

# Vocations answer God's call to make great dreams come true, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Religious and priestly life must be filled with the simple joy of caring every day for what really matters – faithful friendship with God and one another, Pope Francis said.

“I pray that you will experience this same joy, dear brothers and sisters who have generously made God the dream of your lives, serving him in your brothers and sisters through a fidelity that is a powerful testimony in an age of ephemeral choices and emotions that bring no lasting joy,” he wrote in his message for the 2021 World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The day will be celebrated April 25 at the Vatican and in many dioceses around the world.

The message, released at the Vatican March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, was dedicated to the saint and “the dream of vocation.” The pope had declared a special year devoted to the saint starting Dec. 8, 2020, to encourage a greater love for and inspiration from Jesus’ guardian and patron of the universal Church.

As the protector of Jesus and the Church, St. Joseph can be a model for all vocations, which are meant to be the “ever-active hands of the Father, outstretched to his children,” the pope wrote in the message.

St. Joseph has “the heart of a father, able to give and generate life in the midst of daily routines,” which is the same aim of vocations, he wrote.

“The Lord desires to shape the hearts of fathers and mothers: hearts that are open, capable of great initiatives, generous

in self-giving, compassionate in comforting anxieties and steadfast in strengthening hopes.

“The priesthood and the consecrated life greatly need these qualities nowadays, in times marked by fragility but also by the sufferings due to the pandemic, which has spawned uncertainties and fears about the future and the very meaning of life,” he wrote.

St. Joseph, the pope said, is one of those gentle “saints next door” whose “strong witness can guide us on the journey.”

The saint’s heart was always listening to God, who spoke to him in his dreams, the pope wrote.

“This applies also to our calling: God does not like to reveal himself in a spectacular way, pressuring our freedom,” Pope Francis wrote. “He conveys his plans to us with gentleness,” speaking through one’s thoughts and feelings, and unveiling “profound and unexpected horizons.”

The saint faced numerous upheavals, but he always found the courage to follow God’s will, the pope said. The same must happen with a vocation, he said, because “God’s call always urges us to take a first step, to give ourselves, to press forward. There can be no faith without risk.”

St. Joseph is a model of service “as a concrete expression of the gift of self,” the pope wrote.

He always adapted to different and unexpected circumstances without getting discouraged and without complaining because he was always “ready to give a hand to help resolve situations.”

And St. Joseph was always faithful and always persevered, he said, bolstered by God’s words: “Do not be afraid.”

God speaks those same words to priests and religious every day, but especially amid “uncertainty and hesitation” or “trials and misunderstandings,” because they are called, like

St. Joseph, to “say ‘yes’ to God with their lives, through their fidelity each day.”

“This fidelity is the secret of joy,” he said.

“It is the joy of simplicity, the joy experienced daily by those who care for what truly matters: faithful closeness to God and to our neighbor,” he said, asking that this “same atmosphere, simple and radiant, sober and hopeful” pervade all seminaries, religious houses and rectories.

Pope Francis asked that St. Joseph protect vocations and that men and women see how God’s call will make their greatest dreams come true; respond with generous service and attentive care; and live with simple, joyful fidelity.

The text of the pope’s message in English [can be found here.](#)

The text of the pope’s message in Spanish [can be found here.](#)