

## Introduction

A Blessed Christmas! During this season we are invited to learn from Joseph the ways of spiritual paternity, looking at how Mary and Joseph fathered Jesus, protecting him from evil threats and helping him to grow in humility, trust and love for God and for others.

### MONDAY

*(Nativity of the Lord)*

An example of faithfulness

Luke 2: 5-7

*He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

Today is Christmas day. Let us rejoice and contemplate baby Jesus in the manger; Jesus within our hearts and in the hearts of those God calls to be fathers in faith. Jesus in our hearts is born and lives when our life grows in love, freedom and humility, as we try to live and respond to God's calling. The vulnerability of baby Jesus echoes the vulnerability of our

faithfulness to God and to His ways. This vulnerability affirms the need of spiritual fathers who, like Joseph, defend Jesus' life above oneself. How are we faithful to God's call and how do we help others to be faithful to God's call?

### TUESDAY

*(St. Stephen)*

Hard worker, despite persecutions and trials

Ecclesiasticus 2:1-7

*My child, if you are going to serve the Lord, be prepared for times when you will be put to the test. Be sincere and determined. Keep calm when trouble comes. Stay with the Lord; never abandon him, and you will be prosperous at the end of your days. Accept whatever happens to you. Even if you suffer humiliation, be patient. Gold is tested by fire, and human character is tested in the furnace of humiliation. Trust the Lord, and he will help you. Walk straight in his ways, and put your hope in him. All you that fear the Lord, wait for him to show you his mercy.*

Today is the feast day of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr. We call to mind another feature of spiritual paternity, that is, a person ready to give oneself even when it entails passing through persecutions and trials for the sake of Jesus' life.

Spiritual paternity highlights a life that is forged within and therefore is strong in faith, humility and mercy, rather than in any kind of violence. We can see these attributes in Joseph and in the life of St Stephen. Let's become aware of the threats we may experience for our faith and ask God's Spirit for the desire to defend the life of faith in other people and in ours, above any threat or trial we may face.

### WEDNESDAY

*(St. John, the Evangelist)*

Giver of instructions and encouragement

1 John 1: 1-4

*This we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.*

As we celebrate the feast day of St John, the evangelist, we ask God to give us the gifts of exhorting and of giving instructions and encouragement to others, so they can follow God's paths. These are

also characteristics of spiritual paternity. In today's prayer, we invite you to reflect on these questions: how has been my preaching? Am I and is God happy with the way I instruct others? Where do my instructions and exhortations lead others to? Are they encouraging others to trust in the Word of Life and in the path of eternal life taught by Christ? Is my life coherent with what I preach?

### THURSDAY

*(Feast of the Holy Innocents)*

Present and opt for the Truth

1 John 2: 3-11; Matthew 2: 13-18

*We know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did... Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.*

On today's feast day of the Holy Innocents, we pray for so many innocent people who suffer the

consequences of evil, and especially for all those who suffer for not having a spiritual father who can help them to make options for the truth and to reject evil; also for all those who, by not having a spiritual father or mother feel they are left alone in their vulnerabilities, or for those who conform with living in lies and mediocrity, without seeking help to defend baby Jesus within. Which lies is God inviting me to protect others from?

#### FRIDAY

#### A Person who generates life

#### Philemon 1: 8-12

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement... I appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

Spiritual fatherhood, like Paul expressed in his care of Philemon in this letter, entails a love for others that is happy to let go of that relationship for the sake of what can best help one's spiritual son. Paul was aware of his limits and entrusted Philemon to Onesimus,

who would take a good and better care of him in that moment. Real spiritual paternity is not jealous nor control others, but is free and humble to look for what can better benefit others. In a community of faith, we can help each other in this spiritual paternity.

#### SATURDAY

#### Rooted in God's Mercy

#### 1 John 2: 12-17

*I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name...*

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

Spiritual paternity needs to be rooted in God's loving mercy. As today is the last day of the year 2017, I invite you to call to mind all those whom God has entrusted their faith to you along this year. How have you taken care of their lives in faith, love and faithfulness to God? Let's make an evaluation of how our spiritual paternity has been, then, let's offer it to God, resting in His mercy all we've

worked for the sake of Jesus' life and finally, let's ask God to help us recognize the wisdom this year He has given us so that we can live our spiritual paternity in a better way in the year 2018.

#### FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

1<sup>ST</sup> Reading: Sir 3:2-6,12-14

Psalm: Ps 128:1-5

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Col 3:12-21

Gospel: Lk 2:22-40



#### DYNAMISM OF THE WORD



# Verbum Dei

## Guidelines for Prayer

December 25-31, 2017

*“Providing like a father”*

#### General Objectives:

-To discover that living our mission God makes us part of his maternity and paternity; Children that are coming from the communion with God and they will be the new apostles that open the way to the Lord.

**Specific Objective:** to explore the call of spiritual paternity.