

Are you called to be anonymous?

Psalm 132; Hosea 111-9; Luke 241-end

When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' [Luke 248]

There isn't a lot said about Jospheh (whose Feast the Church celebrates tomorrow) - perhaps because there isn't a lot known about him. However, as if to show nothing changes and nothing stays the same, in 1989, Pope John Paul II delivered the Apostolic exhortation *Redemptoris custos* ("Guardian of the Redeemer").

- ✦ We know that he lived in Nazareth and that tradition says that he was a carpenter.
- ✦ We know that he was betrothed to Mary and that he dealt with her unusual pregnancy as well as anyone would - Matthew says that he was a **righteous man** and that he respected what God was doing enough to abstain from sex with Mary until after Jesus was born (to extend it beyond that would be unnecessary and unnatural).
- ✦ We know that his family came from Bethlehem and that he owned land there (we don't know how much - but the Romans only included in a census those who owned land - they could be taxed!).
- ✦ We know that he is Jesus' step-dad, providing Jesus with a heritage traced back to King David that would be honoured by the Jewish tradition.
- ✦ We know that he is probably dead by the time Jesus begins his ministry - not an unreasonable assumption at a time when the average mortality was around 45. He certainly never appears with Mary and Jesus' brothers and sisters and isn't there at the cross.

Would this have been the life that he would have chosen for himself? The trust God places in him is enormous and the rewards nothing at all!

What if God's call on your life is to be in the background, to be anonymous and a supporting act rather than the main event? St Jospheh, the part of workers and of a happy death, may very well be a good role model. Or perhaps you follow the modern cult of the individual and you mirror Jesus' parents rebuke: **why have you treated us like this?**

**O God our Father,
who from the house of thy servant David
didst raise up Joseph the carpenter
to be the guardian of thine incarnate Son
and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
give us grace to follow him
in faithful obedience to thy commands;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.**