

## The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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*2 Samuel 7:12-14a*

*Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22*

*Luke 2:41-51a*

In the gospel today we hear the familiar story when Mary, Joseph and Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover but Jesus stayed behind. Mary and Joseph did not realize this and thought he was lost. Imagine the panic they must have felt during that time of separation. Even after they returned to Jerusalem to look for him, it took three days—which must have seemed like an eternity—to actually find him.

How separated you must feel from the Lord today? How alone and isolated we all will feel in the coming days and weeks (and perhaps even months) as we face the threat of COVID-19. It is unimaginable that we would be in this situation and in such a short amount of time. I never thought there would come a day when I would not be able to celebrate the Mass in your presence and offer you the Bread of Life, which is Christ, the Lord. For the past 22 years as a priest, celebrating the Mass has always been the highlight of my week because it was my opportunity to see you in person, preach the Word of God and offer the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

This is a strange time in which we are currently living. Things are changing by the day and we do not know when it will end. But, in the meantime, I will do everything I can, as your pastor, to remain connected to you and to remind you that the Lord is with us. Fr. Linh and I look forward to celebrating the Mass with you on our new YouTube channel (<http://bit.ly/SFAOKCYouTube>). We will be offering Mass here in this chapel of the Meerschaert House Monday through Friday at 12 noon and on Sundays we will celebrate the Mass in the church at 11:00 AM. I encouraged you to take advantage of this opportunity and to create your own rituals around prayer with your family during this time of separation.

On this Solemnity of St. Joseph, we remember the anxiety, the fear and the sadness Mary and Joseph felt when they were separated from Jesus, our Lord. But we also remember what he said to them when they finally found him in the Temple, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Some scholars suggest that a better translation than “in my Father’s house” is “about my Father’s business.” The “business” that Christ came into the world to accomplish was to preach the gospel, which he did with much power, majesty and authority and with great constancy and diligence, with much concern for the souls of men and women through many dangers and risks of life. He also offered himself on the cross for our salvation and sent us his Holy Spirit to be with us (in every human situation and human condition) as we await his coming again.

My brothers and sisters, for the moment, you are unable to receive the Lord in the Eucharist—this separation creates anxiety and sadness—but never forget that we are still about “the work of the Father” through Jesus Christ, and that he is with you and with his Church now and forever.

*Rev. William L. Novak, V.G.*

*March 19, 2020*