

# St. Joseph's Table – An Italian Tradition

As early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century some Western calendars recognized March 19<sup>th</sup> Saint Joseph's Day and by 1479 the custom was firmly established in Rome. By 1570 the



custom to honor the earthly father of Our Lord was extended throughout the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius V when it was retitled as The Solemnity of Saint Joseph.

In some Catholic countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, this day is also

Father's Day!

The tradition of celebrating St. Joseph's Table in Italy and particularly in Sicily comes from legends from the Middle ages attributed to St. Joseph's intercession after Sicily suffered a very prolonged drought and severe famine affecting people and animals. With a strong devotion to St. Joseph, the Sicilian people prayed for rain. After some time, the clouds opened, and the rains came down and the people rejoiced. Later after the harvest, they remembered their gratitude to his intercession and prepared a table with special foods to honor him sharing their food with the poor and distributing the leftovers to those in need.

This tradition continues to this day in Italy, Poland, Malta, Spain, the Philippines, and the United States among its many Italian and Sicilian immigrants.

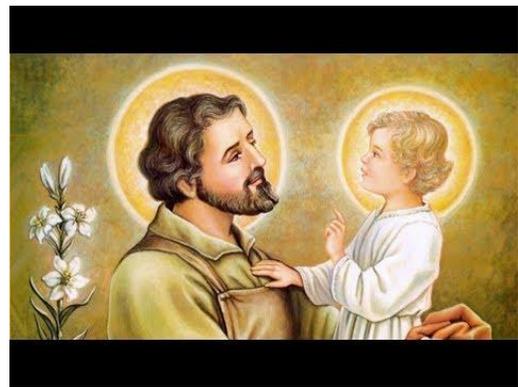
There are three important aspects of this tradition that make the day especially memorable.

**Veneration** of St. Joseph during Mass and recognition of him at the 'table.'

**The Table** is both an 'altar of reverence or honor', and a table for the communal celebration where the food is displayed or gathered.

**The Poor** is the intention of the day with gifts of food to those in need.

In this **Year of St. Joseph**, Bishop Joseph V. Brennan invites the parishes of the Diocese of Fresno to join him in celebrating St. Joseph's Table at all weekend Masses of March 20<sup>th</sup> and March 21<sup>st</sup>, with each parish community bringing non-perishable foods to a 'table' honoring St. Joseph, which will be delivered to local food banks, pantry's, and charitable organizations providing food to the poor.



Mass with Bishop Brennan will be livestreamed from Holy Spirit Church, Fresno on March 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:30 am for those who are participating in Mass from home.

More information will be provided to all Pastor's and Parish Administrators. Perhaps, your parish will continue to honor and venerate this great saint with a St. Joseph's Table every year and continue the tradition!