

ORDER OF BLESSING

In preparation for the celebration of this blessing prayer, contact your parish's social justice ministry to see if there are particular food needs for the parish food pantry, a local food pantry, or ministry supported by the parish or diocese.

Send home with the students a note listing food items needed for the above. Invite families who are able to do so to contribute one or more items on the list, and to send the item(s) to class with their children before March 19. The order for the blessing prayer is as follows. Feel free to adapt the prayer so it is age- or grade-appropriate, and suitable for the timeframe of your religion class.



INTRODUCTORY RITES

Gathering Song: "We Are Disciples" from the *Be My Disciples* music or any song highlighting the focus of feeding the hungry, social justice, or service.

Greeting

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Introduction

Leader: On March 19, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Saint Joseph is the patron saint of the Universal Church, the Church throughout the world. He is also the patron saint of workers, carpenters, and fathers. Let us open our ears and our hearts to listen to a story about Saint Joseph, taken from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Blessing of SAINT JOSEPH'S TABLE

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel Acclamation:

(Sing the Lenten Gospel Acclamation used at your school or parish.)

Gospel:

(Proclaim, or invite a student to proclaim Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24.)

Reflection:

Remind the students that just as Joseph cared for Mary and Jesus, our heavenly Father cares for each of us by blessing us and giving us what we need to live.

Invite volunteers to name some of the things all people need in order to live. Continue by inviting them to name the blessings God has given us to meet those needs. (For example, *all people need food to live. God gives us food that is grown in the fields. All people need water to live. God created the lakes and rivers and streams that provide us with water, etc.*)

Conclude by sharing that in many parts of the world today it is a custom to especially thank God for the gift of food we have to eat, and to give thanks to God for our blessings by collecting food for the poor and hungry.

Invite the students who brought food for the poor to bring their items forward and to place them on and/or around your Lenten prayer table. (You may wish to have extra food available for those who forgot or who were unable to bring a donation of food.)

LITANY OF SAINT JOSEPH

Leader:

Today we celebrate the goodness of Saint Joseph, who worked to provide for the needs of Mary and Jesus.

Let us honor him in a special way by praying together a part of the Litany of Saint Joseph. Your response will be: Pray for us.

(Lead the students in singing or saying the following litany.)



Saint Joseph . . . pray for us.

Husband of Mary . . . pray for us.

Foster father of Jesus . . . pray for us.

Head of the holy family . . . pray for us.

Model of workers . . . pray for us.

Example to parents . . . pray for us.

Comfort of the troubled . . . pray for us.

Protector of the Church . . . pray for us.

Blessing of SAINT JOSEPH'S TABLE

PRAYER OF BLESSING

Leader:

Generous God, as a husband and as a father Saint Joseph cared for the needs of Mary and Jesus.

We thank you, our heavenly Father, for the many ways you love and care for us.

Receive these gifts of food we bring in thanks for your many blessings to us.

May our gifts meet the needs of the poor and hungry, and bless them as they journey with us to your heavenly kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

CONCLUDING RITES

Sign of the Cross

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.**

Concluding Song: (See "Gathering Song" for suggestions.)

