

8th Day of the 33-Day Preparation for Consecration to St. Joseph

St. Joseph's Powerful Prayer

On this day of our preparation to consecrate ourselves to St. Joseph, Fr. Calloway suggests that we reflect on the phrase: "St. Joseph, pray for us." These words are the first invocation of St. Joseph in the ancient prayer the "Litany of St. Joseph." Obviously, the meaning is very simple: we want him to pray for us. We can reflect on what it means to pray to a powerful saint. There are different kinds of prayer. Some kinds of prayer are reserved for God alone. The kind of prayer that we direct toward the saints and toward the angels is different from the kind of prayer that we offer to God. There are two kinds of prayer that we use only for God: worship and adoration ("latria" in Greek). We do not worship the saints or the angels. We do not adore them. These two words are used to refer to the kind of honor that we give to God alone. When it comes to the saints, we give them reverence ("dulia"), but never adoration. When I explain this to our non-Catholic friends, I tell them that "We only worship and adore God. We do not worship the saints. We just 'chat' with them! We talk to them and we ask them to pray for us to God. Just like when you ask your grandmother to pray for you because you know that she is a holy woman who is good at praying, in the same way you can ask a holy person who has died to pray for you. We do not believe in death. We do not believe that death is like a wall that separates us from our loved ones. They can pray for us. If your grandmother who was very holy dies and goes to heaven, you can still ask her to pray for you!"

In the tradition of the church there are special words to refer to the different kinds of prayer. The church has a special word to refer to the kind of prayer that we offer to Mary, because Mary is the greatest saint. She not God. She is below God, but she is very highly exalted ("hyper") above all of the saints. And so, the kind of prayer that we give to Mary is called "hyperdulia", which means "highest reverence". Fr. Calloway explains that there is also a special word that refers to the honor that we give to St. Joseph. It is called "proto-dulia", which means "first revered", because after Mary, he is the most deserving of reverence. Here are the four Greek words which refer to the four different kinds of prayer:

latria (adoration)	→ God
hyperdulia (highest reverence)	→ Mary
protodulia (first revered)	→ St. Joseph
dulia (revered)	→ All other saints

St. Thomas Aquinas tried to explain this unique ability that St. Joseph has to answer our prayers: "There are many saints to whom God has given the power to assist us in the necessities of life, but the power given to St. Joseph is unlimited: It extends to all our needs, and all those who invoke him with confidence are sure to be heard." (- St. Thomas Aquinas)

Please pray the Litany of St. Joseph every day at home for the intention of consecrating our parish to St. Joseph on March 19th!