



## Saint Joseph's Table

Most Americans put on the green on March 17, Saint Patrick's Day, but just two days later – March 19 – is the Feast of Saint Joseph. Celebrated especially in Sicily, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph is the principal feast day for Joseph. In some countries, it is also Father's Day in honor of Joseph as the earthly father of Jesus.

A favorite tradition on this day is Saint Joseph's Table. This custom began in the Middle Ages when Saint Joseph was said to have ended a devastating drought in Sicily that created a devastating famine. In gratitude, the people prepared special foods to thank Saint Joseph and to distribute as alms for the poor.

While Saint Joseph's Table is intended as a community-parish celebration, in these times, large gatherings for a shared meal aren't feasible. Instead, families can create their own Saint Joseph's Table. While Saint Patrick gets more publicity, Saint Joseph and his table make a fun, family-friendly tradition in the middle of Lent.

Here are some ideas:

Create a three-tiered altar covered in white cloth. On the bottom level, place flowers (especially lilies which are the symbol of Saint Joseph) and candles. On the second level, arrange symbolic bread or pastries and put a picture or statue of Saint Joseph on the top level.

Bread is a must. Traditionally, it has a sesame seed topping. The sesame seeds represent teardrops. The bread can be shaped into a cross, heart, staff, sheaf of wheat, or crown of thorns, but sesame seed rolls can also be used. One popular pastry is zepole, a donut-like pastry filled with crème.

Since the festival occurs during Lent, meat is never served, but fish, especially anchovies and sardines, are popular. Greens like early lettuce, celery, and fennel are common, as are olives, figs, and fava beans. Pasta served with breadcrumbs sauteed in butter to resemble the sawdust from Saint Joseph's workshop is another favorite dish. One possible dish could be anchovy pizza topped with olives!

After dinner, the family can read the story of the angel appearing to Joseph as recorded in Matthew 1:18–25 and talk about what it means for Joseph to be the earthly, foster father of Jesus. Praying the Prayer to Saint Joseph would make a fitting closing.

## Prayer to Saint Joseph

To you, O blessed Joseph,  
do we come in our tribulation,  
and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse,  
we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you  
to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God  
and through the paternal love  
with which you embraced the Child Jesus,  
we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance  
which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood,  
and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family,  
defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ;  
O most loving father, ward off from us  
every contagion of error and corrupting influence;  
O our most mighty protector, be kind to us  
and from heaven assist us in our struggle  
with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril,  
so now protect God's Holy Church  
from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity;  
shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection,  
so that, supported by your example and your aid,  
we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness,  
and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven.

**Amen.**

Prayer: Pope Leo XIII in his 1889 encyclical, On Devotion to St. Joseph (*Quamquam pluries*), via USCCB.org

Image credit: Serlena Bessonova/Shutterstock.com

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies. Grow Blog 3/8/2021. Online.

<https://www.pflaumweeklies.com/category/saints/>

Date Accessed: 3/9/2021