

SATURDAY SESSIONS

GROW & SHARE FAITH

WITH
Sr Colleen
O'Sullivan

 DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA



St Joseph – The One Who Chooses

Sr Colleen O'Sullivan

You are invited to create community online as we gather to share and grow faith.

How to Prepare and Run a Session:

Read *Saturday Sessions 'How To' Guide* for information how to host a Saturday Session. This is available at <https://thewell.org.au/video/saturday-sessions-how-to-guide/>

Presentation:

St Joseph – The One Who Chooses

Sr Colleen O'Sullivan read by Catherine Bourne

<https://soundcloud.com/catholicyouthparramatta/st-joseph-one-who-chooses>

Approx. 5 minutes 2020

Some more resources about St Joseph that can be shared:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-12/pope-francis-proclaims-year-of-st-joseph.html>

<https://thewell.org.au/video/celebrating-saint-joseph/>

<https://catholic.org.au/yearofstjoseph>

About the Author:

Sr Colleen O'Sullivan is a Sister of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. She is an experienced facilitator with a rich depth and understanding of spirituality and has presented extensively on Mary MacKillop.

Questions to Ponder:

These questions are only a sample of the many questions that could be generated from the presentation. Use these questions or create your own questions for your small group.

1. Why do you think Pope Francis has proclaimed a Year of St Joseph? (8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021)
2. Sr Colleen calls our times, the time of St Joseph and indeed all time as unprecedented. What is the significance of unprecedented times?
3. Think about the choices Joseph made. Put yourself in Joseph shoes. What do you think he was thinking and feeling when making those choices?
4. How would you describe 'the way of love and vulnerability'?

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5. What do you think is the significance of Joseph speaking no words in the Gospel?
6. It seems part of Joseph's role in Jesus' life is about lineage and links to the line of David. What does this say to you?
7. How do you listen to God's voice when making significant choices?
8. What lessons can we learn from St Joseph and how he responds to what he understands is his call from God?

TRANSCRIPT

read by Catherine Bourne

The following reflection was written by Sr Colleen O'Sullivan rsj

St Joseph - One who Chooses

In the early days of this COVID 19 pandemic a word that was often used was unprecedented. I think people of every era would possibly describe their time also as unprecedented. It is a word that describes an environment that has never before been experienced. The combination of events on such a global scale at the beginning of 2020 was certainly unprecedented.

The historical Joseph was also born into times that could have been called unprecedented by those living in them. It was a period of apparent peace but was in reality a period of oppression and cruelty. The Roman empire ruled almost everywhere and affected the entire known world.

Joseph, as a Jew, was affected by this oppressive ruler in his everyday life. Judea was an outpost of the Roman empire and the Jews, through their high priests, used every tactic to keep themselves in control of their religion and their sacred city. But the reality was the Romans ruled with great cruelty. People at the grass roots level were forced to pay taxes and of course to take part in the census. They had little choice but to obey the Roman rule, there was safety. Rebellion happened throughout the Roman Empire, of course, but the rebels were rarely victorious.

Before his trip to Bethlehem the scriptural Joseph had already been forced to make significant choices. When Mary became pregnant for example he had to choose between life, death or some form of exile for her. He had to choose in believing her story of the Annunciation or refusing to accept its truth.

He made the wise choice and the brave choice of marrying her and thus giving her life and ensuring the life of her child. There were consequences to this choice. Because of it the ministry of Jesus was made possible. Because of it we, in 2021, still learn the way of love and vulnerability. The establishment of Christianity was also a later consequence of this choice. As a result of this choice also the Universal Christ invites us deeper into God.

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The editor of the Scriptures revealed that the Joseph of scripture was also a symbolic figure as well as a real person. In paying attention to his dreams and choosing to respond by taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt the editors allowed the connection between the Prophet Joseph of the Old Testament and Joseph of the New Testament to be made. In this way also Jesus' ancestry was validated. The scripture ensures Joseph and Mary's connection to the House of David to be seen. The Messiah was to be of David's lineage as were Mary and Joseph.

The story of the journey to Egypt, and return again to Jerusalem later, linked Joseph's family to the Exodus story. Out of Egypt would come the Messiah who had been born in Bethlehem and who now returned to Nazareth to live with his foster father and his mother.

This Joseph, who speaks no words in the gospel, carries the powerful Word of God with him wherever he goes.

Joseph chooses to listen to his inner voice, to his dreams. He chooses to listen to the world around him and the dangers that are evident. He acts immediately when he realizes what he is required of him. He consistently chooses life, love and action. In doing so he helps make real the Messianic future promised in the First Testament. He offers us a pattern of behaviour around the way we listen and choose.

Perhaps in our unprecedented times Joseph can show us how to make choices that lead to life and wholeness for ourselves and for those to whom we come in contact. We listen to what is within us, to what is happening around us, to the call to life, love and action!

As Joseph's feast day approaches let us celebrate this man of history, of Scripture, of silence and action.

Further Support:

If you would like further support to bring to life a Saturday Session, please contact Lisa at the Pastoral Planning Office at lisa.bright@parracatholic.org

For information about Zoom please contact the Pastoral Planning Office or you can watch a Zoom tutorial at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac>

The Pastoral Planning Office thanks you for your enduring faith, hope, love and commitment as we venture into the deep. We pray that you experience the peace and grace that our God offers and can be an ambassador of Christ's hope and peace to those you encounter and accompany.

Please contact the Pastoral Planning Office for support in all areas of pastoral ministry.

Richard McMahon	richard.mcmahon@parracatholic.org	0437 497 526
Lisa Bright	lisa.bright@parracatholic.org	0448 652 720
Tanya Quinn	tanya.quinn@parracatholic.org	0459 133 665