ACTION GUIDE

FATHER'S DAY: THIRD SUNDAY OF JUNE

INTRODUCTION

While not a liturgical observance, Father's Day is an appropriate time to recall the essential role of fathers in the life of the family and in building a culture of life. It is also an opportunity to highlight spiritual fatherhood, which all men are called to embrace.

Simple steps, sample intercessions, homily notes, and an activity are provided to help your parish celebrate and pray for the fathers in your community. Please feel free to adapt the following resources to fit the needs of your specific parish or ministry.

Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role "in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God" (Familiaris consortio 25). Indeed, the role of the father "is of unique and irreplaceable importance" (FC 25).

Although society increasingly tells fathers that they have no say in the lives of their children before birth and fails to recognize the dynamic and critically important role of fatherhood, it is both a biological and spiritual reality. Pope Saint John Paul II said fathers are called to exhibit "generous responsibility for the life conceived

The resources referenced in this action guide can be found at respectlife.org/action-guides, unless otherwise noted.

under the heart of the mother" (FC 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life. Yet research continues to show that the top reasons women seek abortions include lacking support from the child's father and financial challenges, which are only exacerbated by a father's absence.

As a Church community, we need to encourage and support men to follow the example of St. Joseph and embrace their various roles as father. Even if a man is not a parent, he is still called to spiritual fatherhood—a fatherhood that fosters others' relationship with God, protecting them from evil and providing an example of Christ's love.

St. Joseph, himself, was unexpectedly called to both practical and spiritual fatherhood, and amid very difficult circumstances. But despite all obstacles, Joseph was faithful. He welcomed life, offering care and protection to Mary and Jesus. We pray that each expectant father will find courage in the example of St. Joseph and offer loving, life-affirming support to the mother of his child.

SIMPLE STEPS

Here is a list of simple steps that offer ideas on how to use the provided resources. Each step may not apply to your specific circumstance, but most can be adapted to suit your needs.

1. Consider how your parish could observe Father's Day.

Many parishes already observe Father's Day in some way. Find out whether your parish currently has any plans in progress. Review the Respect Life resources available for Father's Day such as the *Spiritual Bouquet to St. Joseph* activity that appears later in this action guide. Prayerfully consider which may work best in your parish and, if your parish already has plans in motion, whether there is a way to complement or integrate with those plans.

2. Meet with your pastor.

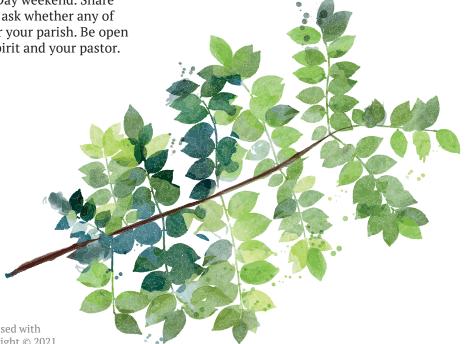
Ask your pastor whether it might be possible for your parish, on Father's Day, to highlight a father's integral role in the life of the family and in safeguarding the sanctity of human life. Let him know sample homily reflection points are available, in case he'd like to take a look at them. Share the sample intercessions, and ask if one or more could be included in the Prayer of the Faithful during Masses taking place Father's Day weekend. Share any other ideas you have, and ask whether any of them might be appropriate for your parish. Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and your pastor.

3. Make necessary preparations.

Once you have determined with your pastor how your parish will celebrate Father's Day, begin making the appropriate plans and preparations in collaboration with relevant parish staff and volunteers. This could include tasks like submitting bulletin announcements, arranging special intercessions for Mass, drafting sections for the parish newsletter, or gathering materials for the Spiritual Bouquet to St. Joseph. See the following sample timeline for more detailed steps.

4. Pray for all fathers.

No matter how your parish has decided to observe Father's Day, prayer should be the basis of everything we do. As you plan and prepare, remember to lift up in prayer all fathers. Seek the intercession of St. Joseph, patron of fathers, especially for those who are struggling with some aspect of their fatherhood, such as feeling overwhelmed with the news of an unexpected pregnancy.



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SAMPLE TIMELINE

We have provided a sample timeline to help you prepare for the celebration of Father's Day. While these steps apply most directly to a parish coordinator for Respect Life ministry, whatever your role serving the Church, they can help you think about key steps for planning ahead.



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31							

JUNE							
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26	27	28	29	30			

Early to mid-March

- Meet with your pastor to discuss highlighting the precious gift of life and fathers' role as defenders and protectors of life as part of the observance of Father's Day. Let him know what resources are available, such as the homily helps and sample intercessions that follow later in this guide. Share with him the ideas for offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph (sample activity at the end of this Father's Day action guide). Request permission for the things you'd like to implement, any bulletin submissions you have in mind, and to set up a table in the vestibule or other gathering area. Most importantly, ask what you can do to help and whether there's any other information he would like you to provide.
- ◆ Following your conversation with your pastor, contact your parish office to open the lines of communication. Share the results of the conversation with your pastor and what you are requesting for the observance of Father's Day. Find out bulletin submission guidelines and deadlines. This information will help you determine the best date to follow up with your bulletin submissions. Many parishes need content well in advance to be able to include it in the weekly bulletin. Find out what else the parish staff needs from you and when they need it.

Early April

Once you have received the appropriate approvals and permission, begin gathering materials for the spiritual bouquet. Research what options you may have for purchasing flowers at an affordable price, and compare the information against your budget. Keep in mind that flower options and prices may change based on the season.

Mid-April

Begin to recruit volunteers to help you facilitate the spiritual bouquet. Volunteers will be needed to staff the table after each Mass the weekend of Father's Day. Other volunteer tasks might include picking up or transferring flowers to the parish or preparing materials.

Late April

Submit the bulletin and pulpit announcements you hope to have featured. This will help your parish plan and allot the necessary space in the bulletin.

Mid-May

Reconnect with appropriate parish staff regarding your bulletin and pulpit submissions, and make sure they have received all the materials needed, including the spiritual bouquet announcements and any pravers. such as the *Litany of St. Joseph*. If you have obtained permission from the pastor, make arrangements to set up a table in the vestibule or other gathering area on Father's Day weekend.

Early June

Touch base with your pastor to offer further assistance and to confirm any plans you may have made, such as the spiritual bouquet. Make sure he has everything he needs, such as pulpit announcements or homily helps. With your volunteers, prepare all the spiritual bouquet materials except for the flowers.

Saturday of Father's Day Weekend

Gather with your volunteers to set up the table prior to the vigil Mass. Keep the flowers in a safe area. Consider allotting a certain number of flowers for each Mass, and setting out each allotment just prior to each Mass. This will help ensure that you don't run out of flowers before the final weekend Mass. Remember that some Masses have higher attendance than others, and plan accordingly.

Father's Day Weekend

Help participants complete the spiritual bouquet following each Mass. Depending on how you have planned to complete and/or adapt this activity for your parish, specific logistical steps will vary. (See the sample activity at the end of this Father's Day action guide for various options for doing this activity.) After the final Sunday Mass, break down the table, and clean up any leftover materials. The spiritual bouquet can remain in place for the next 1-2 weeks.

1-2 Weeks After Father's Day

Clear away the spiritual bouquet, and remove any leftover vases.



If you are planning to do the Father's Day activity, use these sample announcements and graphics to invite parishioners to participate.

Bulletin Announcements

(Suggested Weekends: The Two Weekends Before Father's Day)

On Father's Day weekend, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph. Following each Mass, parishioners will be invited to write down their prayer intentions and offer them to St. Joseph along with flowers of thanksgiving for his fatherly care and intercession. [To cut the cost of providing flowers, consider adding: "If you would like to participate, please bring a flower with you to Mass that/next weekend."]

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for *many*. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions brought to your heart by the occasion.

Pulpit Announcements

Option 1

(Suggested Weekend: Weekend Before Father's Day)

Next weekend after each Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph. All are invited to write down a prayer intention and offer it to St. Joseph with a flower of thanksgiving for his fatherly care. Please see the bulletin for more information.



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Option 2 (if you are not providing flowers)

(Suggested Weekend: Father's Day Weekend)

After Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph. All are invited to *[insert*] *location of the table with the supplies]*, where there are pens and paper for you to write down a prayer intention. You can then present your intention to St. Joseph by placing it in the basket at *[insert* designated statue, icon, or painting and location]. If you brought St. Joseph a flower, you can offer it to him in thanksgiving for his fatherly care by placing it in the vase located [insert location]. [Consider adding: "For those who did not bring a flower, a limited supply is available near the pens and paper."]

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions in your heart today.

Option 2 (if you **are** providing flowers)

(Suggested Weekend: Father's Day Weekend)

After Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph. All are invited to finsert *location of the table with the supplies]*, where there are pens and paper for you to write down a prayer intention. There are also flowers for you to offer to St. Joseph in thanksgiving for his fatherly care. After writing down your intention, take a flower, and present both to St. Joseph at [insert designated statue, icon, or painting and location].

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions in your heart today.

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INTERCESSIONS

These sample intercessions were written for use on Father's Day; however, many can be used throughout the year. These intentions are appropriate for inclusion in the Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Mass. They can also be printed in the weekly bulletin, featured in email newsletters, shared on social media platforms, or prayed during personal or family prayer times.

May expectant fathers lovingly support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life; We pray to the Lord:

For expectant fathers: May they find courage in the example of St. Joseph, as they prepare to love, protect, and provide for their child;

We pray to the Lord:

For all priests:

That through the intercession of St. Joseph, they will be filled with the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus:

We pray to the Lord:

For all married couples struggling to have a child: May the Lord grant them peace and comfort; We pray to the Lord:

For all those longing to welcome a child through adoption:

May the Lord guide their journey and grant them peace along the way; We pray to the Lord:

For fathers who mourn the loss of a child: May they find peace and consolation in the heart of God the Father; We pray to the Lord:

HOMILY HELPS

Rather than drawing from the readings of the day, some general points are provided for consideration as you honor fathers and highlight the gift and responsibility of fatherhood, while also showing sensitivity and compassion to all who may find this holiday especially challenging.

One or more of these reflections on fatherhood could be included as part of a larger homily, and other ministry leaders could also use these reflections as the basis for small group discussions or other faith-sharing scenarios.

Father's Day | Third Sunday of June

- All men are called to the vocation of spiritual fatherhood; some are also called to live this out as fathers of biological, adopted, or foster children. The societal observance of Father's Day, in addition to the traditional observance of the holiday, is also an opportunity to highlight the spiritual fatherhood of godparents, priests, deacons, uncles, and other men who often serve as fathers in important ways within extended family, parish communities, or individuals' lives.
- Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role "in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God" (Familiaris consortio 25).
- In our efforts to honor, offer thanksgiving, and pray for fathers, it is also important to remember that Father's Day can be a difficult **holiday for some,** such as those who have lost or are estranged from their fathers, couples who are struggling with infertility, and fathers who have lost one or more children through miscarriage, abortion, or in some other way. You may want to take a moment to verbally acknowledge there are some who may find this holiday to be painful and invite the congregation to **pray for them.** Those struggling with feelings of loss, emptiness, or loneliness on this holiday may feel overlooked, and this simple gesture can communicate a sense of understanding and support.
- Fathers need to be encouraged to support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life. Research continues to show that the top reasons women seek abortions include lacking support from the child's father and financial challenges, which are only exacerbated by a father's absence. Fathers should be informed of and formed in the irreplaceable role they

- hold in the lives of their children and the responsibility they share in welcoming God's gift of new life.
- Pope Saint John Paul II said fathers are called to exhibit "generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother" (Familiaris consortio 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life.
- Pope St. John Paul II also wrote that, in the case of an abortion decision "the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy: in this way the family is thus mortally wounded and profaned in its nature as a community of love and in its vocation to be the 'sanctuary of life'" (Evangelium vitae 59).
- Although men do not bear the physical challenges of carrying a child within themselves, they can still be overwhelmed by the news of an unexpected or difficult pregnancy. Further, society increasingly tells them that they should have no say in the lives of their children before birth.
- As a Church community, we need to encourage and support men to follow the example of St. Joseph and embrace their role as father. Joseph, himself, was unexpectedly called to fatherhood amid difficult circumstances. But despite all obstacles, he was faithful. He welcomed life, offering care and protection to Mary and Jesus.

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SAMPLE ACTIVITY

A Spiritual Bouquet to St. Joseph, Patron of Fathers

Father's Day provides a beautiful opportunity to pray for and honor fathers. However, it can also be a difficult holiday for some, such as those who have lost their own father, those who have lost a child, and those who are struggling to have a child.

This activity seeks to lift up the many intentions brought to our hearts by the observance of Father's Day, entrusting them to the intercession of St. Joseph, Patron of Fathers. It also provides a way to honor St. Joseph for his own example of embracing the call to fatherhood amid difficult circumstances. Despite all obstacles, he was faithful, welcoming the life of the Christ Child and offering care and protection to both Mary and Jesus.

On the weekend of Father's Day, parishioners are invited to write a prayer intention on a slip of paper and place it, along with a flower if possible, beneath a statue, icon, or image of St. Joseph. (If you don't have one, you could look for an image online to print or temporarily display on a screen.)

When the activity is complete, you will have a spiritual and physical "bouquet" of prayer intentions and offerings serving as a visual reminder of the powerful intercession and protection of St. Joseph.

While the following directions describe completing this activity within a parish, this can be easily adapted for use in a school, ministry, or family. Some adaptation ideas are included in the following pages.

Materials:

- *Flowers of various varieties (inexpensive options often include carnations, daisies, and alstroemeria, among others)
- Buckets to store the flowers in water
- Small note cards or slips of paper
- Pens, crayons, or markers
- Vases of water
- Basket to hold prayer intentions
- Designated statue, icon, or image of the St. Joseph
- Copies of a prayer seeking St. Joseph's intercession, such as the Prayer to St. Joseph after the Rosary or a *Litany of St. Joseph*

Directions:

- 1. Use the included sample bulletin announcement the weekend before Father's Day to invite parishioners to participate in the upcoming activity. (Be sure to submit your bulletin announcement request well in advance to ensure space is available in the bulletin.)
- 2. Gather your materials. Flowers can often be obtained in bulk through a local wholesale florist or wholesale chain. Your parish may have already established connections due to ordering flowers throughout the year. The size of your parish, school, or community will determine how many flowers you need to purchase. To help keep needed quantities lower, ask that each participant use only one flower. You could also consider asking parishioners to bring their own flowers, perhaps supplying only a small number (if any) for those who forget to do so.
- 3. Pre-cut notecards or small slips of paper.

^{*}If your parish or community is unable to afford flowers, this activity can still be completed without them! Simply have parishioners place their written intentions in a basket before the designated statue of St. Joseph. Or, you could consider providing crayons or markers and suggesting participants draw a flower next to their intention. This adaptation cuts costs and encourages participants' creativity! Another option would be to invite parishioners to bring their own flowers. If you do have some access to flowers or money for them, you could provide a limited number on a "first come, first serve" basis for those who forget to bring one.

- 4. Place the basket for the intentions and the vases filled with water near the statue, icon, or painting of St. Joseph that will serve as the center of the spiritual bouquet.
- 5. Set up a separate table outside the church or in the vestibule (with the necessary permission obtained). Place the pens and slips of paper on the table. Set the flowers in buckets of water to the sides of the table or behind it. If there is room on the table, provide copies of a prayer to St. Joseph for participants to pray together before the image or to take home with them to pray. (Some options are this *Litany of St. Joseph* or the Rosary, followed by the *Prayer to St. Joseph after the Rosary*.) Or, you could print the prayer of your choice directly into the bulletin. In addition to saving space on the table, parishioners can use the prayer to seek the intercession of St. Joseph throughout the month. (The prayers can be found at respectlife.org/action-guides.)
- 6. At the end of each Mass, use one of the sample pulpit announcements to invite parishioners to participate in the spiritual bouquet.
- 7. Arrange for volunteers to staff the table following each Mass. They can help pass out materials, answer questions, and assist younger participants in writing their intention. Direct participants to where they can present their intentions and flowers to St. Joseph.
- 8. Your bouquet should grow physically and spiritually after each Mass. Allow the flowers to remain for next week or two to serve as a reminder of the intentions entrusted to the intercession of St. Joseph and in thanksgiving for his fatherly care. Encourage parishioners to also pray for the intercessions of other participants.

Ideas for Parish Adaptations

Because each parish varies widely, you may need to adapt or change this activity to fit your specific needs. Think about the layout of your church building, the location of an appropriate image of St. Joseph, the schedule of Masses, and any other factors that may affect or be affected by this activity.

For example, depending on the space available in your parish vestibule, you may want to conduct the activity outside to help with the flow of foot traffic after Mass. If your parish has a St. Joseph statue outside, consider offering the spiritual bouquet there. This will eliminate the need for parishioners to exit and re-enter the Church. Some parishes have Masses scheduled very close together, so moving outside can also help ensure the next Mass is not disrupted or delayed.

You might ask participants to form a line to present their prayer intentions and flowers to St. Joseph one by one. Or, you could encourage people to pray a moment before approaching and let the foot traffic flow organically.

The purpose of this activity is to seek the intercession of St. Joseph for all the intentions brought to our hearts by the observance of Father's Day, as well as to thank him for his fatherly love for us. Assess what works best for your circumstances, and make adaptations or changes as needed.

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Sample Announcements for At-Home Modification



Bulletin Announcement

(Suggested Weekends: The two weekends before Father's Day)

This Father's Day weekend, we invite you to join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph, seeking his intercession and thanking him for his fatherly care. We invite you to share with us your prayer intentions to be entrusted to St. Joseph. We also encourage you to offer a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph in your own homes, using or adapting the suggestions in this sample activity guide: usccb.org/joseph-spiritual-bouquet. If you participate from home, please consider sharing pictures with our parish family. We would love to see them! [Explain how parishioners can share pictures – for example, by emailing them to parish staff to be shared publicly or by posting directly in the comments under a specific post on one of the parish's social media accounts.]

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions brought to your heart by this occasion.

Pulpit Announcements

Option 1

(Suggested Weekends: The two weekends before Father's Day)

We invite you to join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph for Father's Day. Please see the parish website for more information.

Option 2

(Suggested Weekends: The two weekends before Father's Day)

We invite you to join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph for Father's Day. Simple suggestions for families to participate from home are available on the parish website.

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions brought to your heart by the occasion.

Social Media Post

We invite you to join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to St. Joseph for Father's Day. We invite you to comment with prayer intentions you'd like to be entrusted to St. Joseph's intercession. We also encourage you to participate from home with these simple suggestions: usccb.org/josephspiritual-bouquet.

As we celebrate the gift of fathers and honor St. Joseph, we also recognize that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions brought to your heart by the occasion.



A Spiritual Bouquet to St. Joseph, Patron of Fathers



Option for At-Home Adaptation

Materials:

- *Flowers, greenery, or some other type of small gift like hearts or flowers cut out of colored construction paper
- Small note cards or slips of paper
- Pens, crayons, or markers
- Small basket or other container to hold the prayer intentions
- Vase of water (if using fresh flowers or greenery)
- **Statue, icon, or image of St. Joseph
- Copies of a prayer seeking St. Joseph's intercession, such as the *Prayer to St. Joseph after the Rosary* or a *Litany of St.* **Ioseph**

*This activity can also be completed without flowers or any other type of gift. Simply place your written intentions in a basket before the designated statue or image of St. Joseph. Or, you could draw a flower or another image next to your prayer intention on the paper.

**If you don't have any of these in your home, find an image online to display on a computer or other type of screen.



Directions:

- 1. Gather your materials. Look around your own yard for flowers or greenery that might be available, or pick some up at the store.
- 2. Set up a small table for your spiritual bouquet. Place on the table your statue or image of St. Joseph with a small basket for prayer intentions and a vase with water or other receptacle for your offerings. Put writing utensils and something to write on nearby.
- 3. Pre-cut notecards or small slips of paper.
- 4. Invite household family members to participate in the spiritual bouquet. Participants can write down on the notecards or slips of paper what they would like to ask St. Joseph to intercede for. They can then be invited to place their prayer intentions in the basket, as well as to place their flowers or other offerings in the vase or other receptacle in thanks for St. Joseph's fatherly care.
- 5. When all participants have presented their prayer intentions and gifts to St. Joseph, offer a closing prayer of your choosing.
- 6. Encourage family members to pray throughout the week for all the intercessions placed under the St. Ioseph's care.

The purpose of this activity is to seek the intercession of St. Joseph for all the intentions of our hearts related to the observance of Father's Day, as well as to thank him for his fatherly love for us. Assess what works best for your circumstances and make adaptations or changes as needed!

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