A Reflection on St. Joseph

FORMATION INNOVATION PODCAST: Courageous Paths of Hope & Healing Series

Sister Abby Newton, OP, Vice President of Mission Integration for CommonSpirit Health's Central California Division, shared the following message and prayer with her colleagues, co-workers, and staff on March 19, the feast day of St. Joseph.

St. Joseph is the patron saint of St. Joseph's Medical Center; as we mark the 121st anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of St. Joseph's, we remember that St. Joseph was a man of faith, a husband, a father, a dreamer and a saint.

Pope Francis has written of St. Joseph in his vocation as protector. Caring and protecting demands goodness and calls for a certain tenderness. We see St. Joseph as a strong and courageous man, a working man; but in his heart, we also see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak, but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, compassion, genuine openness to others, and love. As we protect and care for our patients, families and community, let us be tender, compassionate and loving to our own spirits.

We are in uncharted waters as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important to remember that those who came before us faced the flu epidemic of 1918, the depression of the 1930s, the shortages and rationing of two World Wars, the fear of the Cold War, and the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks. They, too, extended the "healing presence of God," which is part of our CommonSpirit Health mission statement, in their time.

And so, what is our call in these days of "shelter in place?" Pope Francis encourages us to have real conversations, so that "we understand one another's needs, struggles, and desires." He also warns of the danger of becoming monks who eat in silence because we are in front of the TV or our electronic devices. We will be fundamentally changed by this global experience. Let us take these days and be intentional about the world we want to build.

Sr. Abby Newton
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