

May 1, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH EASTER

Photo by Tomas Williams from Pexels

SAINT JOSEPH THE BUILDER

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

*O Lord, you have been our refuge in every generation.
Before the mountains came into being,
before you brought forth the earth and the world,
from eternity to eternity you are God.
Teach us to count our days rightly,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may sing for joy all our days.
Let your work be seen by your servants
and your glory by their children.
Let the work of our hands prosper.
O prosper the work of our hands!*

PSALM 90:1-2, 12, 14, 16-17

Jesus came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

MATTHEW 13:54-58

Reflection

Before we contemplate St. Joseph the Worker, let us remember God's labor of love in fashioning our earth home. In the Hebrew Bible, the verses of Psalm 90 begin with the language of birth, rather than with the language of creating the world. Before there was a habitat for us, God was our refuge from all eternity. In the psalmists' words, God gave birth, God labored to bring forth the earth and the world. This is God's work. The psalmist ends with God's children who carry on the work of their hands, giving glory to the Holy One who birthed them.

In first-century Galilee, **Joseph of Nazareth** was known as a builder or a *tekton*, one who works with hard substances (limestone, basalt). Sometimes *tekton* was also translated as *carpenter*, one who works with wood, making ploughs, door frames, small items of furniture. We see this term used in Matthew 13 when Jesus returned to his native village and taught in the synagogue. People were amazed at his wisdom and wondered how he was able to do such deeds of power. Wasn't he **the carpenter's son**? They knew his mother, Mary, and his cousins. The villagers could not fathom where he got this wisdom and they took offence at him, rejecting what they considered humble beginnings. Therefore, "Jesus did not do many deeds there because of their lack of faith." The people thought they knew Jesus' origins and they considered him ordinary like themselves. Actually, in the Talmud, carpenters, or joiners, are praised for their knowledge the Torah. Joseph the builder was known as a **just man** in the Gospel. Since he was a tradesman or a mason, people would have known first-hand his honesty and manner of justice. Joseph followed his Jewish practices and would have taught the Law of God to Jesus at an early age by his example and his word. Joseph the just man would have followed the religious practices in his home life which included prayers, teaching, fasting, and feasting, supplemented by the community life the family shared in the synagogue.



Image by Sr. JoAnn Tabor, CSJ

For Pondering & Prayer

- Joseph the Builder knew the dignity of work. Psalm 90 tells us that God's work was a labor of love, birthing the earth to be our habitat. What is the

work God has given to me?

- Joseph, the Husband of Mary, was entrusted with the care and protection of his Beloved and their Son. What is the mission God has given to me – my vocation?
- A suggested prayer might be to pray Psalm 90 above.

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