

# SAINT JOSEPH: THE DREAM OF VOCATION

6th Hospitaller Week of Prayer for Vocations  
19 - 25 April 2021

Hospitaller Order of St John of God



ORDINE OSPEDALIERO di  
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## Introduction

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Dear Members of the Hospitaller Family of Saint John of God,

The members of the General Commission for Vocation Promotion and Formation of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God are united with you and send you our Easter greetings and wish to present to you the devotional materials we have prepared for the 6th Hospitaller Week of Prayer for Vocations.

Wherever we are in the world, we are all still in a precarious situation because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which Brothers and Co-workers, members of our Family, have personally suffered by becoming infected with this virus, some of who have even died. We join you in prayer and remember them all.

Against this continuing situation, and without wishing to ignore it, we are still praying for, encouraging and promoting the vocation to Hospitality. And we are doing so in a year in which, as Church, we are celebrating two major events: firstly, in 2021, in Spain we are celebrating the Jubilee Year of the Monastery of Guadalupe - a hugely significant place in the life and vocation of St John of God, where he prayed, discerned and learned how to organise the hospital care he desired to initiate to offer the best possible service to the poor and the sick. And secondly, on 8 December 2020, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis inaugurated the Year especially dedicated to him. We have very few explicit references linking St Joseph and the Hospitaller Order of St John of God apart from a few facilities bearing his name. We do know, however, that at the 1965 General Chapter of the Hospitaller Order, St Joseph was chosen as the patron saint of Hospitaller vocations.

These are two events that we wanted to recall when preparing this year's 6th Hospitaller Week of Prayer for Vocations which will take place from 19 to 25 April, 2021. On the last day, the Fourth Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday), we will join the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations with the whole universal Church.

We are proposing a very flexible format so that you can use whenever you think it most appropriate. Each day begins with an introduction including a reference taken from Pope Francis' message for this Day, a biblical text related to the introduction, a key place in the life of St John of God, beginning at the Monastery of Guadalupe, a few vocation petitions, and a final prayer for Hospitaller vocations.

We invite you to join us, as a community, to pray for the gift of vocations offered to the Church and in particular to the Hospitaller Order of St John of God.

May St Joseph, St John of God, and St Benedict Menni pray for us all.

**The General Commission for Vocations Promotion and Formation  
of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God**

## God sees the heart

Monday 19 April

### Introduction

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Dear brothers and sisters,

8 December last, the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, marked the beginning of a special year devoted to him (cf. Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 8 December 2020). For my part, I wrote the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, whose aim was "to increase our love for this great saint". Saint Joseph is an extraordinary figure, yet at the same time one "so close to our own human experience". He did not do astonishing things, he had no unique charisms, nor did he appear special in the eyes of those who met him. He was not famous or even noteworthy: the Gospels do not report even a single word of his. Still, through his ordinary life, he accomplished something extraordinary in the eyes of God.

God looks on the heart (cf. 1 Sam 16:7), and in Saint Joseph he recognized the heart of a father, able to give and generate life in the midst of daily routines. Vocations have this same goal: to beget and renew lives every day. The Lord desires to shape the hearts of fathers and mothers: hearts that are open, capable of great initiatives, generous in self-giving, compassionate in comforting anxieties and steadfast in strengthening hopes. The priesthood and the consecrated life greatly need these qualities nowadays, in times marked by fragility but also by the sufferings due to the pandemic, which has spawned uncertainties and fears about the future and the very meaning of life. Saint Joseph comes to meet us in his gentle way, as one of "the saints next door". At the same time, his strong witness can guide us on the journey.

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

**Biblical text:** 1 Samuel 16, 1-7

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*Yahweh said to Samuel, "How long will you go on mourning over Saul when I have rejected him as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a king among his sons." Samuel replied, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it he will kill me." Then Yahweh said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and then I myself will tell you what you must do; you must anoint to me the one I point out to you."*

*Samuel did what Yahweh ordered and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the town came trembling to meet him and asked, "Seer, have you come with good intentions toward us?" "Yes," he replied, "I*

*have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He purified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, he caught sight of Eliab and thought, "Surely Yahweh's anointed one stands there before him," but Yahweh said to Samuel, "Take no notice of his appearance or his height for I have rejected him; God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but Yahweh looks at the heart."*

## Reflection: Guadalupe Monastery

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John of God was aware that he lacked any medical knowledge or how to organise a hospital, but he was confident that he could prepare himself. He had no money to start his work, but he was not workshy, or ashamed to go out to beg ... What most spurred him on was the certainty that it was not his work, but the "work" of God, and he was sure that he could manage it. He therefore shared his plan with John of Ávila who urged him to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of Guadalupe to commit the plan to Our Lady. There he was able both to satisfy his devotional needs, and at the same time to acquire much-needed knowledge about caring for the sick and organising a hospital, for the Hieronymite monks of Guadalupe ran a hospital that was renowned eve beyond the borders of Spain.

When he arrived in Guadalupe, he was received by the Prior, Brother Francisco de Benavides, and he offered to work in the services entrusted to him, and was allowed to live in their community. He could see that the time he spent there would help him to plan how he should organise the dream that God had prepared for him: to establish a hospital for the poor where they would be treated with great humanity.

From the first moment he entered the walls of the monastery, he was taken aback by the cleanliness, the order, the silence, the efficient distribution of the patients, the well-stocked and organised pharmacy, the gentle and efficient care offered to the sick ... He discovered there a wonderful place offering rest for the body and the soul of pilgrims of all states of life.

Dressed in the habit he had been offered to wear during his stay in Guadalupe, he joined in the liturgy of the monks and devoted all his time to prayer. For John of God these were very important moments of simple communication with God and the Blessed Virgin. By contemplating everything, he was able to learn how to welcome Christ's poor and sick, to offer them relief and consolation, and to listen to each one in order to respond to their needs.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for the young people engaged on vocational discernment.

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- For the Church, that she may show the world the merciful message of the Gospel of Jesus and invite us to live in readiness to do the will of God the Father. **Let us pray.**
- For young people, that they may open their hearts to hear the voice of the Lord, and dispel from their lives the fears and vulnerabilities that prevent them from hearing God's call. **Let us pray.**
- For the young people who are currently discerning their vocations, that the Lord will enlighten and sustain them. **Let us pray.**
- For the families of the young people who have heard the call to consecrate their lives to God, that they may recognise the precious gift of the vocation and support them at all times. **Let us pray.**
- For all of us who are members of the Hospitaller Family, that we may be generous with our lives and raise up among us abundant vocations for the Order and its Church. **Let us pray.**



**Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.**

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Father of mercy,  
who gave your Son for our salvation  
and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life,  
and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate  
themselves to you and to the work of evangelisation.

Sustain these communities in their commitment  
to offer appropriate vocational catechesis  
and ways of proceeding towards each  
one's particular consecration.

Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment,  
so that in all things the greatness  
of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, and Saint Joseph,  
intercede for each Christian community,  
so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
holy People of God.

Amen



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## We only have life if we give it

Tuesday 20 April

### Introduction

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Saint Joseph suggests to us three key words for each individual's vocation. The first is dream. Everyone dreams of finding fulfilment in life. We rightly nurture great hopes, lofty aspirations that ephemeral goals – like success, money and entertainment – cannot satisfy. If we were to ask people to express in one word their life's dream, it would not be difficult to imagine the answer: "to be loved". It is love that gives meaning to life, because it reveals life's mystery. Indeed, we only have life if we give it; we truly possess it only if we generously give it away. Saint Joseph has much to tell us in this regard, because, through the dreams that God inspired in him, he made of his life a gift.

The Gospels tell us of four dreams (cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22). They were calls from God, but they were not easy to accept. After each dream, Joseph had to change his plans and take a risk, sacrificing his own plans in order to follow the mysterious designs of God, whom he trusted completely. We may ask ourselves, "Why put so much trust in a dream in the night?" Although a dream was considered very important in ancient times, it was still a small thing in the face of the concrete reality of life. Yet Saint Joseph let himself be guided by his dreams without hesitation. Why? Because his heart was directed to God; it was already inclined towards him. A small indication was enough for his watchful "inner ear" to recognize God's voice. This applies also to our calling: God does not like to reveal himself in a spectacular way, pressuring our freedom. He conveys his plans to us with gentleness. He does not overwhelm us with dazzling visions but quietly speaks in the depths of our heart, drawing near to us and speaking to us through our thoughts and feelings. In this way, as he did with Saint Joseph, he sets before us profound and unexpected horizons.

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

### **Biblical text:** Matthew 1, 18-25

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*This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally.*

*He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins."*

*Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us."*

*When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.*

### **Reflection: At Venegas Palace**

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On his return from Guadalupe, John of God paid a visit to several important people in the city, close friends of Master Ávila, to talk to them about his plan. One of those visits was to the Venegas family palace, also known as 'Casa de los Tiros', on whose façade hung a heart pierced by a sword. They welcomed him with understanding and affection, and offered him the vestibule to their palace to spend the night, and provide warm food and receive assistance to help the poor.

He jumped at the chance. On the first night, he carried a poor man unable to move on his own, and who might have frozen to death if he had left him to his own devices. Day after day, John arrived carrying one or two patients, until the vestibule became too small to hold so many people. The owners were displeased to have so many impoverished people on their property, and finally asked John to find somewhere else to put them.

John immediately set out in search of a suitable and affordable place to stay, and found what he was looking for in Calle Lucena, very close to Plaza de la Pescadería.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

## **Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for the Brothers of St John of God

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- For all the Brothers of St John of God, that we may communicate with our lives the joy of the Hospitaller vocation and know how to daily update our calling to serve and love the poor and the sick. **Let us pray.**
- For the Brothers of our Order who are currently in a state of crisis or vulnerability, due in some cases to COVID, that the Lord Jesus may be balm and healing to soothe their vulnerability. **Let us pray.**
- For all the Brothers, that we will not be afraid to dream and promote new forms of Hospitality that will respond to emerging needs. **Let us pray.**
- For the Brothers who dedicate themselves to the governance of the Order, that they may exercise their service with wisdom and discernment. **Let us pray.**
- For all the Brothers who are in infirmaries or assisted living facilities, that they may sense the presence of Jesus as they age, at times of sickness and suffering. **Let us pray.**



### **Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.**

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Father of mercy,  
who gave your Son for our salvation  
and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life,  
and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate  
themselves to you and to the work of evangelisation.

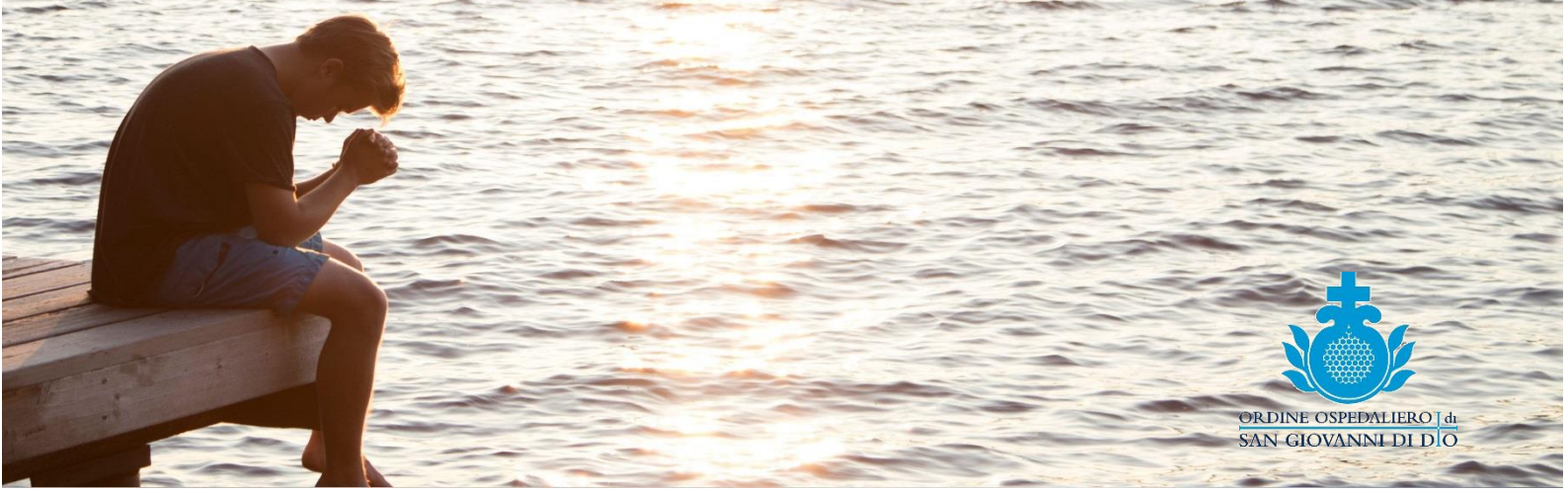
Sustain these communities in their commitment  
to offer appropriate vocational catechesis  
and ways of proceeding towards each  
one's particular consecration.

Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment,  
so that in all things the greatness  
of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, and Saint Joseph,  
intercede for each Christian community,  
so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
holy People of God.

Amen





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## Our Lord always surprises us

Wednesday 21 April

### Introduction

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Indeed, Joseph's dreams led him into experiences he would never have imagined. The first of these upended his betrothal, but made him the father of the Messiah; the second caused him to flee to Egypt, but saved the life of his family. After the third, which foretold his return to his native land, a fourth dream made him change plans once again, bringing him to Nazareth, the place where Jesus would begin his preaching of the Kingdom of God. Amid all these upheavals, he found the courage to follow God's will. So too in a vocation: God's call always urges us to take a first step, to give ourselves, to press forward. There can be no faith without risk. Only by abandoning ourselves confidently to grace, setting aside our own programmes and comforts, can we truly say "yes" to God. And every "yes" bears fruit because it becomes part of a larger design, of which we glimpse only details, but which the divine Artist knows and carries out, making of every life a masterpiece. In this regard, Saint Joseph is an outstanding example of acceptance of God's plans. Yet his was an active acceptance: never reluctant or resigned. Joseph was "certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive" (Patris Corde, 4). May he help everyone, especially young people who are discerning, to make God's dreams for them come true. May he inspire in them the courage to say "yes" to the Lord who always surprises and never disappoints.

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

### Biblical text: 1 Corinthians 1, 25-31

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*For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Take yourselves for instance, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families?*

*No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen—those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything.*

*The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but God has made you members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and 31 our freedom As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord*

## Reflection: In Calle Lucena

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He knew that he would have to work hard to make the place he had found in Calle Lucena to transfer the poor and sick people look anything like the hospital he had been dreaming of, but he was certainly not short of enthusiasm.

With the help of benefactors, he was able to acquire the essentials to get started: some blankets and tufa mats, laid out on the floor to serve as beds initially; then he needed equipment to tidy up the house, pots to cook the food and serve it... and the rest as he moved forward.

A number of doctors and surgeons from the city offered to help him and generously came to treat John's poor people, amazed at the order and the love that was so evident in his house. As the help increased, he was able to give each sick person a bed of their own, separating them according to their sickness. This was quite unusual at the time and it astonished the people in the know, even more than the rest of the world.

That simple house was the beginning of something that simply could not wait: it was the very same day he rented the premises in Calle Lucena that saw the birth of what was to become the Hospitaller Order that bears John's name.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for all the co-workers of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God.

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- For all those who work in our Centres, that, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, through their work they may be able to manifest and bear witness to the Hospitality that St John of God has bequeathed to us. **Let us pray.**

- For all the Order's volunteers, that they may live out their commitment to freely and compassionately serve the people. **Let us pray.**
- For all the benefactors who contribute to the Order's projects around the world, that Our Lord may help them to meet their needs. **Let us pray.**
- For all those who are close to St John of God and feel spiritually united with our Order, that they may continue to share, discover and deepen the Gospel of Mercy. **Let us pray.**
- For all our brothers and sisters associated with the Hospitaller Order of St John of God, that they may be witnesses of the Gospel and the values of our Institute. **Let us pray.**



### **Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.**

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Father of mercy,  
 who gave your Son for our salvation  
 and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
 grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
 fervent and joyous, which are fonts of fraternal life,  
 and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate  
 themselves to you and to the work of evangelisation.

Sustain these communities in their commitment  
 to offer appropriate vocational catechesis  
 and ways of proceeding towards each  
 one's particular consecration.

Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment,  
 so that in all things the greatness  
 of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, and Saint Joseph,  
 intercede for each Christian community,  
 so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
 it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
 holy People of God.

Amen



## His vocation was to serve

Thursday 22 April

### Introduction

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A second word marks the journey of Saint Joseph and that of vocation: service. The Gospels show how Joseph lived entirely for others and never for himself. The holy people of God invoke him as the most chaste spouse, based on his ability to love unreservedly. By freeing love from all possessiveness, he became open to an even more fruitful service. His loving care has spanned generations; his attentive guardianship has made him patron of the Church. As one who knew how to embody the meaning of self-giving in life, Joseph is also the patron of a happy death. His service and sacrifices were only possible, however, because they were sustained by a greater love: "Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration"

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

### **Biblical text:** *Matthew 20, 20-28*

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*Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him, and bowed low; and he said to her, "What is it you want?" She said to him, "Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom."*

*"You do not know what you are asking," Jesus answered. "Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" They replied, "We can." "Very well," he said, "you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father." When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers.*

*But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt.*

*This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

## Reflection: Around the streets of Granada

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He walked the streets shabbily dressed, barefoot, with his head and beard shaved. His humble and loving way of treating the poor and the sick gradually won over the hearts of all who saw him. The whole of Granada was stunned by the ability of this simple, unlettered man who out of nothing managed to help all the poor and sick who came to his hospital, or whom he came across in the streets, every single day. It was becoming an everyday event to see him picking up some poor sick person who could not walk unaided, and carrying them to his hospital.

Day after day, he went out into the streets of Granada to find the food and supplies he needed to keep the poor people he was beginning to take in. The local people would hear the same words he would cry out every day: "Brothers, do good to yourselves by giving alms to the poor".

Donations soon began to increase, and above all, he was joined by volunteers who helped him to care for the poor and the sick.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for the Order's Formation Houses.

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- For the young men who are discerning their vocation in one of the Order's communities, that they may experience the joy of God's call to serve the poor and the sick. **Let us pray.**
- For the young men in the postulancy phase, that they may deepen their call to practise the Hospitality of Saint John of God. **Let us pray.**
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- For the young men in the novitiate stage, that they may experience this time of discernment as an opportunity to be converted and configured with the compassionate and merciful Christ. **Let us pray.**
- For the young men in the scholasticate stage, that they may strengthen their Hospitaller vocation and, by their life and example, bear witness to the joy of consecrated life as a Brother of St John of God. **Let us pray.**
- For all the solemn professed Brothers who devote themselves to promoting, welcoming, accompanying and forming new Hospitaller vocations, that they may faithfully live up to their consecration and reveal the joy of the Gospel through the personal testimony of their lives. **Let us pray**



#### Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.

Father of mercy,  
 who gave your Son for our salvation  
 and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
 grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
 fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life,  
 and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate  
 themselves to you and to the work of evangelisation.

Sustain these communities in their commitment  
 to offer appropriate vocational catechesis  
 and ways of proceeding towards each  
 one's particular consecration.

Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment,  
 so that in all things the greatness  
 of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, and Saint Joseph,  
 intercede for each Christian community,  
 so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
 it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
 holy People of God.

Amen



## Willingness to serve

Friday 23 April

### Introduction.

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For Saint Joseph, service – as a concrete expression of the gift of self – did not remain simply a high ideal, but became a rule for daily life. He strove to find and prepare a place where Jesus could be born; he did his utmost to protect him from Herod's wrath by arranging a hasty journey into Egypt; he immediately returned to Jerusalem when Jesus was lost; he supported his family by his work, even in a foreign land. In short, he adapted to different circumstances with the attitude of those who do not grow discouraged when life does not turn out as they wished; he showed the willingness typical of those who live to serve. In this way, Joseph welcomed life's frequent and often unexpected journeys: from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census, then to Egypt and again to Nazareth, and every year to Jerusalem. Each time he was willing to face new circumstances without complaining, ever ready to give a hand to help resolve situations. We could say that this was the outstretched hand of our heavenly Father reaching out to his Son on earth. Joseph cannot fail to be a model for all vocations, called to be the ever-active hands of the Father, outstretched to his children.

I like to think, then, of Saint Joseph, the protector of Jesus and of the Church, as the protector of vocations. In fact, from his willingness to serve comes his concern to protect. The Gospel tells us that "Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night" (Mt 2:14), thus revealing his prompt concern for the good of his family. He wasted no time fretting over things he could not control, in order to give full attention to those entrusted to his care. Such thoughtful concern is the sign of a true vocation, the testimony of a life touched by the love of God. What a beautiful example of Christian life we give when we refuse to pursue our ambitions or indulge in our illusions, but instead care for what the Lord has entrusted to us through the Church! God then pours out his Spirit and creativity upon us; he works wonders in us, as he did in Joseph.

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

### **Biblical text:** *Matthew 2, 13-21*

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*After they had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him." So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to*

*fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt. Herod was furious when he realised that he had been outwitted by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or under, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. It was then that the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled: A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loudly lamenting: it was Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more. After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead." So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel.*

## Reflection: The House of the Dead

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In Calle Horno de Marina, on the corner of Calle Lucena where John of God had set up his first hospital, the building known locally as the 'House of the Dead', is still standing to this day.

One of the works of mercy to which he was dedicated was to collect the dead he found in the streets and to give them a Christian burial. One morning, as he was about to go begging, he came across an abandoned body, but did not have enough money to buy something to wrap it in and bury it. He thought that the well-to-do owner of the nearby building would help him perform this work of mercy. But the man refused to cooperate.

Without uttering a single word, John of God walked back to the body, picked it up and carried on his shoulders and took it to that house, where he called out to the owner. On facing him, John pointed to the dead man's body and said, "You have the same duty as I do, as a Christian, to bury this dead man". And he would have left him there, if the man had not quickly given him what he had previously refused.

John of God knew the difference between simplicity of heart and gullibility. This gave him the inner freedom he needed to forcefully demand what people refused to give for the love of their neighbour.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**



**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for those who are being served in our Centres.

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- For all who are being cared for in our hospitals, especially the patients with COVID-19, that the Lord will be their light and hope at this time. **Let us pray.**
- For all those who are suffering from an incurable illness, that they may be able to face their vulnerability and uncertainty with serenity. **Let us pray.**
- For all those who are suffering from a mental health problem, that they may find the compassionate and merciful love of Christ in the people caring for them. **Let us pray.**
- For people with different abilities, that they may accept their diversity as an asset to the world within diversity. **Let us pray.**
- For people caught up in poverty or by social exclusion, that they may find in St John of God new opportunities to rebuild their own life project. **Let us pray.**



#### **Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.**

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Father of mercy,  
who gave your Son for our salvation  
and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
fervent and joyous, which are fonts of fraternal life,  
and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate  
themselves to you and to the work of evangelisation.

Sustain these communities in their commitment  
to offer appropriate vocational catechesis  
and ways of proceeding towards each  
one's particular consecration.

Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment,  
so that in all things the greatness  
of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, and Saint Joseph,  
intercede for each Christian community,  
so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
holy People of God.

Amen



ORDINE OSPEDALIERO  
SAN GIOVANNI DI DIO

## Daily fidelity

### Memorial of Saint Benedict Menni

Saturday 24 April

#### Introduction

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Together with God's call, which makes our greatest dreams come true, and our response, which is made up of generous service and attentive care, there is a third characteristic of Saint Joseph's daily life and our Christian vocation, namely fidelity. Joseph is the "righteous man" (Mt 1:19) who daily perseveres in quietly serving God and his plans. At a particularly difficult moment in his life, he thoughtfully considered what to do (cf. v. 20). He did not let himself be hastily pressured. He did not yield to the temptation to act rashly, simply following his instincts or living for the moment. Instead, he pondered things patiently. He knew that success in life is built on constant fidelity to important decisions. This was reflected in his perseverance in plying the trade of a humble carpenter (cf. Mt 13:55), a quiet perseverance that made no news in his own time, yet has inspired the daily lives of countless fathers, labourers and Christians ever since. For a vocation – like life itself – matures only through daily fidelity.

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

#### Biblical text: Matthew 13, 53-58

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*When Jesus had finished these parables he left the district; and, coming to his home town, he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, "Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?" And they would not accept him.*

*But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is only despised in his own country and in his own house," and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

#### Letter 788 of St Benedict Menni

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"Turn in confidence to the glorious St. Joseph who practised all the virtues of the Religious life so perfectly that God gave him such great power to help religious souls who implore his paternal patronage".

## Reflection: Gomeles Hill

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Such huge numbers of men and women in need of care and shelter constantly turned to him for help, that John of God had to think once more about finding a more spacious and more suitable place to continue his mission.

On Gomeles Hill he found a place that seemed just right. It was a large building, with an orchard and garden that until 1540 had been the home of a community of the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis, right beside the Granadas Gate, that led to the woodlands of the Alhambra.

The old convent awakened in John of God memories of his own experience at the Royal Hospital and of everything he had seen and admired during his time in Guadalupe. Pilgrims needing a bed and a hot meal would be accommodated on the ground floor; there he would set up the kitchen and the pharmacy, and on the first floor he would house the sick. In the most secluded place he would accommodate the mentally ill so that they could live in a quiet and calm part of the building, and prevent them from disturbing the other patients. He would also make a separate area for infectious patients, and another set aside for the dying.

Finally, he calculated how many beds could be installed to ensure that each patient would have their own bed. Without realising it, he was revolutionising hospital organisation and care.

Towards the middle of 1546 he moved from Calle Lucena to Gomeles Hill. Granada was accustomed to processions, but they had never seen anything like this one: John of God and his brothers, along with many volunteers, walked from one place to the other all day long, carrying the sick to the new hospital: broken, dying Christs, the rejects of society, exposed to the gaze of the curious, but this time also taken aback by the capacity to love and the resilience that God communicates to certain people.

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

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**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for a more Hospitable world

- For the Pope and the Bishops, so that, faithful to the Spirit of Jesus, they may be good shepherds of the Church and lead her along ever more Gospel-inspired pathways. **Let us pray.**

- For the rulers of nations, that they may exercise their responsibilities by their service and ensure peace and justice for all peoples. **Let us pray.**
- For all the men and women who have strayed from the faith, that our Christian witness may help them to rediscover the life and salvation that you are offering them. **Let us pray.**
- Today we are celebrating the memorial of St Benedict Menni, a Brother of St John of God and the Founder of the Sisters Hospitallers. May his example encourage us to practise our Hospitaller consecration. **Let us pray.**
- For all of us who, while caught up in this global pandemic, may never stop dreaming that it is still possible to live in a more hospitable world, and place our talents at the service of humanity. **Let us pray.**



### Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.

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 who gave your Son for our salvation  
 and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit,  
 grant us Christian communities which are alive,  
 fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life,  
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 intercede for each Christian community,  
 so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit,  
 it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the  
 holy People of God.

Amen



## God faithfully keeps his promises

Sunday 25 April

### Introduction

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How is such fidelity nurtured? In the light of God's own faithfulness. The first words that Saint Joseph heard in a dream were an invitation not to be afraid, because God remains ever faithful to his promises: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid" (Mt 1:20). Do not be afraid: these words the Lord also addresses to you, dear sister, and to you, dear brother, whenever you feel that, even amid uncertainty and hesitation, you can no longer delay your desire to give your life to him. He repeats these words when, perhaps amid trials and misunderstandings, you seek to follow his will every day, wherever you find yourself. They are words you will hear anew, at every step of your vocation, as you return to your first love. They are a refrain accompanying all those who – like Saint Joseph – say yes to God with their lives, through their fidelity each day.

This fidelity is the secret of joy. A hymn in the liturgy speaks of the "transparent joy" present in the home of Nazareth. It the joy of simplicity, the joy experienced daily by those who care for what truly matters: faithful closeness to God and to our neighbour. How good it would be if the same atmosphere, simple and radiant, sober and hopeful, were to pervade our seminaries, religious houses and presbyteries! I pray that you will experience this same joy, dear brothers and sisters who have generously made God the dream of your lives, serving him in your brothers and sisters through a fidelity that is a powerful testimony in an age of ephemeral choices and emotions that bring no lasting joy. May Saint Joseph, protector of vocations, accompany you with his fatherly heart!

**Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.**

**Biblical text:** *John 10, 11-18*

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*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.*

*And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father."*

## Reflection: Casa de los Pisa

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In 16th century Granada, John of God carried out his work by personally caring for the sick and the beggars, roaming around the city in search of food, preparing it, washing the pots, scrubbing, sweeping, cleaning the house, washing the laundry, fetching water and collecting firewood. Another task was visiting the brothels on Fridays, trying to convince the women to take up other jobs, providing them with a livelihood and finding them families who would take them in.

So many things remain to be said about his life, his work, his qualities, his way of listening, but on this particular afternoon, a hopeful atmosphere reigned in the Pisa family home, because Brother John of God was more serene and lucid than ever. He appeared to be getting over his sickness. They had taken him away from his patients against his will so that he could recover properly. After dinner, he had asked to be left alone, and they assumed that he wanted to pray or rest awhile, and they all left the room. As if responding to an inner voice, John got out of bed, clothed himself in sackcloth and grasping the crucifix in his hands he fell to his knees. Deep within him he could hear the verses of a psalm: "Bless the Lord, my soul, bless His holy name, that is in me. Remember all his kindnesses: in forgiving all your offences, He forgives all your faults and fills you with tenderness and mercy. The Lord is good to all, he is loving to all his creatures. The Lord is gentle and merciful, slow to anger and rich in mercy. He takes our sins farther away than the east is from the west. As tenderly as a father treats his children, so the Lord treats those who love him. Bless the Lord, my soul." And like a gentle breeze, John surrendered his spirit to God. It was 8 March, 1550

**(And God became a Brother. The life of St John of God by Valentín A. Riesco Álvarez)**

**Petitions for the day:** Let us pray for the diversity of vocations in the Church.

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- For the Consecrated life, that we may daily renew Our Lord's call and the mission to devote our lives to the service of our brothers and sisters, while sharing our personal testimony with those who wish to follow us. **Let us pray.**
- For the contemplative life, wholly dedicated to God in prayer, silence and in what is hidden. They are all beacons that mark the haven, torches lighting up the darkness of night, sentinels announcing the dawn of a new day. **Let us pray.**
- For our priests, that God may bless them and help them in their dedication to evangelisation, in a spirit of service to their communities. **Let us pray.**
- For all those who have heard their call in the Church to boldly bear witness to the call they have received from Christ to serve Him in the world. **Let us pray.**
- For all Christian families, that their testimony of their shared lives may be a source of many future vocations for the Church. **Let us pray**



**Prayer for Hospitaller Vocations.**

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