

Celebrate St. Joseph's Day on March 19

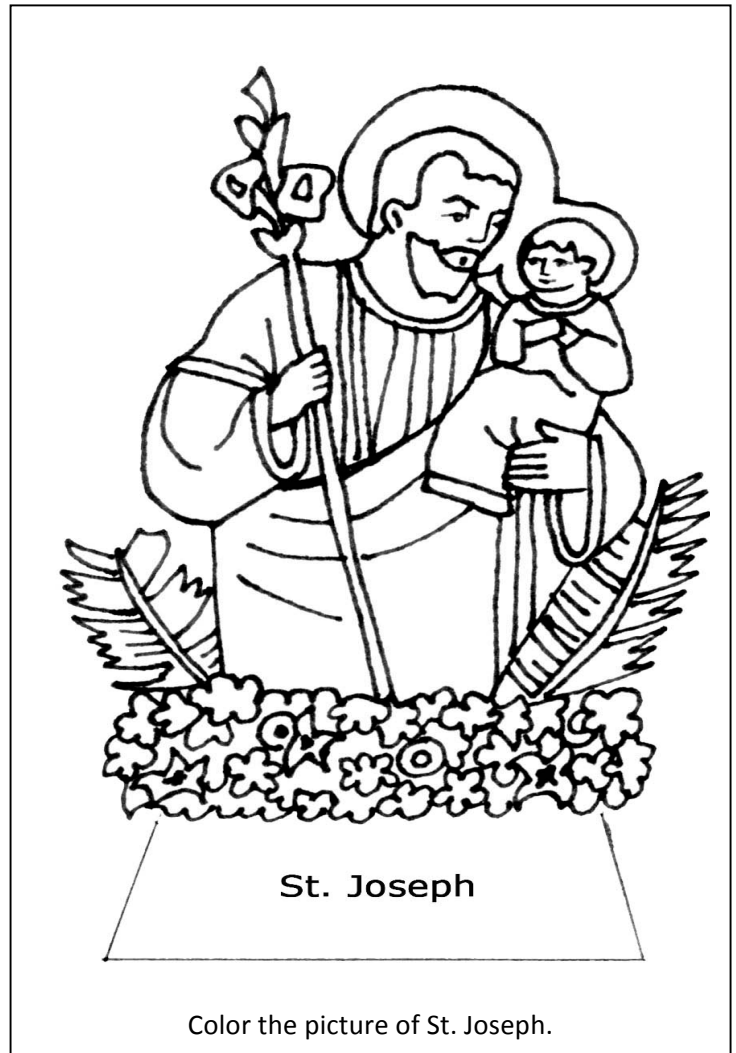
St. Joseph's Day is a big Feast for Italians because in the Middle Ages, God, through St. Joseph's prayers, saved the Sicilians from a very serious drought. In his honor, the custom is for all to wear red, in the same way that green is worn on St. Patrick's Day.

Traditionally, to celebrate St. Joseph's Day, a big altar ("la tavola di San Giuseppe" or "St. Joseph's Table") is filled with food contributed by everyone. Different Italian regions celebrate this day differently, but all involve special meatless foods: minestrone, pasta with breadcrumbs (the breadcrumbs symbolize the sawdust that would have covered St. Joseph's floor – he was a carpenter), seafood, desserts, and fava beans, which are considered "lucky" because during the drought, the fava thrived while other crops failed.

The table -- which is always blessed by a priest -- will be in three tiers, symbolizing the Most Holy Trinity. The top tier will hold a statue of St. Joseph surrounded by flowers and greenery. The other tiers might hold, in addition to the food: flowers (especially lilies); candles; figurines and symbolic breads and pastries shaped like chalices, fishes, doves, baskets, St. Joseph's staff, lilies, carpentry tools, etc.; 12 fishes symbolizing the 12 Apostles; wine symbolizing the miracle at Cana; pineapple symbolizing hospitality; and lemons for "luck,"

When the eating is done, three children dressed as the Holy Family will knock on three doors, asking for shelter. They will be refused at the first two, and welcomed at the third, in memory of the Holy Family's seeking of hospitality just before Christ was born. This re-enactment is called "Tupa Tupa," meaning "Knock Knock."

The day ends with each participant taking home a bag that might be filled with bread, fruit, pastries, cookies, a medal of St. Joseph, a Holy Card and/or a blessed fava bean. Keep your "lucky bean," and let it remind you to pray to St. Joseph.



To make your own 3-D version of a St. Joseph's Table , visit our website, www.icf.org, for a template.