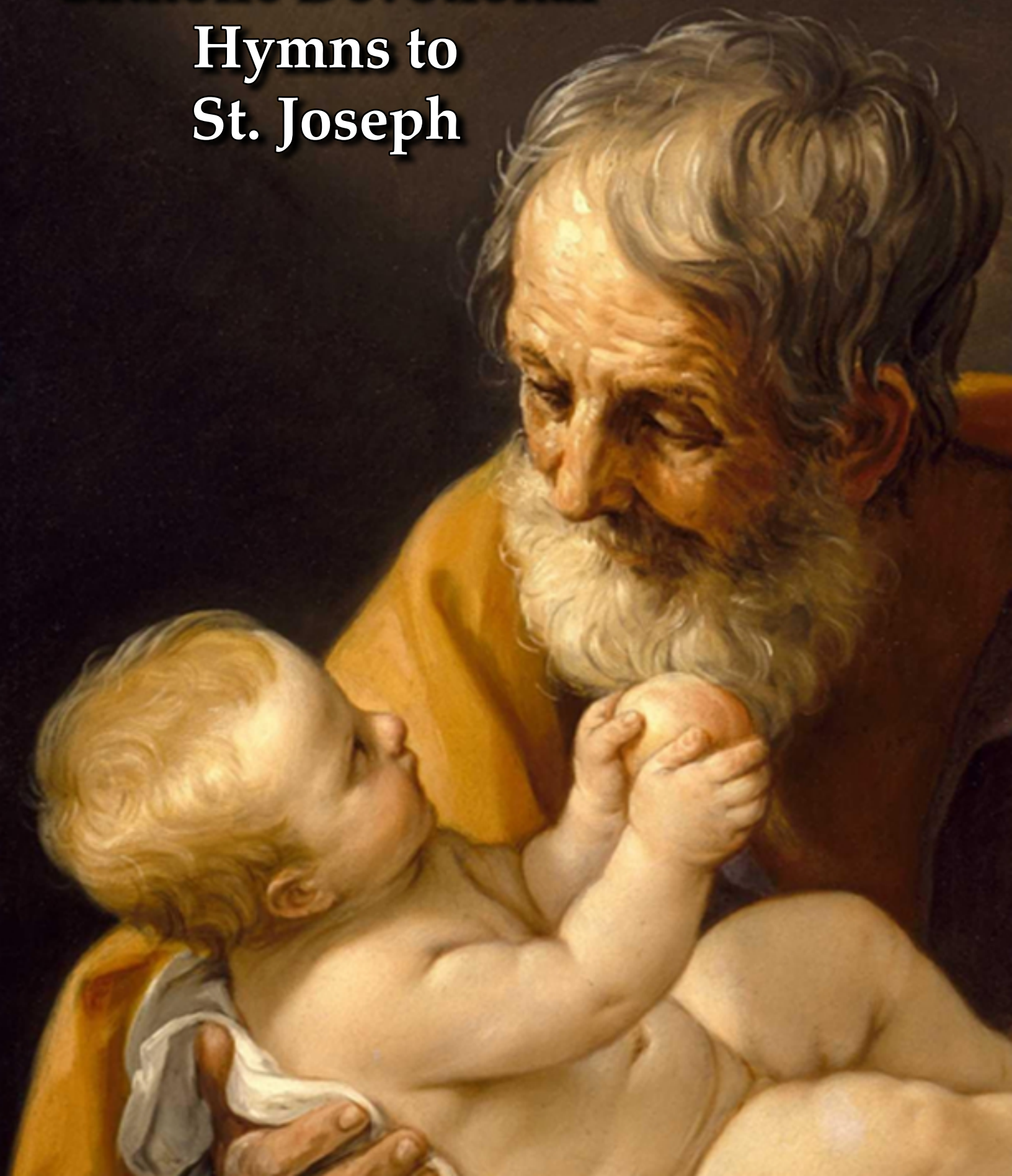


**A Collection of
Catholic Devotional
Hymns to
St. Joseph**



*A Collection of
Catholic Devotional Hymns
To St. Joseph*

*Compiled by
Donald A. Howe*

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Introduction

I surveyed over 100 Catholic hymnals and I found over 80 hymns to Saint Joseph. The survey included both American and English public-domain hymnals like the SUNDAY SCHOOL HYMN BOOK, ST. BASIL'S HYMNAL, ST. GREGORY'S HYMNAL and others from the late 19th and early 20th century period. From there, I set out to identify the melodies of these hymns. The results can be found in the Appendix section at the end of this collection.

Presented here in this collection are 14 of the most widely used Catholic Devotional hymns to St. Joseph. I included a melody and choir arrangement for each hymn as well as a brief history and reflection. These hymns were sung by Catholic Choirs, in Catholic Schools and in Catholic homes for devotions. A good method for using these hymns for devotion at Mass is the following: Before Mass, Beginning of Mass, Offertory, and at the Blessing.

I think today we don't sing hymns to St. Joseph as often as we should. Hymns are a most effective way for the congregation to learn about our Catholic faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church and so we should sing them more often. The hymns are more than just a melody and words, many of the hymns are prayers. We don't need to wait for a feast day to occur, be spontaneous and you'll see what a wonderful relationship develops and the numerous graces that will flow from St. Joseph's intercession.

Cover art

Saint Joseph and the Christ Child painted in 1640 by Guido Reni (1575-1642), downloaded from wikiart.org (public domain).

In gratitude

To my family, who has been very supportive of my work. I am also indebted to the work done by J. Vincent Higginson (aka Cyr de Brandt), and for his two books, HANDBOOK FOR AMERICAN CATHOLIC HYMNALS published in 1976 and HISTORY OF AMERICAN CATHOLIC HYMNALS: SURVEY AND BACKGROUND published in 1982 which has provided much of the history of Catholic hymnals available today. To Peter Meggison, producer of The Devotional Hymns Project website, who has helped by providing copies of hymns from his vast collection of Catholic hymnals. To the archivists of religious communities who have been kind enough to supply me with valuable information and hymnals.

Dedication

This collection of devotional hymns to St. Joseph is affectionately dedicated to the Mother of Christ who has been encouraging me to compile these hymns for her Son.

All the hymns presented in this collection are in the public domain and are from approved Catholic Hymnals.

Hymns to Saint Joseph

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Dear Guardian of Mary

Of all the hymns I would sing at St. Mary's for the Feast of St. Joseph, *Dear Guardian of Mary* was the one most favored and best known among the choir and congregation. The hymn was written by Fr. Frederick Faber, and it first appeared in his JESUS AND MARY, 1849 hymnal. In certain hymnals like the STANDARD CATHOLIC HYMNAL, 1921 and a few others, the hymn is captioned *Dear Husband of Mary*. In the ST. MARY'S MANUAL, 1924 the hymn isn't captioned at all, but the lyrics of the hymn read, *Hail spouse of our Lady*. Even though these hymns were captioned differently the lyrics of the hymn are essentially the same. In my survey of hymns to St. Joseph, I found over 16 different melodies. Of these melodies four were widely used.

The first melody is from the PADERBORN GESANGBUCH, 1765 and is also found in the TRIER GESANGBUCH, 1872. This melody is found in several Catholic hymnals like the CATHOLIC CHURCH HYMNAL, 1905; ST. GREGORY HYMNAL, 1920; the ST. CECILIA HYMNAL, 1937. A list of other hymnals can be found Appendix 2.

The second melody was composed by Bro. Bonitus and was perhaps the most widely used of all the melodies in Catholic hymnals. Bro. Bonitus was a member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, also known as the De La Salle Brothers. Bro. Bonitus was educated in Germany devoting most of his studies to all branches of music. He arrived in America in 1845 and took the post of organist and teacher at St. James Church, Baltimore. In 1852, under the auspices of Fr. Schaeffler of Detroit he entered the Novitiate the Christian Brothers of Montreal. He taught in the schools run by the Brothers of Montreal for about four years and in 1856, he was then sent to Marseilles, France and remained there for fourteen years and directed music at the large college in that city which was run by the Brothers. He longed to return to America and did so by 1870 and took up residence in New York and began teaching. He quickly won the kind esteem and affection of the students, teachers, parents, and anyone who came to know him. On the morning of April 12, 1872, Brother Bonitus died after struggling with a short illness. Many of Brother Bonitus' compositions can be found in the CATHOLIC YOUTH'S HYMN BOOK, 1871 and DE LA SALLE HYMNAL, 1913.

The third melody appears in W. Becker's GEBET- UND GESANGBUCH, 1872. This melody is used in the ST. MARY'S MANUAL, 1921 for the text *Hail, spouse of our Lady*, with a refrain, *Sweet spouse of our Lady! we lean upon thee*.

The fourth melody was composed by Richard N. Matthews who was born in Lincolnshire, England, 1869, the son of Timothy Matthews who was also a composer. This hymn arrangement has a refrain that repeats, *Sweet spouse of our Lady, Sweet spouse of our Lady, Sweet Spouse of our Lady, we lean safe on thee*.

The verses of the hymn remind us of St. Joseph's role in protecting and providing for Jesus and Mary. The poetic imagery is beautifully written by Fr. Faber. I am reminded of the flight to Egypt and the sands that the Holy Family saw as they traveled, *Bleak sands are all round us, no home can we see*. Consider the desert sands that surround you in your own life, how bleak they might be, how weary and wild, especially today. St. Joseph was chosen by God as *father and guide and Jesus and Mary felt safe at his side*. Turn to St. Joseph and ask for his guidance and protection. Many souls have come to Christ through the intercession of St. Joseph, and many have found comfort in the verses of this hymn.

1

Dear Husband of Mary

St. Joseph

Fr. Frederick Faber (1814-1863)

Trier Gesangbuch, 1872
1921 Standard Catholic Hymnal

1. Dear Hus - band of Ma - ry! Dear Nurse of her
 2. For thou to the pil - grim art Fa - ther and
 3. O bless - ed Saint Jo - seph! how great was thy

5



Child! Life's ways are full wea - ry, the des - ert is
 Guide, And Je - sus and Ma - ry felt safe at thy
 worth, The one chos - en shad - ow of God up - on

9



wild; Bleak sands are all round us, no home can we
 side; Ah! bless - ed Saint Jo - seph! how safe should I
 earth, The fa - ther of Je - sus ah! then wilt thou

13



see; Sweet spouse of our La - dy! we lean up - on thee.
 be, Sweet spouse of our La - dy! if thou wert with me!
 be, Sweet spouse of our La - dy! a fa - ther to me?

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Dear Husband of Mary

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be, Sweet spouse of our La - dy! if thou wert with me!
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I have been singing as a tenor in the choir for over 40 years. I grew up in St. Mary's Parish in Akron, Ohio and joined St. Mary's Choir in my junior year of high school and continued to sing until St. Mary's closed in 2010. After St. Mary's closed, I became a parishioner at St. Paul's Catholic Church and I joined their choir.

In March of 2018 as the Feast of St. Joseph approached, I looked through our parish hymnal and was disappointed by the lack of devotional hymns to St. Joseph. So, I set about to gather as many hymns as I could from my collection of Catholic hymnals and other sources.

Over the course of 3 years, I surveyed over 100 Catholic hymnals and found over 80 hymns to St. Joseph. The survey included both American and English public-domain hymnals like the SUNDAY SCHOOL HYMN BOOK, the ST. BASIL'S HYMNAL, ST. GREGORY'S HYMNAL and others of the late 19th and early 20th century period. From there, I set out to identify the melodies of these hymns and I have put together 14 of the most widely used Catholic hymns to St. Joseph. These hymns were sung by Catholic Choirs and in Catholic Schools for more than 120 years.

It is my hope that these hymns will become part of a parish repertoire and help to renew our understanding and devotion to St. Joseph.

Donald Howe