

Los Lazos Familiares

Fortaleza la Familia Católica

Family Bonds

Building Strong Catholic Families

By CARLOS VILLARREAL, STL



My Dad, Saint Joseph

Because of his faith and devotion to Mary, St. Joseph is a central figure in the Catholic Church and the patron saint to millions of men and women around the world. For me, however, he is the patron saint to someone a lot closer to home—my dad. As St. Joseph was, my dad is an immigrant and a carpenter by trade. Some people might call that coincidence—I call it divine intervention.

I grew up in deep South Texas, where, culturally speaking, many residents have more in common with people from the northern Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon than people from other parts of Texas. As a result the Latin culture of manliness (*machismo*) is as pervasive in the male population as wearing cowboy boots. Being raised in this environment, like most male kids, I wanted to emulate that *machismo* and spend as much time with my dad as possible. I wanted to do what he did and go where he went, whether it was to mow the lawn, play catch, or go to work with him.

However, I learned that there are many kinds of *machismo*, ranging from the idea that men are not supposed to do house chores to the corrosive idea that “Women are here to serve men.” The common thread in all forms of *machismo* is the oppressive marginalizing of the woman’s relationship to a man. From this point of view, a machista is the norm of what a “real” man is and something women have to deal with or put up with. It does not have to be this way.

God, in the person of St. Joseph, sent us a shining example of a “real” man. He shows us another type of *machismo*; one that allows us men to be “faithful and prudent managers” while valuing the women in our lives.

This was the *machismo* in which I was raised. I didn’t realize it at the time, but in my mind I was growing up to be machista like my father, in the footsteps of St. Joseph. He taught me that being a man is about working hard and caring for your family. Although my father may not have done much laundry or washed many dishes, he catered to every need of his family, especially his wife, with love, care, and concern.

As I grow older, I realize more and more each day all that my father taught me. Although he is not perfect, he is true to his calling as the head of our household. He provides, supports, and loves his family. He is my St. Joseph, ever-present, protecting and guiding me.

Take Time:

- ▶ Learn about the virtue of humility
- ▶ Learn about Saint Joseph
- ▶ Establish a family day

Joseph, Husband of Mary

“Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge...” (LUKE 12:42)

St. Joseph embodies the virtues of humility and obedience. Even though historically we know little about him, the Church recognizes Joseph as the second greatest saint, next to the Virgin Mary. He receives such great honor, not only because he accepted the Blessed Mother while she was with child, but because he accepted the will of God when he became the foster father of Mary’s son, Jesus.

(FEAST DAY: MARCH 19)

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