

5 Ways to Spend Christmas with St. Joseph

By Father William Byrne

From time to time you hear about babies being born in the car on the way to the hospital. Suddenly the expectant father becomes the obstetrician. While those moments must be very stressful, I imagine that the back seat of a car in 2013 must seem like the Mayo Clinic compared to a stable in Bethlehem. I don't think that St. Joseph gets enough credit in making the Christmas story a happy one, so I offer you my 5 ways to spend Christmas with St. Joseph.

Sore Feet - I have never ridden a donkey before, but I imagine that there is not much room for anyone besides a pregnant woman. The trip to the delivery stable was not short. Google Maps puts it at over 10 miles of walking. Luke's Gospel does not indicate that Mary was in active labor during the trip, but nonetheless Joseph did all the walking. Remember that getting things ready for Christmas can be exhausting, but don't add to the stress of the delivery by being cranky. I guarantee you that Joseph didn't complain.

No Reservations - We know for a fact that the Holy Family had no reservations, so Joseph had to do some quick thinking. Flexibility is the first ingredient to lowering holiday stress. This Christmas expect the unexpected, say a little prayer to St. Joseph, and go with the flow. When things turn upside down, you'll smile and not frown.

There's Company Coming - After Jesus was born, there were a lot of visitors. First the shepherds showed up, next the Magi, and all along a multitude of Heavenly Hosts were enjoying the view. A little alone time is a nice thing, but it may not happen this year. Enjoy any calm before the storm. Don't just lie on your bed and nap, spiritually rest. Say a decade of the Rosary slowly and ask the newborn Prince of Peace to let His peace stay with you when you are in the midst of a big crowd, especially if that crowd is related to you!

Away from Home - Joseph and his young family may have had some guests, but they were away from family or friends, otherwise they probably would not have ended up sleeping in the barn. Many people are alone on Christmas, and for some this is very challenging. If you're not one of those people, stop and think if you know someone who will be alone and invite them over at some point for a little Christmas cheer. I am of the opinion that having someone outside the family at the Christmas table, puts everyone else on their best behavior. If you will be alone this Christmas, remember you're never alone. In prayer, spend some time with the Holy Family in their solitude. Holidays need not be a lonely. You can actually make Christmas an intentional spiritual retreat, a planned time of prayer with the best company imaginable.

No Delivery - I am not talking about the baby, I mean dinner. New moms need to eat and drink to regain their strength. The Gospels make no mention of a Domino's delivery camel showing up outside the stable. Joseph shopped, cooked and cleaned up. If that is your Christmas job assignment, be grateful because you're in such great company. If you normally don't help with these things, put down your eggnog, get your lazy self off the couch and say these simple words, "I will do the dishes." Think of it as doing Jesus's dishes.

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