

One year in—and counting

By Derrick Kunz



Photo by Kiply Yaworski: Statue of St. Joseph at St. Paul's Co-Cathedral in Saskatoon

“With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” – 2 Peter 3:8

Has it been one year or a thousand years since the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (you might recognize it as COVID-19) a pandemic?

Much ink has been spilled—or maybe computer keys have been punched—reviewing, analyzing and critiquing the events of the past year. Since it is the [Year of St. Joseph](#), and the Solemn Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary is celebrated on March 19, it is an opportune time to take a brief look at the past year for our school division with a bit of a St. Joseph slant.

Taking a few lines of prayer from the *Litany of St. Joseph*, here's a brief reflection.

Joseph, most patient. *Pray for us.*

Remember when we thought public health restrictions would come and go and this whole COVID thing would blow over by the summer? Summer turned to fall. Then, well, we collectively wrapped our mind around the fact we were in this for the long haul.

Uncertainty can stretch our patience. And we have had more than our fair share of uncertainty as things have changed quickly and frequently over the past year. St. Joseph faced a fair degree of uncertainty himself. He was uncertain about Mary's pregnancy. Just think about the uncertainty he faced when the Holy Family left everything at the drop of a hat and fled to Egypt. He had patient trust in God's goodness, providence and love. We can learn from St. Joseph as a model of patience.

Joseph most prudent. *Pray for us.*

One of the cardinal virtues, prudence “...disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1806).

With the health and safety of students, staff and families in mind, a series of prudent measures have been examined, implemented, changed, and changed again over the past year.

Social scientists will have decades of material for research on the effectiveness and efficacy of public health measures, and it's likely there will not be a consensus.

As a school division, a few prudent decisions made last spring come to mind. Division staff worked hard to ensure all students had access to technology after all learning shifted online. Buses were used to send nutrition kits to families who relied on breakfasts, lunches and snacks at school. A Support Line was established to support student mental health and wellness.

Read [Supporting more than learning](#) for more details.

We can all turn to St. Joseph as a model of prudence to assist us as we continue to navigate our way through the pandemic.

Head of the Holy Family, Pillar of families and Glory of domestic life. *Pray for us.*

These are three separate lines in the litany, but share many attributes.

We suddenly found ourselves at home, with every other member of our family and household, for long periods of time. What an opportunity to focus on building relationships within our families! There was a resurgence of games, puzzles, baking, cooking, and many other activities at home. Maybe it was a time to reconnect for some, as our calendars abruptly changed from full to blank slates. Sure, domestic life can be challenging. We are fortunate to have St. Joseph and the Holy Family to be our models and guides. Also, see above regarding patience.

Model of workers. *Pray for us.*

As a humble carpenter, St. Joseph knew the value of an honest day's work. Unfortunately, he also knew what it was like to lose work and have to start over again. When fleeing to Egypt, he left all of his work behind. As a foreigner in Egypt, it is easy to imagine that he may have had a hard time finding work. Assuming he did find work during the Holy Family's years in exile, he would once again leave it all behind when the angel let him know it was safe to return to Nazareth.

For those who have lost work, have had their work change dramatically, and for those who struggle to enter the workforce, we have a patron who understands and can teach us once again about faithful trust in a loving God.

Hope of the sick. *Pray for us.*

Yeah, this one's kinda obvious. The human body and systems are fantastic, intricate things. Our immune systems have evolved to fight infections, and modern medicine has done wonders in keeping us healthy. Unfortunately, a new virus for which there is no immunity and medicine could not possibly anticipate has taken hold.

St. Joseph reminds us we have a hope that is greater than our immune system or modern medicine. Not to presume God will miraculously heal us all (although that would be nice). We are more than our body, and St. Joseph can help our spirits and souls.

Protector of the Church. *Pray for us*

It's not part of the litany, but we'll throw in Patron of Canada here, too.

If God, in his infinite wisdom, trusted humble St. Joseph to be protector of the Holy Family, of the incarnate Son who would forgive our sins and redeem humanity, it only makes sense we should place our trust in St. Joseph to look after our Church and our country—even through a pandemic.

Patron of the dying. *Pray for us*

The end of an ancient prayer for St. Joseph's intercession reads:

*I never weary contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms.
I dare not approach while he reposes near your heart.
Press him in my name, and kiss his fine head for me.
Ask him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.*

We have faced death during the pandemic. Adding to the pain is the fact we are not able to mourn as we should. May we find hope and consolation in St. Joseph's intercession. May Jesus return the kiss as He welcomes those who have died into His kingdom.

Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*
Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.*
Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us.*
God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*
God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*
Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *pray for us* (after each line)
Saint Joseph,
Noble offspring of David,
Light of Patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-father of the Son of God,
Zealous defender of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,

Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,
Joseph most courageous,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,

Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of workers,
Glory of domestic life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Comfort of the afflicted,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of the Holy Church,

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

V. He has made him lord of his household:
R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray. O God, who in your loving providence, chose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most Holy Mother, grant us the favour of having him for our intercessor in Heaven whom on Earth we venerate as our protector. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.