

Votive Mass of St. Joseph, Placing of Votive Heart – April 26, 2017 – Fr. Bryan Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:00pm – 800 words

Our Mass this evening, in gratitude to St. Joseph for his patronage not only of the Universal Church but also as it has been manifested in a special care for our Cathedral church, is a fitting crowning of the many novenas that you, dear parishioners, prayed together with Father Bazzel during the time of the major renovations here. Thanks to St. Joseph's intercession, not only was the project completed early and under budget, but also – and far more importantly – not a single worker was harmed, in spite of the risks that working on a very tall structure brings. In addition, all of the work was made possible because the priests of the diocese overwhelmingly supported the addition of a new diocesan tax on parish revenues in order to fund the long-term maintenance of our Cathedral. If you know anything about diocesan politics, you will recognize that adding a new tax must also be considered a miracle due to St. Joseph's intercession!

For these reasons, tonight, at this Holy Mass, we will place a votive heart on our image of this great saint. It is a very traditional thing to do in response to answered prayer: throughout the great churches in Europe, for example, you will see all manner of adornments left by the faithful around images and altars in gratitude for answers to prayer. These offerings are called *ex votos*, Latin words that mean “from a vow made” – the vow being to honor the saint who obtains a special answer to prayer. Father Bazzel graciously procured the beautiful silver *ex voto* heart that we will place on St. Joseph here tonight.

Within this heart is a list of names that he wrote: first, the names of all the priests of the diocese who, again, really made so much of the financial part of this project possible; also, the names of all of the workers – I would guess there are probably a hundred, if not more – who did any work here at all during the duration of the project; then there is a message of gratitude to St. Joseph for the completion of the work. In addition to these petitions, which Father Bazzel composed, I have also added a few of my own. One, for our Cathedral Fraternal Chapter, which seeks to form the men and boys who participate in it after the example of St. Joseph and the heart of Christ: chaste and pure, manly, just, chivalrous, and filled with all the other virtues. I have also included a general intention for the remaining projects in our Capital Campaign, and for our long-term needs here at the Cathedral. Finally, I have written, “For all parishioners, past, present, and future, living and deceased”.

A brief thought, then, about this great saint whom we honor tonight. I love our statue of him, because it portrays him so well as the man of silence that he is in the gospels – serious, strong, and with eyes downcast in holy reverence. There is not a single word spoken by Joseph in any of the four gospels, but neither do we need to know of any words he spoke, for his example speaks volumes. Joseph is the man of action: God speaks, and Joseph responds promptly with obedience. He is a protector: recognizing risk to his family, he sacrifices all to move them to a foreign land. And he is the man who taught the Lord Jesus how to be a man himself in his humanity, for the gospels tell us that Christ was obedient to Joseph and Mary and that he grew in wisdom and stature.<sup>1</sup> St. Joseph was chosen by God to model the divine fatherhood not only for Jesus but also for all of us, the his brothers and sisters by adoption. He is, therefore, in God's plan, one of the greatest of the saints – perhaps the greatest after the Blessed Mother.

I decided to have this votive Mass of St. Joseph tonight because historically – in the old calendar – the Wednesday after the Second Sunday of Easter was celebrated as the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph. We honor him as patron and protector of the Universal Church. As I said before, we here at St. Paul's have particular cause to honor him as our special patron and

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:51-52.

protector here also. May St. Joseph continually present to Almighty God the intentions that we commend to his heart this night. May he be a father to us and help form Christ in each one of us. May he protect us from all harm and help us to do God's will. And may we rejoice to see him in heaven, together with the Blessed Mother and all the angels and saints.

Good Saint Joseph, pray for us, and pray for our parish always. Amen!