

THE YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH

A Statement by the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis published an apostolic letter, *Patris Corde* (With a Father's Heart) to mark 150 years since Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. Pope Francis declared December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021 as the "Year of St. Joseph."¹

Then, on December 27, he announced that the period March 19, 2021, to June 26, 2022, will be *Amoris laetitia* Family Year, a time to reflect upon his apostolic exhortation, The Joy of Love. And last January 31, the pope announced that from now on the fourth Sunday of July will be the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

We can see that Pope Francis is calling upon us who have endured more than a year facing the coronavirus pandemic to especially think of and cherish our families. However, in light of the pope's insistence that all men and women are brothers and sisters, this should mean that our families are not merely a matter of blood, but include all communities, regions, and nations – the whole world.

Pope Francis has established the Year of Joseph in order to deepen our trust in St. Joseph, to ask for his intercession, and to imitate his virtues. In the pope's apostolic letter, he considers the image of St. Joseph as father and lists seven characteristics to keep in mind in this pandemic calamity. These traits apply to all of us, not just fathers. Please read *Patris corde* and deepen your friendship with St. Joseph.

The Church has long been devoted to St. Joseph and long sought his intercession. Let us pray that through the intercession of St. Joseph our faith and love will be purified, and that this plague will end as soon as possible.

In addition, in my catechesis as president of the bishops' conference and in connection with the Year of St. Joseph, I have offered thoughts on "St. Joseph, Protector of Life" (in Japanese). I hope you will reflect on them.

March 4, 2021

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¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*: On the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.