



In an age when many Catholics are searching for **concrete ways to live the faith amid the noise of the world**, the Church holds within her tradition a surprising spiritual treasure that is little known today: **the devotion to the Seven Sorrows and Joys of Saint Joseph**.

While Christian spirituality has widely spread the devotion to **the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary**, the contemplation of **the sufferings and joys of the foster father of Christ** has often remained in the background. Yet for centuries this devotion was deeply cherished, especially among saints, mystics, and religious orders.

Rediscovering it today can help us **better understand the hidden life of Nazareth**, deepen our appreciation of Saint Joseph, and learn something our time desperately needs: **how to live faith amid uncertainty, silence, and family responsibility**.

Saint Joseph never preached sermons, never wrote apostolic letters, and never performed public miracles.

Yet **his entire life was a continuous act of faith, obedience, and love**.

1. What Is the Devotion of the Seven Sorrows and Joys?

This devotion consists of **meditating on seven moments of suffering and seven moments of joy in the life of Saint Joseph**, which are usually paired together.

Each sorrow is followed by a joy.
Each trial is illuminated by grace.

This spiritual pattern reflects a deeply Christian truth:

| *God never allows a cross without also preparing a grace.*

The devotion is usually practiced **by meditating on each mystery and praying one Our Father and one Hail Mary**, although there is also a longer form of prayer.



Traditionally it was prayed **on Wednesdays** (the day dedicated to Saint Joseph) or throughout **March**, the month dedicated to him.

2. Historical Origins of the Devotion

The tradition of the Seven Sorrows and Joys spread especially during the **16th and 17th centuries**.

Its expansion is connected to a well-known spiritual tradition: the **mystical experience of two Franciscan friars who survived a shipwreck**.

According to tradition, these religious were saved through the intercession of Saint Joseph. In gratitude, they spread a form of prayer that Saint Joseph himself had inspired: **meditating on his sorrows and joys**.

From that moment the devotion quickly spread across Europe, especially among:

- Franciscans
- Carmelites
- contemplative religious communities

Over time, **many saints recommended this devotion**, including:

- Saint Teresa of Ávila
- Saint Alphonsus Liguori
- Saint Bernardino of Siena

The Church has always regarded this practice as **a deeply evangelical spiritual school**.

3. The Theology of the Sorrows and Joys

At first glance, it may seem like just another pious devotion.



In reality, however, it contains **a profound theological teaching.**

Saint Joseph participates in the mystery of Redemption in a unique way because he was chosen by God to guard **the two greatest treasures of heaven on earth:**

- Jesus Christ
- the Virgin Mary

His vocation was extraordinary, yet it was also **filled with interior trials.**

Spiritual theology teaches that **great gifts from God are often accompanied by great purifications.**

Saint Joseph experienced:

- uncertainty
- danger
- persecution
- poverty
- immense responsibility

Yet he also lived **spiritual joys that no other man has ever experienced.**

For example:

- contemplating the face of the Incarnate Word
- educating the Son of God
- living with the Virgin Mary

In his life we see perfectly fulfilled what Scripture says:

“*The Lord disciplines the one He loves.*” (Hebrews 12:6)



4. The Seven Sorrows and Joys of Saint Joseph

Let us now contemplate each of them.

1. The Sorrow of Doubt — the Joy of Revelation

Sorrow

Saint Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant before they live together.

The Gospel recounts his inner anguish:

“Joseph, her husband, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.” (Matthew 1:19)

Imagine his inner struggle:

- he deeply loves Mary
- he does not understand what is happening
- he wants to act justly

It is **one of the most dramatic moments in the Gospel.**

Joy

An angel appears to him in a dream:

“Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:20)



Anguish turns into joy.

Joseph understands that **his life is part of the plan of salvation.**

Spiritual Lesson

God often allows **moments of darkness before revealing His will.**

Saint Joseph teaches us **not to react impulsively when we do not understand what God is doing.**

2. The Sorrow of the Birth in Poverty — the Joy of the Savior

Sorrow

Joseph arrives in Bethlehem with Mary, who is pregnant, and finds no place to stay.

The Messiah is born **in a stable.**

For a responsible father, this must have been deeply painful.

Joy

Yet Joseph contemplates something no man had ever seen before:

God made a child.

The shepherds arrive, the angels sing.

Poverty becomes glory.

Spiritual Lesson

True Christian joy **does not depend on material comfort.**



God can accomplish **His greatest wonders in poverty.**

3. The Sorrow of the Circumcision — the Joy of the Name of Jesus

Sorrow

Saint Joseph must present the Child for circumcision, the sign of the covenant and also **the first shedding of Christ's blood.**

Joy

At that moment the saving name is revealed:

Jesus, which means "*God saves.*"

Joseph has the privilege of **pronouncing that name for the first time on earth.**

Spiritual Lesson

Salvation begins with sacrifice.

Even the Child God **enters human history by sharing in our suffering.**

4. The Sorrow of Simeon's Prophecy — the Joy of the Light for the Nations

Sorrow

Simeon announces that the Child will be **a sign of contradiction.**



And he prophesies to Mary:

| *“And a sword will pierce through your own soul also.” (Luke 2:35)*

Joseph realizes that the Child’s future will be marked by suffering.

Joy

Simeon also proclaims that Jesus will be:

| *“A light for revelation to the Gentiles.” (Luke 2:32)*

Joseph understands that his foster Son **will bring salvation to the entire world.**

5. The Sorrow of the Flight into Egypt — the Joy of Saving the Child

Sorrow

Herod wants to kill the Child.

Joseph must flee at night, leaving everything behind.

He becomes **a refugee in a foreign land.**

Joy

Through his obedience, the Savior is protected.

Joseph becomes **a direct instrument of God’s plan.**



Spiritual Lesson

God entrusts enormous missions to seemingly simple people.

Humble obedience can **change the course of world history**.

6. The Sorrow of the Uncertain Return — the Joy of Returning to Nazareth

Sorrow

After Egypt, Joseph does not know where he will settle.

The threat still exists.

Joy

Finally he settles in Nazareth.

There begins **the hidden life of Jesus**, filled with peace.

7. The Sorrow of Losing Jesus in the Temple — the Joy of Finding Him

Sorrow

For three days Joseph and Mary lose Jesus.

It is one of the most human sorrows in the Gospel.



Joy

They find Him teaching in the Temple.

Jesus reveals His divine mission.

Spiritual Lesson

Even the holiest souls can experience **moments of the apparent absence of God**.

Yet the Lord always allows Himself to be found.

5. The Relevance of This Devotion Today

This devotion may seem ancient.

But in reality **it speaks perfectly to the challenges of today**.

Saint Joseph is an extraordinary model for our time because he represents:

- the responsible father
- the silent worker
- the faithful believer amid uncertainty

In a culture that often **ridicules fatherhood or devalues family responsibility**, the figure of Saint Joseph once again becomes prophetic.

The Sorrows and Joys teach something fundamental:

holiness is lived in ordinary life.

Not in spectacular gestures, but in:

- caring for one's family
- working honestly
- obeying God in everyday life



6. How to Practice This Devotion Today

Recovering this devotion is very simple.

Here are some practical ways:

1. Pray it on Wednesdays

Wednesday is traditionally the day dedicated to Saint Joseph.

You can meditate on **one sorrow and one joy each week**.

2. Practice it as a family

This devotion is perfect to pray with children.

It helps teach them:

- the life of Jesus
 - the importance of fatherhood
 - trust in God
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3. Pray it in times of crisis

Saint Joseph is especially invoked as:

- protector of families
 - patron of workers
 - helper in difficult moments
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4. Live the spirituality of Nazareth

The Sorrows and Joys teach us a very concrete spirituality:

- accepting trials
 - trusting God
 - finding joy in simple things
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7. Saint Joseph, a Teacher for a Wounded Church

Today many Catholics feel uncertainty because of:

- cultural crises
- tensions within the Church
- rapid social changes

Saint Joseph shows us the way.

He lived in a world that was also turbulent:

- under Roman domination
- with political persecution
- with poverty

And yet **he remained faithful.**

His holiness was not spectacular.

It was **silent, strong, and constant.**



Conclusion: A Devotion Worth Rediscovering

The Seven Sorrows and Joys of Saint Joseph are far more than an ancient devotional practice.

They are **a school of Christian life**.

They teach us that:

- faith is lived in uncertainty
- suffering can become grace
- obedience opens the path to God's miracles

In a noisy world, Saint Joseph invites us to rediscover **silence, trust, and everyday fidelity**.

Perhaps that is why the Church has always considered him **the saint for our times**.

Because today, more than ever, we need men and women capable of living as he did:

without seeking prominence, but completely surrendered to God's plan.

And perhaps, if many Christians rediscovered this devotion, we would once again learn the secret of Nazareth:

that God's greatest works are born **in the silence of faithful hearts**.