



'Journeying With Joseph' Zoom Launch Address Congregational Leader Sr Monica Cavanagh, 29 June 2021

Congratulations to you **Sr Mary Cresp rsj** and all the authors of the pages within this book and to Steve Todd the artist. What a rich and wonderful contribution to reflections on the life of Saint Joseph. It takes us to the heart of the person who shapes our Josephite spirituality and mission. Throughout the essays in this book you encounter Joseph the man who acted justly, decided courageously, lived compassionately, and walked humbly with his God in our common home Earth.

I would like to express my appreciation to **Sr Mary Cresp rsj** for accepting the challenge to bring this work to fruition – gathering the essays, developing a framework, and then undertaking the important work of editing. Mary we are proud of what you have achieved in this special year.

In the words of Michele Fairburn, author and Covenant Josephite, this book invites the reader **'To dive deeper into the Joseph story and symbolism'**.

Pope Francis' recent document *Patris Corde – With a Father's Heart* becomes a source document on which to enter the story and significance of Joseph within the Catholic Tradition. On 19 March 1893 Mary MacKillop had written her own reflection on Joseph of at least nine typed pages – in this she asks us to ponder: *Who are we; what we are doing here; in what relation we stand towards this great saint*. In this treatise Mary MacKillop speaks of Joseph's courage, his quiet humility, and his noble heart. You will gain further insight into Mary MacKillop's faith and trust in Joseph in the writing of **Sr Mary Cresp rsj** in her reflection – *Joseph and Mary MacKillop – A Love Story*.

The chapters in this book give us nineteen different insights into person of Joseph. The book begins with the scriptural foundation from which Joseph emerges. **Sr Michelle Connolly rsj**, Josephite Scripture scholar, opens the wisdom contained in Matthew's Gospel related to Joseph around four distinct sections contained in the Gospel emphasising Joseph's role in guiding Jesus to adulthood. **Sr Virginia Bourke rsj** gives us the story that leads to Joseph being proclaimed the Patron of the Universal Church and the Patron of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and a favourite of Pope Francis'. Inspired by St Teresa of Avila love for Joseph, Julian Tenison Woods, has a special place in his heart for Joseph. **Sr Jan Tranter rsj** shares about the three events that marked his time in Penola - arriving on the feast of Joseph in 1857, opening and blessing his first church 'St Joseph's' in 1859 and beginning the work of the Institute on the feast of Joseph 1866.



Throughout the Chapters of this book, we are taken on a journey of stories which encapsulate Joseph's life as father, educator, dreamer, worker, refugee, protector, and seeker of justice intertwined with each author's lived experience, background, and area of interest. These encounters with Joseph are broken open in the Section of the Book – Titled '**Joseph's Radiant Influence**'. While I will not refer in detail to each essay, I do want to say two Chapters which quickly drew my attention were '**St Joseph and Ecology**' and '**Joseph a symbol and challenge for contemporary women**'.

I wondered how **Trish Hindmarsh** might open the topic '**Joseph and Ecology**'. It didn't take long to discover the connection, "Joseph's influence on both Jesus' love for the natural world and his mission to bring Good News to the whole of creation". I imagined Joseph walking around the village with Jesus explaining about the "birds of the air and the lilies of the field" and perhaps the inquisitive Jesus asking, "How come that fig-tree has not produced any fruit?" We can thank Joseph for Jesus' love for nature and the gift it was to Jesus as he began his preaching and teaching and the way he used these images to teach us about the Reign of God. I will leave you to discover more as you contemplate this essay.

Perhaps **Michele Fairbairn** called us to engage with the most challenging aspect of Joseph's life – **Joseph as a symbol and challenge for contemporary women**. In our telling of the story of Joseph, Michele encourages us to be mindful that we do not continue to uphold and share stories that perpetuate a patriarchal lens. Michele invites us to "breathe new life into the narrative" so that Joseph continues to inspire and shape who we are in the world. Thank you for the challenge.

As I read and pondered each essay I was deeply moved by the research and insights that were shared by each writer – each taking an aspect of Joseph's life and expanding it in a way that leaves the reader enriched and seeking the more. **Sue and Leo Kane** write of Joseph's rugged introduction to family life. Like so many ordinary folks, who seek the great Mysteries and fathom difficult life events, Joseph is a friend and advocate. For the Catholic educator in the Josephite Tradition you will find meaning and purpose in **Sr Catherine Mead's rsj - Joseph: Model for Educational Leaders**. There is much to be said about **Joseph the Just Man** – thanks **Sr Susan Connolly rsj**. One thought that particularly touched me was the insight that Jesus learns about the place of women in society through Joseph, who respects Mary and the women in Nazareth. As one author shares an insight into Joseph – perhaps Jesus recalled how Joseph treated Mary when she was found to be with child, when he was faced with the woman caught in adultery.

We who grew up in the Young Christian Workers movement well know the influence of Joseph in this movement, leading to the naming of the feast of **Joseph the Worker** – so thanks **Sr Jo Brady rsj** for exploring Joseph the Worker with us. **Sr Betty Brown rsj**, I had a real sense of Joseph the refugee accompanying you in your ministry with refugees.



Sr Susan Pollard rsj expands the meaning behind the dreams revealed to us in the scriptures leading us to acknowledge that deep capacity within Joseph to respond from a place of deep authenticity.

As you enter the section entitled '**Joseph's Cultural Outreach**' you find how those within different cultural contexts find a way into the Joseph story. I must say, words within the Gospel story took on new meaning and relevance as I read these accounts.

I loved how **Sr Nola Goodwin rsj** connects Joseph the man of tradition to the experience of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. There is an immediate connection for them between Joseph who knew his Jewish cultural traditions and their own understanding of law, traditions, and culture. Nola shares one story of an Indigenous man who came to talk to a Religious Sister in the Kimberley about the Christmas story. What struck him as right and normal, and more important than the rest of the story, was that Joseph took Mary and the soon-to-be-born Jesus to his home country to share the country with his son, to share the holy places, the holy traditions, to tell him the stories of these places and what they meant for his tradition. Joseph engages in those aspects of the Jewish tradition which are of significance – going to the temple for the purification, to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover just as the Indigenous peoples of Australia pass on the traditions and rituals of their culture.

In the Fiji culture, it is the connection to **village** that opens the story for them. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to live in the village of Nazareth. Village life is important to the people of Fiji. **Sr Lusiana Matai sjs** and **Sr Carmel Pilcher rsj** invite us to join with them in understanding this connection.

In Peru, returning to the place of your birth to vote in elections connects the people to Joseph going to Bethlehem for the census. **Sr Jenny Mori rsj** reminds us that there are sixty-three religious festivities held in St Joseph's honour. The Peruvian connection to Joseph goes back as far as 1828 when Joseph was declared Patron of the Peruvian Republic. He is particularly loved for his protective and comforting role in the face of difficulties. As Jenny writes, "He was a man of faith who welcomed Mary as his wife because they were united by a sacred mission."

For the Maori people the fact that Joseph belongs to the tribe of Judah is significant. It signifies that he is a tribal person - so important to their cultural context. I loved the reflection on "Joseph's Ancestry". **Sr Makaretta Tawaroa rsj** lives and breathes this story every day as she urges her people to believe in the dream given to them just as Joseph believed in his dream and then find solutions that can put it into action.

The Vietnamese, Peruvian and Timorese experience of Joseph reminds us that Joseph has been their protector long before he was declared Patron of the Universal Church. As **Sr Rose Vu rsj** shares with us St Joseph was declared the Patron of the Catholic Church in Vietnam in



1670. Rose writes of Joseph's honest love of Mary as he honours her dignity, a very important part of Vietnamese culture. I sensed a deep connection in Rose's writing to Joseph's sense of urgency as he leaves for Egypt – an experience of many Vietnamese people as they left their homeland under the cover of night not knowing what was ahead of them.

Gertrudis Da Silva reminds us that the Gospel tells of Joseph living in a country that was invaded by the empire of Rome. People of Timor Leste have lived their own experience of invasion until 1999. There is a deep sense that the story of the massacres that have taken place in their country connects to the story of Matthew's gospel of the massacre of innocent children and the need for Joseph, Mary and the child to flee their country just as many Timorese have had to do for safety. In and through this story there has always been the deep realisation that Joseph was there as protector of the 'holy' family just as he continues this protection among the people of Timor Leste.

Each of us has our own story of journeying with Joseph. As **Sr Marcia Allen csj** writes, the mantra "Go to Joseph" for just about everything, was and is part of our story. We put Joseph out in the weather hoping that his presence would provide us with a fine day, to placing petitions under his statute just as Pope Francis does to his sleeping Joseph. Many of us recall the many "Josephs" who came to our doors seeking a bite to eat during difficult and hard times. Their presence was a constant reminder that the Joseph who accompanied Mary and Jesus was still there accompanying those who had fallen upon difficult times. I was reminded myself just last week of Joseph who could not find a place of shelter for his beloved, through Peter the homeless man who found shelter in the street and who has just died. His gentle presence and warm smile were a constant gift to me as I made my way to the physio. Like Joseph his unassuming life touched the heart of many.

As you read and reflect on the essays in this book, I hope you discover like me, some new ways of seeing and hearing the Joseph story. Images and words such as "cordial", "holding", "capacity builder", "resting with God", "being entrusted with a God given mission", "from the deepest corners of his heart" and the importance of connection in daily life unfold in these pages. May you meet and experience Joseph the deep listener, the courageous, just, humble, obedient, tender, and silent one as you find the wisdom on the pages of this book.

This book is not a novel to read from beginning to end, but rather it provides the reader with the opportunity to reflectively walk the journey with Joseph as you ponder and treasure these writings in your heart.

With these words I now formally launch the book "Journeying with Joseph – Josephite Essays for the Year of St Joseph". Congratulations to all those involved.