



The Origin of the St. Joseph's Table

St. Joseph is one of the most beloved Saints. As patron of the family, he is honored on March 19th each year. According to legend, there was a famine in Sicily many centuries ago; people were starving from lack of rain and crops. The villagers prayed to St. Joseph, foster father of Our Lord, Jesus and protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they asked his intercession to provide for their families. Their prayers were answered. In thanksgiving they began the custom of celebrating his feast with the most precious gifts they had, food.

Over the years the celebration has taken on many traditions and customs, the most popular is the St. Joseph's Table. The table is filled with breads in the shape of carpenter's tools, pastries, especially St. Joseph's sfinje and zeppole, oranges and lemons (typically grown in Sicily) and fava beans which were the staple food which saved the Sicilians from starvation during the famine. People usually take a dried fava bean and carry it with them throughout the year as a reminder of God's generosity and bounty in providing food for our families so that we will never go hungry. Upon the table is always placed a statue or picture of St. Joseph or the Holy Family, flowers, especially lilies, and candles. The table is blessed by the Parish Priest and all are welcome to partake of the feast. In some places, if there is a meal served, three people are chosen to represent the Holy Family. They dress like St. Joseph, Our Lady and the child Jesus and they are served first. The customary meal is pasta made with sardines and fennel. No cheese is served on the pasta, but rather toasted bread crumbs are sprinkled on top, which remind us of the saw dust from the carpenter's shop.

This year we will honor our Parish Patron with a Triduum (three days) of Prayer. With the Most Blessed Sacrament exposed on our Altar, Father Justin Cinnante will lead us in devotional prayers and preach on the virtuous life of St. Joseph. The evening will conclude with Benediction. This will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday March 17 and 18 at 7:00pm. On the actual feast day of St. Joseph we are honored to have Bishop Dominick Lagonegro with us who will offer Mass at 7:00pm (please note that there will be no 7:30 Mass that morning). After Mass we will gather in the Parish Hall to bless our St. Joseph Table and partake of the traditional desserts. Our Lenten sacrifice of giving up sweets is exempt for this feast day.

Please join us for this traditional celebration of our Patron, St. Joseph. Let us express our gratitude for his fatherly protection of our Parish and our families in the past and confidently seek the same for the present and future.