

Annual Mass for Homeschooling Families – September 6, 2018 – Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 10am Votive Mass of St. Joseph – 675 words

A warm welcome to you all, once again, for our beginning-of-the-year homeschool Mass. We are grateful to have Fr. Booth with us, also. This year, since we're in the year of St. Joseph, I thought it would be fitting for us to have a votive Mass in his honor. He, like everyone in his time, would have been home-schooled. He would have also learned his trade – carpentry – in the home, from his father. He made his living in that way and also passed his trade on to Jesus. Our Blessed Mother of course taught Jesus many things also. Hopefully we have made the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph part of our homes, as well, and are learning from them as they continue to teach us even now.

Our readings had to do with wisdom. The wisdom that comes from God helps us to see things from his perspective. When we have divine wisdom, we can see the deeper meaning of life and the things of life – and we can see more clearly how they fit into God's overall plan. Peter and the others with him were experienced fishermen and their practical experience told them that after trying to catch fish all night it was time to go home; it wasn't worth continuing. But Jesus told them to let down their nets again. In doing so, he taught them true wisdom: perseverance, trust in God, obedience to God. They thought they had things all figured out, but to their astonishment, Jesus showed them otherwise.

When we are in school we gain a great deal of knowledge. But we do not necessarily gain wisdom. The wisdom that comes from God is not something that we can find in a book. But we can find it through prayer. We know also that it's one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, so we receive it at confirmation. But even then we must still pray, to “open up” or “unwrap” that gift that we receive, so that it starts to operate in our lives. This is why it's so important to pray for the gift of wisdom. Catholic students traditionally pray before they study. The prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas for students is one of the best ones there is. But if you do not pray each day before you study, I want to challenge you to start this school year.

St. Joseph's life was marked by profound silence. He does not say a single word in the gospels. But we know he was a just man; an obedient son of God; a provident father; a diligent worker; a faithful spouse. Each one of his days was marked by prayerful listening. And to think that for many years he had Jesus by his side, as he taught him how to be a carpenter also. How many blessings of wisdom St. Joseph must have received! As we begin a new school year during the Year of St. Joseph, we would do well to meditate on his life also. Do we have good silence in our lives each day – the kind through which we can listen to God and seek the gift of wisdom? Are we trying to be obedient to God? Are we diligent in our work?

Let's conclude with the prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas for students. You can easily find it online; whatever prayer you use, I hope you will pray daily before you study. “O God, Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all being, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Take from me the double darkness in which I was born, an obscurity of sin and ignorance. Give me a keen understanding, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally. Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and help in the completion. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.”