

LOCKDOWN DAY 36 – 1 MAY 2020 – WORKERS DAY

Good day dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:53-58 Hymn: *We plough the fields and scatter*

Level 4 of lockdown gets under way today. There is a slight opening up of the economy. The great sadness is that millions of people have already lost their jobs. The Speaker of Provincial Legislature stated that Anglicans are in the forefront in relief aid in the Cape Metro. I salute you!

Today we commemorate **St Joseph the Worker**, so this reflection is mainly aimed at fathers. What atmosphere do you bring into your home and family? In the gospel, we read that the listeners come to the **realisation** that Jesus is the Messiah. We ask ourselves whether we reject or accept the teaching of Jesus? Do we raise **barriers** that make it impossible for Jesus' teaching to have an effect on us?

St Joseph had a special vocation – to be the **protector** of Mary and the foster-father of her Son, Jesus. The gospels picture him as a **man of principle** who accepted his God-given responsibility with **gentleness and humility**. He is also the **patron saint of workers**, and for this reason we commemorate him on 1 May, **Workers Day** around the world.

Many of our churches are named after Saints. To have a saint protector means to have an example to imitate and a spirit to cultivate. Let us therefore reflect on what we can learn from St Joseph.

Joseph was a man of **deep and extraordinary faith**. **He was a religious man**. When Joseph was newly married to Mary, he sent her to help her cousin Elizabeth. He was **understanding** and **supportive**, not **demanding or possessive**. Remember the difficult journey to Bethlehem and the **birth** of Jesus there in a cave. Remember how Mary and Joseph **fled** to Egypt. The very life of baby Jesus would have been in **danger** but Mary could trust Joseph enough to cooperate with him. Later, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth under the **leadership** of Joseph.

Remember the trying and painful search for the lost child Jesus that lasted for three days. Joseph **fully participated** in the **parental love and responsibility** of Mary towards Jesus. Remember how Jesus, the Son of God, as adult, participated in the fatigue and burden of Joseph in his workshop, in true intimacy and genuine loyal spirit, and how Joseph, with paternal interest, taught him the art of carpentry.

During this Covid 19 lockdown, I encourage fathers to be attentive as Joseph was to welcome and obey the will of God. I invite you today to recommit yourselves to be totally available to God's plan. Be the protector of your children. With the scourge of Gender Based Violence escalating, we depend on fathers to break the silence, to speak out and be part of the solution and not the problem.

Today, please **reach out** to any member belonging to St Joseph the Worker churches, to anyone bearing the name of Joseph. Give your father or the person who is like a father to you, a call today. Also reach out to a work colleague.

In our Prayers, we pray Canticle 6, on page 346 of An Anglican Prayer Book. We pray for weary, depressed, hungry fathers. We pray for angry fathers, fathers in poverty, fathers who abuse, fathers who weep. We pray for fathers in prosperity, tender fathers, caring fathers, faith-filled fathers. We pray for inconsiderate fathers, hard hearted fathers, fathers in prison. We pray for trusted fathers, helpful fathers. May all fathers contribute to the welfare of society, and thus honoring and imitating St Joseph in the best possible way.

I am, Because we Are, Because God is opening hearts to heal God's world.