



Brothers of
the Christian
Schools

Retreat 1



A NEW BEGINNING
Always start anew
as a Lasallian Family

(Br. Rafa Matas)

Opening Prayer

Motivation

We recall what the Rule says to the Brothers but which we can well extend to the whole Lasallian Family: "The Brothers find a model for their whole life in St Joseph who shared in the work of salvation by the human education of Jesus Christ. They invoke him, remembering that the Founder placed the Institute under his protection." (Rule 75).

As we begin these hours of retreat, we turn to St. Joseph to help us on our journey. He who had to "start anew" in his acceptance of Mary, in his journey to Bethlehem, in his flight to Egypt and in his return to Nazareth, always with his eyes fixed on God, enlightens the way we live our "I adore in all things", our desire to follow God's will in our lives, which often entails "start anew".

Hymn (can be replaced by a hymn known to all):

O Joseph, the husband of Mary
faithful help of Christ God and man.
Mighty Patron saint of the Church,
Protector of the entire Lasallian Family.
Light and breath of a walking people.

You lived your silent years,
brushing the skin of the wood,
you spent your life as a worker,
from dawn to dusk.

Day by day you put in your efforts,
in the service of Christ and the Blessed Virgin.
You set up your home among men,
the most beautiful home on earth.

O Joseph, great lover of work,
of people with weary hands.
Increase the zeal of our strength,
for a more beautiful world every day.

O Joseph, good father of your home,
You who loved the greatest loves,
Bring us together as brothers and sisters to all humanity,
In the only love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Looking at Joseph (Two chorus)

All: "Those who practise righteousness and think righteously in their heart, will receive the blessings of the Lord".

How little we know about you, Joseph!
The Gospel tells little about your life,
Almost as little as about your wife Mary.
Generations of Christians have longed
To know much more about you,
But the Gospel focuses on Jesus,
That child you saw be born and grow up,
in stature, wisdom and grace
before God and the people.

The Gospel simply tells us that you were "righteous".
It does not tell us that you doubted Mary, your wife,
who bore the mystery of God in her womb.
It seems to tell us that you did not dare
to be so close to that great mystery
that had found its way into your home.

We could have called you
"advocate of good dreams";
God knows what your dreams were,
in them, God led his way for you.
And you had no hesitation in "taking Mary into your home".
or "in taking the Child and his mother".
to flee from Herod to a foreign country.

Your life was not easy;
You had to "start afresh" many times again.
You had to leave the warm home in Nazareth
in which you were waiting for the Son of God and of Mary.
Perhaps you were beginning to feel at home in Bethlehem,
but the Child's life was in danger
and, once again, you had to set off...

Your calloused hand leading that child's hand
that seemed as if was going to continue your craftsmanship.
And many happy times together,
as an intimate family
sharing a simple table...

What was your death like?
Old piety has thought it early...
but we would like to think
that the righteous and good man
still had time to listen to his fellow countrymen,
surprised by Jesus' message:

All:

**“Isn't this Jesus,
The son of Joseph the craftsman?”.**

Glory to the Father..

All: "Those who practise righteousness and think righteously in their heart, will receive the blessings of the Lord".

(Brief moment of meditative silence)

Proclamation of the Good News according to St. Matthew (Mt 2, 1-22)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage."

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.

Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

"A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more."

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee.

He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

(Personal moment)

Litanies to Saint Joseph

At this critical moment, when we are experiencing the consequences of this global pandemic, we turn to St. Joseph and ask him to mediate with Jesus: that he may receive those who have died during this year, especially those who have died alone, without the company of their beloved ones. We also think of those whom the pandemic has left in financial ruin, jobless, without prospects in life. To those whose hearts have been touched by the virus of indifference, hopelessness and lack of horizons. Let us pray for those who find it difficult to "start anew" their journey, their life.

(You are invited to name someone you know who has suffered from any of these situations).

We invoke you, Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy

Christ, have mercy,

Christ, hear us,

God the heavenly Father,

God the Son Redeemer of the world,

God Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, who art one God,

R/ Lord, have mercy on us.

R/ Christ, have mercy.

R/ Christ, hear us.

R/ Have mercy on us

Holy Mary,	R/ Pray for us
St Joseph,	R/ Pray for us
Eminent descendant of David	R/ Pray for us
Light of the Patriarchs	R/ Pray for us
Husband of the Mother of God	R/ Pray for us
Guard of Our Lady	R/ Pray for us
Stepfather of the Son of God	R/ Pray for us
Thoughtful defender of Christ	R/ Pray for us
Head of the Holy Family	R/ Pray for us
Righteous Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Cast Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Prudent Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Strong Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Obedient Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Faithful Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Poor Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Patient Joseph	R/ Pray for us
Model for workers	R/ Pray for us
Example of love for the home	R/ Pray for us
Protector of the families	R/ Pray for us
Comfort to those who suffer	R/ Pray for us
Hope for the sick	R/ Pray for us
Advocate for the dying	R/ Pray for us
Protector of the Holy Church	R/ Pray for us
Patron and Protector of the Lasallian Family	R/ Pray for us

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,	R/ Forgive us, Lord.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,	R/ Hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,	R/ Have mercy on us.

V/ He made him master of his House.

R/ AND PRINCE OVER ALL HIS DOMINIONS.

V/ Let us pray together.

R/ O God, who chose Saint Joseph to be the husband of your Blessed Mother, we beg you to grant us that, since we venerate him as our protector on earth, we may deserve to have him as our intercessor in heaven. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

For personal reflection

Time for prayer and/or personal reflection. The following text may be helpful:

You are invited to return to yourself. In the silence of your heart, take a look at the moments when St. Joseph had to start anew. You may find it helpful to reread the Gospel passage already proclaimed in prayer.

Think of each of the moments when Joseph had to consider how to respond to his dreams, to the manifestations of God through the angel. Dreams, not daydreams, that demanded a change of direction for him and his family.

In life we often settle into our comfort zones, we seek security, we opt for easy ways, we run away from what makes us uncomfortable or forces us to retake our course in life, uninstall or question our comfort zone.

Yes, there is no doubt that we are also accompanied by a passion for ideals, although, unfortunately, when frustration, disenchantment, contradiction or even the wear and tear of daily effort come along, it is more difficult for us to experience unconditional availability.

Who hasn't experienced moments of crisis? Haven't you ever had the perception that the world is falling apart on you? It is very human and frequent that an illness, the death of a friend or a relative or an acquaintance, a personal break-up at whatever level, a crisis of identity and/or vocation... or, when, as in this time of pandemic, everything seems to be meaningless. It is difficult to overcome the dark nights when they appear in our lives and, in faith, to carry our small or big crosses. Our Founder invited us "to love the cross" when it appears in our life (cf. Meditation 121.1.2) and to continue to walk in union with the cross of Jesus Christ because "this union and love will soothe your pains and make them much more tolerable" (Meditation 165.2.2) but we know how difficult it is when the time comes.

Each of these situations is frightening and provokes many questions on us: why me? what can I do? will I have the strength to move forward? will I be understood? will I find help from a "Cyrenian"? Questions that overwhelm and even paralyse us. And yet, we know that there is no choice but to keep walking, there are no alternatives that do not involve starting anew, yes, sometimes from scratch.

It was Joseph's experience. It was also the experience of St John Baptist de La Salle.

Saint Joseph's life was full of comings and goings, ups and downs. Think of the moment when he learns that Mary is pregnant without him being involved in it. It is a logical human reaction to run away stealthily out of love, so as not to harm the person with whom he had thought of creating a new family. He must have thought why did she do this to me, what should I do... It must not have been an easy moment. Change of plans! What a change!

However, with time and thanks to a dream, he understood that he had to move on, to develop a new project. I cannot put myself in his shoes. His faith in God was so great, so great as to take Mary into his home and, on top of that, to take charge of a son who was not his own and whom he would have to educate as if he were. Joseph's response was one of absolute trust in God, whether he understood it rationally or not, and of complete generosity.

And the story continues, for he must set out on the road. He is a good citizen, and he must start a new journey to Bethlehem to comply with census required by the civil authorities. The circumstances are not the most appropriate, as Mary is already in an advanced pregnancy and I imagine that the road is not the most suitable for a woman in her condition, however strong she might be. There are more than 150 km to go but, there they are... We all know what happened. As if that wasn't enough, she experienced rejection, "there was no room in any inn" because of overbooking? What difference does it make! What a way to start again the expansion of his family. The joy of having her son was accompanied by the sadness of not finding a decent or at least suitable place. That is the way things are. We can imagine her anguish, her nerves, her anxiety. Fortunately, they found a stable, humble, but at least it was a shelter to spend the night. And so began his experience as a father.

And when things seemed to "return to normal", they were already registered, his wife Mary was more or less recovered, the child was fine (with his cries, I imagine), another unexpected proposal. It was not possible to return home. They had to flee, and far away! So many families today are going through this experience! Of course, there are many different reasons: work, economic, political reasons. All of them require a new start. Always!

The three of them are already on their way to Egypt, with only with the clothes on their back. Another change of plans and, this time, heading towards insecurity, uncertainty... their responsibility and the safety of Mary and Jesus is above all else. They have to emigrate and find a way to survive in the unknown.

When they were more or less settled, another change came. If I had been José, I would have preferred never to sleep for fear of having a "new dream". But we know... my plans are not your plans. And it's time to uninstall. Again, time to take the Child and his mother Mary to return to their homeland. What a nuisance! A logical reaction would have been: hey, that's enough, we're staying here! But no, he is a man of deep faith, of absolute trust in God, and he seeks the strength to return to Israel from wherever he can find it. On the road again, back to the beginning!

This was also the experience of our Founder. An ongoing starting over. Always open to God's dream for his life, ready to "adore him in everything" until his last breath. He had to start anew when he had to take care of his whole family after the death of his parents, when he committed himself to help Adrian Nyel, when he decided to host the teachers at his home, with his family, when he decided to go and live with them in another house (you can mentally add other experiences of starting anew to complete what you have read). And so, from commitment to commitment, he started anew as many times as necessary in order to respond to what God was asking of him.

This whole experience of Joseph and Saint John Baptist de La Salle reminds us of our own journey. A pathway which, for most of us, has not been linear. There have been more than one curve and broken line. Changes of community, changes of mission, of responsibility, of places and spaces... and yet, for most of us, they have not been changes of "necessity" for survival. Imagine those who are forced to leave their country, their village, their family environment in search of a better future for their family. Real dramas to start over and over again.

Certainly, for all of us, the pandemic is also forcing us to start many things anew. At least to adapt to new situations and unforeseen events. At a time like the one we are passing through, it is good to take stock. Ask yourself: How do you react to the changes in your life? how do you interpret such changes? do you discover God in them?

This time of pandemic, on the other hand, opens us to feel deeply united with those who have no choice but to leave their homeland, and not on a whim or for tourism. Hopefully, they will find in us a place of understanding and welcome.

May Joseph's example, his generosity, his ability to adapt to God's will, to seek answers to every moment of crisis, to put himself in others' shoes, also in Mary's and Jesus'... make him a model to imitate. St. John Baptist de La Salle rightly tells us: "Take Saint Joseph as your model, for he is your patron, and strive to be worthy of your ministry and to excel in virtue by following the example of this great saint." (MF110,1,2) No doubt he was a great point of reference for him.

For sharing conversation

Our proposal does not require an order. If any questions appear, they are for guidance only.

1. We could silently view the PowerPoint presentation "With a Father's Heart", which is included in the resources folder.

2. It is a matter of freely sharing what you have felt, thought, experienced during this time of prayer and/or personal reflection. It is good to prioritise two or three ideas if possible. Let us enrich ourselves by avoiding exhaustive repetitions.

3. If necessary, these are some possible questions:

- What has struck you most about Joseph's story? why?
- Do you have any personal experiences that have come to your mind as a result of your reflection?
- Have you ever had to "start anew"? how have you experienced it? what has helped you to walk with more strength?

4^a. Whoever moderates the meeting could end by making a brief synthesis and motivating the final prayer.

Closing prayer

(Proclaimed between a reader and all)

WITH A FATHER'S HEART.

Lasallian Prayer to Saint Joseph

(Br. Rafa Matas)

Reader:

Saint Joseph: you are a model educator, together with Mary,
we Lasallians call upon your fatherly heart
acknowledging you as Patron and Guardian of the entire Lasallian Family.

All:

Beloved Father,
help us to live our humanity in faith
and be bearers of the seeds
that make our commitment bear fruit
in the Lasallian Educational Mission.

Reader:

Father of tenderness:
teach us to act
with the firmness of a father and the tenderness of a mother,
always holding in high esteem
those at the heart of our mission,
just as you and Mary knew how to do it with Jesus.

All:

Obedient Father:

help us to discover God's will
and to live our "I adore in all things",
our "Fiat" in fidelity,
like Mary at the Annunciation and your Son Jesus in Gethsemane.

Reader:

Father full of mercy:

teach us how to welcome others in a fatherly embrace,
and to touch their hearts
to provide them all the good that we can,
especially the most vulnerable:
the destitute, the needy, the exiled, the afflicted,
the poor, the dying, the last and the least,
who are the favourite ones of your Son.

All:

Father of creative boldness,

help us to overcome difficulties
with passionate fidelity and creativity
and embrace the adversities
that we encounter on our journey towards Jesus.

Reader:

Father in the silence at the workshop:

teach us how to be thankful to God
for our work
and to feel sympathetic with those who are without work.

All:

Father of silent presence:

help us not to feel that we are the centre of everything
and to collaborate generously
with the parents of our students
in their human and Christian education.

Reader:

Saint Joseph, we place our home and our community into your hands.

Help us to be at the service of Jesus' plan: The Kingdom of God.

Teach us to love and be grateful for the gifts we have received.

Like you, Saint Joseph, may we always look with the eyes of faith.

And let us act with a father's heart.

Amen