On Aug. 16, the Diocese of Lafayette will commence a year-long celebration honoring St. Joseph. The opening Mass for this special Year of St. Joseph will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m. at St. Joseph Church in Patterson, with evening prayer and benediction also scheduled for 6:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette.

A closing Mass and festivities have also been scheduled to conclude the Year of St. Joseph at St. Joseph Church in Milton on May 1, 2021.

This special year is in conjunction with the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph as patron of the Universal Church. Originally, Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel had intended for the celebration to commence on March 19, 2020 (the feast of St. Joseph), but plans were postponed as part of the diocese’s safeguarding measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, Bishop Deshotel is directing each church parish throughout the diocese to join in with the start of this special year by celebrating a votive Mass of St. Joseph during the weekend of Aug. 15-16 (instead of the usual 20th Sunday of Ordinary Time). He is encouraging the parishes to host St. Joseph Altars then as well, and the diocesan Office of Worship is also working to finalize plans for the release and distribution of a special commemorative booklet for the Year of St. Joseph during this same weekend.

Additional information on various events and activities in honor of the Year of St. Joseph is tentative at this time. However, Bishop Deshotel has designated the 13 St. Joseph parishes in the Diocese of Lafayette to serve as pilgrimage sites. Everyone can join in the celebration by visiting these sites and carrying out certain prayers (to be announced) so that they may receive a plenary indulgence.

Individuals are also being encouraged to offer their prayers to St. Joseph. Petition him to lift us up through his intercession as we strive to emulate the characteristics that he himself exhibited as he watched firsthand while the great mysteries of Christ’s life unfolded before his eyes. Adore as St. Joseph adored, devoting himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to Jesus Christ. Obey as he obeyed, guided by the four prophetic dreams he received according to the Bible. (Mt 12:20, 21, 21, 21 and 2:22). Last, but hardly least, serve as he served in the roles of laborer, husband and foster father.

Bishop Deshotel has also requested that office directors and program coordinators within the diocesan chancery reflect the Year of St. Joseph in their individual programs and events. Additional diocesan events may therefore be announced as the celebration progresses, and members of the chancery staff are working to release supplemental resources designed to help the church parishes carry out this endeavor at their level as well. Access to these items will be included at diolaf.org/stjoseph as they become available.

As these resources, details and information are confirmed, they will be posted at diolaf.org/stjoseph. Individuals are encouraged to visit there and also to follow along at facebook.com/DiocestoLafayette for event photos and other shares as the year progresses. 

### Monthly themes for the Year of St. Joseph

The Diocese of Lafayette’s Office of Worship has released the following monthly themes to guide everyone in prayer and reflection throughout the Year of St. Joseph:

- **Aug. 2020**: Joseph and the Universal Church
- **Sept. 2020**: Tutor of Christ: Joseph and Catechesis
- **Oct. 2020**: Husband of Mary: Marian Devotion
- **Nov. 2020**: Patron of the Dying: Joseph and End of Life Care
- **Dec. 2020**: Son of David: Joseph and the Covenant
- **Jan. 2021**: Take Your Family: Joseph and the Vulnerable (Unborn, Migrants, Refugees, Persecuted Christians, the Poor)
- **Feb. 2021**: Joseph and Marriage
- **March 2021**: Joseph the Worker: Dignity of Labor
- **April 2021**: Joseph and Fatherhood
ST. JOSEPH OFFERS US A LEG UP

One of my favorite things to do as a child was to ride on my father’s shoulders. I especially remember it at Mardi Gras parades. By sitting on my father’s shoulders, I could see the people on the floats more easily. There, I didn’t have to elbow and grab for favors, only catch them as they fell into my net. Eventually, I outgrew my dad’s shoulders, but what I haven’t outgrown is needing others to carry me and to lift me up. In particular, I haven’t outgrown the help of the saints.

This month, we begin our diocesan celebration of the Year of St. Joseph, and St. Joseph offers us a leg up, just like my dad did when I was little. St. Joseph invites us to sit on his shoulders and there, together with Christ and the Holy Spirit, presents us to our heavenly Father.

On St. Joseph’s shoulders, we ADORE the face of God more clearly.

We OBEY, letting down our nets and receiving the grace of God more abundantly.

We SERVE, humbling ourselves like children.

This year is an occasion for us to devote ourselves to our heavenly guardian and to practice these three virtues: adoration, obedience and service. It’s an occasion for us to proclaim and to live the fact that we never outgrow St. Joseph.

One hundred fifty years ago, Blessed Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph as the patron of the Universal Church. We begin our year by reflecting on that theme, Joseph and the Universal Church. Each Sunday at Mass, we proess that the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. To declare that the Church is catholic is to declare that she is universal. One way that she is universal is that she has been sent by Christ to all the nations. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 831) In other words, “All human beings are called to the new people of God.” (Lumen gentium, 13) What a consoling message this is! Jesus has been sent to all. The Church has been sent to all. All are called. There is no people, no culture, no time, no place and no kind of person that is excluded from Christ and the Church’s universal mission.

If Christ and the Church possess a universal mission, so, too, does St. Joseph. He is sent to all; each of us is called to find a father in the spouse of Our Lady and the guardian of Christ. Whether we be young or old, rich or poor, ordained, religious, married or single, each of us is invited to take St. Joseph as a model, a companion and a sure support.

May this year be a moment of encounter with the person of St. Joseph for you and your family. In communion with him, may you adore, obey and serve the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Together, let us heed the words of Blessed Pope Pius IX: “Go to Joseph! Have recourse with special confidence to St. Joseph, for his protection is most powerful, as he is the patron of the Universal Church.”

REFLECT AND PARTICIPATE

As the Diocese of Lafayette celebrates the Year of St. Joseph, reflecting upon the virtues of adoration, obedience and service, several events have also been planned in which all are invited to actively participate. Events scheduled for the month of August include:

- Aug. 15-16: St. Joseph Kickoff Weekend
- Aug. 16 (9:00 a.m.): Opening Mass, St. Joseph Church, Patterson
- Aug. 16 (6:00 p.m.): Vespers and Benediction, Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Lafayette
- Aug. 19-20 (6:30-7:30 p.m.): Parish mission “With Blessed Joseph, Her Spouse” presented by Father Rene Pellessier, St. Leo Church, Lafayette
- Aug. 22 (6:00 p.m.): Parish Mission, St. Joseph Church, Ville Platte

FOR FURTHER READING, see Lumen gentium, Dogmatic constitution on the Church, 13; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 830-856.