



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

MARCH 2021

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The Choice is Ours

by Aaron Minix

On January 6, 2021, our country witnessed with horror the attempted takeover of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob. Even more alarming was the fact that this mob was personally encouraged by the sitting President of the United States to go to the Capitol building. It was a disturbing turn of events, a sickening coda to a year full of shock and trauma.

Events like we saw at the Capitol do not happen in a vacuum. They are not random occurrences. Nor were the riots this past summer simply inexplicable. For events

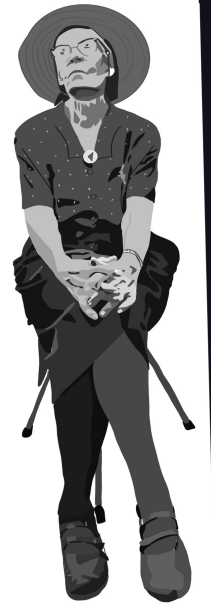
like these to occur several factors must come together. It is not enough to simply dismiss the violence we've seen as the work of ne'er-do-wells and agitators. There are deeper currents of anger, distrust, and even despair running through our culture. Nor are these currents inexplicable. There has been a steady erosion of virtues throughout our society and politics. Indeed, many of our leaders have failed to lead, and many institutions are in dire need of reform. Personal gain seems to overrule consideration for the common good. People think "the system" is rigged against them,

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THE THING TO REMEMBER
IS NOT TO READ SO MUCH
OR TALK SO MUCH ABOUT
GOD, BUT TO TALK TO GOD.

TO PRACTICE THE
PRESENCE OF GOD.

-DOROTHY DAY, FROM HER
NEW YEAR'S
RESOLUTIONS, 1936



Fratelli Tutti, A Vision for Where to Begin Again

by Nicole Jaramillo

A total breakdown in dialogue and failure to find common ground is the result of dehumanizing our neighbors; its obvious fruit is violence and war. We saw firsthand the violence on January 6th at our capitol and the hatred that fueled and brought its actions to fruition. Where do we go from here and start again toward social friendship and fraternity? This universal problem we find ourselves in has ripple effects from the micro to macro level. In his new encyclical Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis bravely addresses this and proposes a way of encounter based on the Gospel (if we are willing to try!). He also issues a grave warning, that failure to extend mercy, forgiveness and charity will lead

to the self destruction of ourselves in a very real and spiritual sense.

The Holy Father's response to this starts with a personal reflection on the world's reaction as the pandemic arose during his writing of this letter. His hopes are outlined and crystallized in these words, "It is my desire that, in our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration of fraternity... How important it is for us to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams on the other hand are built together" (FT 12). At first glance, some may hear these words and wonder how we

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Respect your Neighbor

by Karen Rojas

I am a Mexican, a Catholic and a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient, born in Mexico but raised in Chicago. My parents immigrated to the United States in a search for a brighter future. All immigrants come to this country for a breath of freedom and opportunity. As a child, I grew up with a vision that the United States of American was the land of the free and we were all equal. As an adult, this wishful thinking disappeared and reality hit. Racism continues to be prevalent after decades since the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, a leader and advocate, began the battle for equality anew and decades later the end of the fight is nowhere in sight. How is that possible? Why

do we keep treating people differently based on their skin color?

As my brother and I grew up, my parents drilled into our minds to respect and treat everyone the same regardless if they are wearing a suit or not. You may be asking, what does a suit have anything to do with respecting people? Well, people that wear suits in Mexico normally have a corporate position which indicates a well earning salary. The "respectable" position indicates you would not be discriminated against. My parents kept reminding the two of us to respect and treat everyone equally.

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Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

As I write we are buried deep in snow and doing our best to keep warm in a prolonged cold snap. This time of year, especially with such bitter weather, I relish the mystery of the hope that lies sleeping deep in the earth. It is no coincidence that this also happens to be the brink of Lent.

During these frigid days, Nativity House has been bustling with activity. In Mid-January we welcomed our seventh guest mom. She is due with a baby boy on July 4. What a blessing to have a new mom join the community! We are currently taking applications and hope to welcome a second mom early Spring.

To keep the chill off the house on these frigid days, Becca and Karen, our interns, have been keeping a fire crackling in the hearth. They have been working on mini projects and brainstorming new and exciting ways for us to welcome you to the farm this coming summer. We are excited to introduce Camping at the Farm. We will welcome families for a day of work and an evening of camping fun.

We have begun our 7th growing season for the Nativity House CSA. Seeds have been planted by our good friend and beekeeper, Erik Olson. We have many returning member families and much interest from new families. We are blessed to have so much new interest in our community food growing experience.

This February we said good-bye to Kayla. She was a Nativity House community member for almost three years. She brought her love and passion for community life, the earth and Gospel justice to Nativity House. We were sad to see her move on and wish her well as she continues her work on the new diocesan initiative, Jordan River Farm, and life in her new community!

We are happy to welcome Megan Zaleski to our full-time intern staff here at Nativity House. She brings many years experience as a personal trainer and life coach as well as experience working on an organic seedling farm for the last few seasons.

As always, we at Nativity House hold you, our greater community, close in prayer through our daily offerings. We are blessed to be on this journey of building up God's Kingdom with you! Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Peace of Christ,

Venus & Justin Wozniak

About The Visitation

This newspaper, The Visitation, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality, and theology. It is published four times a year by Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

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17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

The Choice is Ours

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that every institution is rotten to the core.

Political factions have become more entrenched and polemical. Division is emphasized, and it is said that one cannot associate with the “other” and remain pure. Therefore the options for one’s opponents are to convert or be defeated. In its extreme forms the thought patterns can run thusly: “We are righteous but our enemies are standing in the way of true goodness. Therefore they must be evil. Why debate with someone who has such a corrupt heart? We are right and they are wrong. We are the patriots and you the traitors. We are the compassionate and you the stone-hearted. Compromise is weakness and surrender, a betrayal. We must win or else everything we love will be forever destroyed.”

We are losing the ability and willingness to give others the benefit of the doubt. If we all suspect that everyone around us is ready to attack us, how can we even talk to each other? If we are ready to pounce on anyone who diverges ever slightly outside of our beliefs, to “cancel” them at even the slip of a tongue, we will descend into deeper isolation and fear. We will dig our trenches

even deeper, close ranks even closer, and fight for our beliefs even more desperately.

Every election magnifies the tension and the conflict. “The fate of our country hangs in the balance!” “This is the most important election of our lifetimes” “Fight! Resist! Or else the nation will fall!” The rhetoric is bloated and deafening. It is easy to begin thinking that everything is falling apart, that we are on the brink of catastrophe.

But of course not all is darkness. Most people do not support police brutality against African-Americans or anyone else. Most marches are peaceful. Most people are wearing masks and distancing for the common good. And most are just normal people simply trying to get through this most difficult time in our recent history. Also, many young people are very socially conscious: they want to positively contribute to our society by helping the poor and supporting just causes. There is far more good in our nation, I believe, than we see. The problem is that it is easier to see the bad than it is to see the good. The bad things are loud, ugly, obnoxious, and glaring. But the good things are often quiet, hidden, and

passive. You have to go looking for them in small, out-of-the-way places. Everyone knows about Mordor, but very few have even heard of the Shire. Evil seems to do so much damage so quickly, while building up good things takes time, effort, and determination. Evil is flashy and impressive; good is often straightforward, simple, and plain.

The saints, of course, give us a great model to follow, especially two Theresas: Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, and Mother Teresa. These extremely holy women are two of the greatest saints of all time, and both took their own “little ways.” Neither of them set out to change the world. Thérèse of Lisieux was unknown in her lifetime. Mother Teresa labored in India for years before she was noticed by the wider world. Yet both of these wonderful saints undoubtedly changed the world, in very significant ways, and continue to do so by praying for us in heaven. They loved God and God filled them with love for their neighbors.

This past year has shown us many things. We now have a choice before us: what kind of people do we want to be? Do we want to be

perpetually angry and bitter? Do we want to continually fight each other? Do we really want unity? Do we desire the common good? We can choose which way we can go as a society, but like all real choices, there are real consequences. We cannot continue to choose anger and divisiveness and not expect the erosion of unity and peace. We cannot continue to excuse bad behavior as long as it is done by “our side” and not expect the other side to adopt the same tactics.

In 20 years, will our children ask us: “Were things really that crazy?” or will it be, “Why didn’t you stop it when you had the chance?” We all earnestly hope for the former, but we have to make the right decisions now. Our past is a good guide, with many good role models, but Washington, Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others cannot travel the road for us. They worked and sacrificed, and carried us far, but now it is our turn. We can continue the work they started, or we can throw it away for the sake of power and domination. The choice is ours.



Aaron Minix is a seminarian of the Diocese of Joliet.

Letters from our readers

Dear Nativity House Community,

Thank you so much for sending a copy of the December Visitation.

I had the opportunity of visiting NH twice with the University of Notre Dame Gospel of Life group. It's so fun to stay updated on all that's happening. I graduated ND in May and am in my first year of

the Echo program, living and working in Portland, OR.

Thank you for your inspiring witness of the Gospel. I hope the remainder of your Advent is blessed and you have a joyful Christmas season!

-Peace, Ally

Venus,

Happy New Year to your family and Nativity House. Prayers for Nativity House and continued success.

-From all of us, Vic, Merle, and Alyssa

Dear Nativity House,

Thank you for all the good work that you do and publishing The Visitation. Blessings on your community as you welcome and serve a new family!

-Merry Christmas,

John M Hogue AMDG

Respect Your Neighbor

Skin tone should not matter, but this country continues to discriminate and believe stereotypes. During Trump's rise to power, he kept associating Mexicans with rapists, job thieves, and criminals. His racist statements gave people permission to be outspoken with their discriminatory thoughts. Radical white supremacy groups came out of the shadows which gave rise to new leaders to fight against the injustice. A president that incites violence and speaks hatred is not pro-life. Being pro-life means defending, respecting and honoring the dignity of a human being throughout their life span.

On January 6th, 2021, the country witnessed an attempted coup. Trump supporters trespassed and vandalized a federal building all because their ideal candidate did not win the presidential election, which felt like a whole bunch of adults were throwing tantrums. What happened to blue lives matter and patriotism? Attacking and terrorizing officers, employees, senators at the Capitol building is not patriotism, and especially not pro-life.

After days passed, photographs of the event began to surface. A photographer captured the moment a man lifted a statue of the Virgin Mary over his head.

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Now you might ask yourself; what is awful about that? Nothing is wrong with displaying the Virgin Mary, our mother, because she represents love and purity. The issue is seeing Catholics participate at an event of violence and hate. We, as Catholics, are called to follow Jesus Christ's teachings not to cause disorder because Trump's ego was publicly hurt.

I kept waiting for Trump to condemn the acts, but he allowed the chaos to continue for a few hours before speaking. His one minute long speech addressing the attack was infuriating. The terms thugs nor domestic terrorists were not used to describe the people attacking a federal building. Trump, however, did use those terms to describe the participants at Black Lives Matter protests. While people were being terrorized and police officers attacked at the Capitol, the sitting president had the nerve to begin his speech by saying "I know your pain, I know your heart. We had an election that was stolen from us;" he was giving an excuse as to why they should act this way. Then he asked his supporters to leave by saying "but you have to go home now." Trump treated them like house guests who overstayed their visit! The speech concluded with, "we love you, you're very special." How can



Lent is the right time to make room for the Word of God. It is the time to turn off the television and open the Bible. It is the time to disconnect from your cell phone and connect to the Gospel... During Lent, Jesus is calling us into the desert, Jesus invites us to listen to what matters. To the devil who tempted him, he replied: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Pope Francis
February 26, 2020

Easy Essays:

Teachers Of Subjects

by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)



Our business managers
don't know how to manage
the things they try to manage,
because they don't understand
the things they try to manage.

So they turn to college
professors
in the hope of understanding
the things they try to manage.

But college professors
do not profess anything,
they only teach subjects.

As teachers of subjects,
college professors
may enable people
to master subjects,
but mastering subjects
has never enabled anyone
to master situations.



you say we love you and you are very special to people that attacked the democracy of this country. The attack was not condemned until the following day, which upset millions of people including myself.

The majority of the attackers were white human beings. Would Trump have said, "we love you, you're very special" if they were people of color? No, the statement would have been drastically different. My assumption if the majority were Hispanic he would have stated, see they cause crime, attack our beautiful capitol, they should go back to their country and this is why we need a much stronger southern border. The attempted coup is a clear indicator we have taken steps back as a country and we must continue to fight for justice and equality.

God created every person differently. We must learn to listen

and respect each other. Human beings could disagree but respect is the key to move forward and make a positive change. Jesus calls us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We should genuinely meet people where they are in their journey and see them with our hearts not our eyes. The country will heal only if we treat each other with respect and empathy.

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'" (Matthew 22: 37-40)



Karen Rojas is a Nativity House
intern.

NATIVITY HOUSE PRESENTS

CAMPING AT THE FARM 2021

Get ready to explore the farm!

SATURDAY

Morning

- Garden work time

Lunch and Midday Break

Afternoon

- Farm projects

Late Afternoon

- Set up camp

Evening

- Dinner
- Campfire

SUNDAY

Morning

- Breakfast
- Pack up



FOOD IS INCLUDED!

- Dates: May 29-30
June 12-13
June 26-27
- Free will offering

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT VENUS
Email: venusad@nativity-house.org

JOIN US IN THE GARDEN!

Nativity House-Growing Season
2021

(May - September)



**GO GREEN! FRESH, LOCAL,
ORGANIC PRODUCE
GROWN BY YOU**

• SAVE MONEY!

\$350 A SHARE;

\$250 FOR A 1/2 SHARE

**FOR FRESH FRUITS &
VEGGIES (MOSTLY ORGANIC)**

• MAKE NEW FRIENDS!

**YOU WILL QUICKLY FIND
THAT THERE IS NO BETTER
WAY TO GROW YOUR FOOD
EXCEPT IN A COMMUNITY!**

**CARROTS * RASPBERRIES * ONIONS * APPLES
* SPINACH * GREEN BEANS * EGGS *
TOMATOES * ASPARAGUS * POPCORN *
CUCUMBERS * PUMPKINS * STRAWBERRIES *
LETTUCE * BASIL * SUMMER SQUASH *
CILANTRO * RHUBARB * HONEY * GOAT MILK
(NEW) * AND MORE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
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Fratelli Tutti

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can all have a dream together, but Pope Francis throughout his encyclical shows that through encounter, we can begin to realize we have common dreams, beliefs and values despite our religious, cultural and political differences. Commonality and fraternity are the fruit of taking the risk to encounter another outside our sphere of influence. Peace is the reward of finding this commonality with each other, and through this peace, true dialogue can begin to emerge albeit slowly.

Spiritual growth always starts with pausing and asking ourselves questions. Self reflection can be defined as meditation or serious thought about one's actions, character and motives. In our current society, self reflection has been turned away from in favor of finger pointing, deflection and willful ignorance to our actions, inaction and its effects. Humility, and the ability to admit we may be wrong in our assessments and assertions of others, and yes even ourselves-- has become a novel idea that has lost value in today's gladiator arena of 'dialogue'.

Current culture and society has been formed by years of political and online subculture factions. These divisions have been cemented by social media algorithms and online provocateurs that encourage fear and hatred of others to keep their presence and brand relevant. Sadly, these entities have been successful to an extent; we have willingly let them radicalize us in different ways and shades. This poison and its thought processes has seeped into every aspect of life and relationships. This very extreme trend is thus equating

political persuasion with demonization and dehumanization of the 'other.'

One of the first steps toward this risk of encounter is the honest evaluation of our role in the problem. Early on the encyclical, Pope Francis uses the parable of The Good Samaritan as a springboard for this self reflection. He encourages us to place ourselves in each role of the Samaritan story: the injured man, the thieves, the innkeeper, the passers-by. "Several persons passed by the injured on the wayside. They failed to stop, some who passed held important social positions, and yet lacked real concern, they would not waste a few minutes to even call for help" (FT44). "Only one person stopped, approached and cared for the man, giving him something we cling so tightly to: our time, plans, needs, commitments and desires for the day" (FT44). Pope Francis proposes we think on this and ask ourselves which of the persons in the story do we see ourselves as, perhaps at different times we have been in different roles of the story. The Holy Father goes on to remind us, "For all the progress we have made, we are still 'illiterate' when it comes to accompanying, caring for, and supporting the most frail and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed of looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly" (FT 44).

After taking stock of our own perceptions, and prejudices regarding self sacrificing charity to others and the cost of

encountering another, especially the "injured" what can we do to move forward? Francis suggests areas we can respond to. His letter is rich in the multiple layers of fraternity and solidarity we can employ. At the grassroots level we can start with what he calls "our gratuitousness with others" (FT 82). He relates this word to God's response to us, regardless of the state of our souls. For example, in Matthew 10:8, Jesus tells his disciples, "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give." In times of crisis, global, national or personal, we depend on this gratuitousness from God and one another to survive.

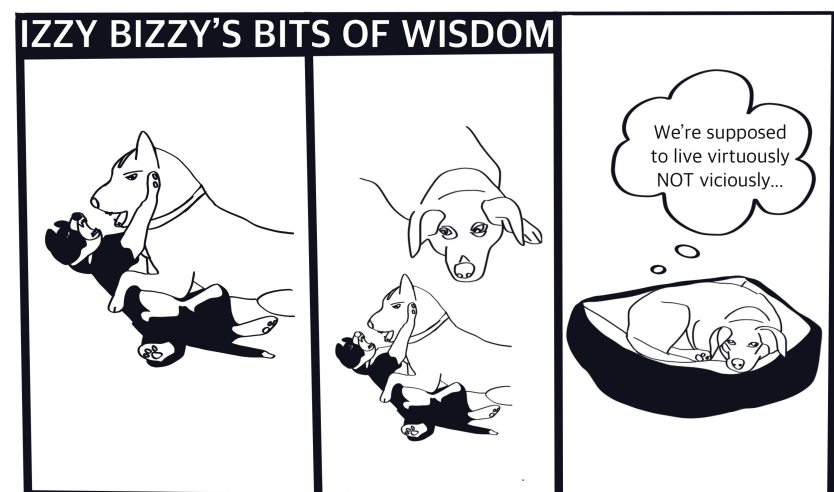
We fall short of this gratuitousness daily, in our small beliefs about others, our perceived judgements or suspicions about others; these are all hindrances to encounter. Do we set out to dialogue with those outside our circle, and truly get to know them and their story, or would we prefer to ignore them as the passerby in the parable. Social media can so easily turn others into one dimensional caricatures, and soon we find ourselves in echo chambers with others we think to be similar to us,

failing to see the humanity in those we may have have alienated with a violent comment or meme: again, this is a destroyer of encounter.

It may be uncomfortable for us to come out of our independent and isolating tendencies in our thoughts and speech, and even more difficult in our actions. Relenting in holding on to our tangible and intangible possessions like time, money and forgiveness for the sake of the common good and especially the poor and injured are themes Pope Francis takes up time and again in his letter. Even greater at stake is our fidelity to Christ and our decision to follow Him (FT 137). Our stepping out on this path of acknowledging our fraternity and need for each other answers the prayer of Jesus that Francis recalls, "that they all may be one" (FT 158).



Nicole Jaramillo has worked in OB as a nurse for 17 years. She is also an IBCLC and community educator at Silver Cross Hospital. She is raising her 5 children with her husband, Jose, in the Joliet area where they both grew up.



By: Becca Storey



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Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
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St. Joseph

Feast Day: March 19th

by Sarah Lonergan

Patron: the Universal Church, unborn children, fathers, workers, travelers, immigrants, and a happy and holy death

The morning that we got married, Anthony and I exchanged wedding gifts and letters via driveway deliveries (porch pick-up was a piece of cake by our October wedding day, after many months of contactless drop-offs due to COVID-19). Anthony developed a particular fondness of St. Joseph during our engagement as we prepared for the start of our marriage, so I thought it would be sweet to commemorate this great role model by gifting him with a St. Joseph pendant necklace.

Seeking an exemplary display of compassion, faith, humility, and overall righteousness to which we can aspire in marriage, we need not look further than St. Joseph.

Upon finding out while they were engaged that Mary was pregnant with a child who was not his own, Joseph chose to protect her, maintaining her dignity and safety before knowing she was carrying the Son of God, rather than publicly divorcing and exposing her. His top priority seemed to be to keep his family safe. He packed up and traveled far away from home in the cold to an unfamiliar town, seeking refuge and protection for this child to whom God entrusted him. A faithful

man, Joseph trusted God's directives given him through his dreams and the angel, instead of playing into his doubts and fears. He faithfully followed God's commandments and trekked to Jerusalem for Passover every year. A hard-working carpenter, Joseph lived a humble lifestyle. He offered two pigeons and turtledoves as a sacrifice when taking little Jesus to be circumcised, as he could not afford a lamb; a far cry from his royal lineage as a descendent of King David.

I share these depictions not with an intention to inform, as these are commonly shared and well known examples of Joseph's honorable character, but to remind myself how radically different from my own natural tendencies are Joseph's responses to trying situations. He is truly exemplary and I have a lot of maturing to do spiritually. While I aim to be compassionate toward others, faithful to and unwavering in my trusting of God, and live humbly, I could sure improve a whole lot! How differently from Joseph would I likely respond to life's challenges, uncertainties, and curve balls? I am so grateful that we as a Church, as well as Anthony and I in our marriage, have St. Joseph to look



toward for guidance on what it means to be truly selfless, open to life and life-giving, and faithful, and I will do so even more intentionally during this newly proclaimed Year Of Saint Joseph.

In his recent Apostolic Letter "Patris Corde," Pope Francis celebrates 150 years since St. Joseph was declared the Patron of the Universal Church. May we aspire to live with love the way we know Joseph loved Jesus, With a Father's Heart. Pope Francis leads us in praying:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,

Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;

with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,

show yourself a father

and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,

and defend us from every evil. Amen.

St. Joseph, pray for us!



*Sarah Lonergan is a Nativity House
CSA shareholder and memeber of St.
Joseph Catholic Parish in Lockport,
IL.*