities. Donations may be made to help defray the cost of printing the literature and the postage.

### **Does this Confraternity have the support of the Church?**

The Confraternity of Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of Saint Joseph was first established in the Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama, and was enthusiastically approved by Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi on July 25, 2013. In the letter of approval, Archbishop Rodi wrote: “Prayer is powerful and this Confraternity, through its spiritual support, will bring countless blessings to us who serve in ordained priestly ministry.”

### **How do I become a member?**

One should pray, asking St. Joseph to direct your decision. There is a commitment that comes with becoming an Intercessor. If after prayer, one discerns a call to join, you may enroll in one of two ways: Complete the attached form and return it to the following address:

[Sticker with address]

Or one may complete the application form on the official website:  
[www.intercessorsforpriests.com](http://www.intercessorsforpriests.com)

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**Application for an Individual to become an Intercessor for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph**

Name

Address

Phone

Email Address

Parish

***I have read this introductory information and I pledge to fulfill the requirements of prayer and sacrifice to the best of my ability. I realize too this pledge is not binding under pain of sin.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

After acceptance into the Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph, you will be sent a "Manual of Prayer."

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**Application to form a Chapter of Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph**

Parish Name

Address

Phone

Parish email address

Pastor's Name

***As Pastor of the above named Parish, I welcome the formation of a Chapter in my Parish of Intercessors for Priests in the Heart of St. Joseph.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date