



Resource guide:

Sleeping Saint Joseph

(Evening prayer session)

Activity aims:

- To explore the significance of the sleeping Saint Joseph statue.
- To reflect on the Bible stories that focus on Saint Joseph's dreams and the actions taken from them.
- To write down prayers, thoughts and any worries to give to Saint Joseph to intercede for us and present those needs to God.

You will need:

- Template of Sleeping Saint Joseph (1 per child)
- Empty toilet roll/kitchen roll tube (1 per child)
- Small strips of paper for prayer intentions (2-3 per child)
- Glue
- Pens/pencils

Procedure:

- Begin your session with the opening prayer



St Vincent
de Paul Society
England and Wales
Turning Concern into Action



Opening prayer

Now the day is coming to a close, we thank you for keeping us safe. You've helped us to learn more about those who are most in need in your world, and how we can take small actions to make a difference to their lives.

We come closer to you now as we learn more from your Word about handing over our worries to you and asking for your help and the help of your great Saints.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

- Show the children a picture of Sleeping Saint Joseph (Appendix 1. Let them take a guess as to who they think it is and why he is pictured sleeping).

The image and statue of Sleeping Saint Joseph reminds us of the times in the Bible when God spoke to Saint Joseph in his dreams. An angel of the Lord appeared to Saint Joseph at times when he faced difficulties in his life, telling him to not be afraid and to trust in the plan that God had for his life. When we leave our difficulties and worries with Saint Joseph, he prays for us and asks God to handle our problems while we rest.

- Explain to the children that they are going to look at two examples of when Saint Joseph was visited by an angel in his dreams.

Option 1: With older children this could be done in pairs as a jigsaw reading with one child reading the extract about the birth of Jesus Christ, and the other child reading about Jesus' parents taking him to Egypt. They can then tell their partner about their extract and then feedback as a group.



Option 2: You could read one extract to the children and discuss Joseph's dream, and then do the same for the second extract.

- Read Matthew 1 18–24 and Matthew 2 13–15 (International Children's Bible)

The birth of Jesus Christ

¹⁸ The mother of Jesus Christ was Mary. And this is how the birth of Jesus came about. Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, she learned that she was going to have a baby. She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ While Joseph thought about this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said: "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son. You will name the son Jesus. [a] Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel." [b] This name means, God is with us.

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph married Mary.

Jesus' parents take him to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15)

This part of scripture comes after the wise men visited Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, who had been warned by God in a dream not to go back to Herod. They travelled back to their own country.

¹³ After they left, an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream. The angel said: "Get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Herod will start looking for the child to kill him. Stay in Egypt until I tell you to return."

¹⁴ So Joseph got up and left for Egypt during the night with the child and his mother. ¹⁵ Joseph stayed in Egypt until Herod died. This was to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord had said through the prophet. The Lord said: "I called my son out of Egypt."



Reflection

- Discuss as a group how Joseph must have been feeling before he had these dreams.

Did Joseph do what God wanted him to do?

In both extracts, we can see how Joseph's difficulties and worries in life were in God's hands as he slept. Even though what God was telling Joseph to do was not what he had planned or imagined, Joseph still said "Yes" and didn't resist God's plan for his life. He took action. We can do the same by bringing all our problems and difficulties to God with the help of St Joseph.

- Share with the children the following quote from Pope Francis, who spoke about Sleeping Saint Joseph on his visit to the Philippines in 2015.

"I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church!" Pope Francis January 16, 2015 (Philippines)

Activity

- Get the children to colour in their image of Sleeping Saint Joseph and stick this to the side of the toilet/ kitchen roll tube.
- On small strips of paper, the children can write down any thoughts or prayers they want to leave with God as they sleep, which may include prayers for those experiencing homelessness. These don't need to be shared in the group, but simply noted down and given to God as they rest.
- Those slips of paper can then be folded and placed in the tube behind the image of Saint Joseph.



Closing prayer

Dear Saint Joseph,

We place all our prayers and worries under our pillow so that God can take care of these things as we rest tonight. Help us to trust God with the plan he has for our lives, to listen carefully to His guiding voice, and to say “Yes” when He calls us to take action. We especially pray for all those who are experiencing homelessness at this time. May God protect and comfort them this night too.

Amen



Appendix 1: Sleeping Saint Joseph template (colour in the image)

