

Man Your Post



# Man Your Post

Learning to Lead Like St. Joseph

Duane and Carrie Daunt

Foreword by Scott Hahn

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## Foreword

What's in a name? What's in a title?

In the case of St. Joseph, we can find an infinity of significance in the syllables by which we call him. A silent man, Joseph spoke volumes when he simply gave his name to the census taker in Bethlehem.

His name, after all, is a confession of hope. It means “God will increase.” Joseph’s lifetime was a strange interlude for God’s Chosen People. Economically, they prospered. But they were ruled—illegitimately, according to the Law of Moses—by a murderous tyrant, Herod, who answered readily to the demands of his Gentile patrons, the Romans. He rebuilt the Jerusalem Temple, but he also subsidized the construction of idolatrous shrines in the Holy Land. Yet Joseph’s name looked forward to the time of fulfillment, the day of the Messiah, which many believed to be imminent.

Joseph was known as a “son of David” (Mt 1:20). He was born into the royal clan from which the Messiah was expected to come. The family had been much diminished in the thousand years since David’s reign. They had suffered exile and poverty. But they kept their sense of dignity and divine purpose. They safeguarded their identity in their genealogical tables, which historians tell us were carefully preserved even for centuries after the lifetime of Joseph. The clan of David remembered the marvels the Lord had done,

and they knew that the arm of the Lord had not been shortened in the intervening years. The name Son of David was still another expression of faith and hope.

Joseph's given name bespoke another foreshadowing in Israel's history. It evoked the memory of God's prodigies in the time of the patriarchs. The original Joseph was the most beloved son of Jacob and Rachel. And the father in the Holy Family had much in common with his ancient namesake. Both men brought their families to Egypt. Both received revelations in dreams. Both were righteous by any measure. By calling forth a new Joseph, God was fulfilling an implicit promise he had made almost two thousand years before. He was resolving an Old Testament type in a New Testament antitype.

Joseph's name spoke so eloquently that the saint, perhaps, did not need to say much. Saints and scholars make much of St. Joseph's silence. Scripture records not a single word from his mouth. It would be enough, however, for his people to know that he was *Joseph, Son of David*.

Everything after that is evidence of God's generosity—the superabundance of graces and glories that come to us with faith in Jesus Christ. As you'll see in the pages of this book, the treasury grows richer as the centuries pass and the Church deepens its reflection on the life of St. Joseph. We know him now as the Worker, Terror of Demons, and Patron of the Dying. We know him by names and titles implicit in his story, but drawn out only gradually, over millennia, through the development of Christian devotion and doctrine.

What emerges in this book is a powerful Catholic vision of manhood from a wide variety of Catholic men. And their



witness points to the manly virtues of our common father figure. It's not the ideal we find in popular culture—where the ideal man moves through degrees of macho, from Rocky to Rambo. In Joseph, instead, we find a life that is silent so that God can speak. We find a man who reflects and prays before he acts. We find a man who cares more for his righteousness before God than his reputation before his neighbors. We find the antithesis of machismo, and yet we find the model of holy and courageous manhood.

This book is also an expression in words of the deeds of the John Paul II Healing Center, founded by Dr. Bob Schuchts, who is Carrie Daunt's father. I met Dr. Bob for the first time by phone, through a mutual friend, and I immediately got the sense that our initial conversation was itself a moment of grace, a sort of sacred serendipity—holy happenstance if you will.

Within minutes, it seems, we both figured out that we share a common background. Was it our accents? I wasn't sure.

"Wait," he said, "are you from Pittsburgh?"

"Well, yes. Yes, I am."

"What part?"

"The South Hills."

"Which town?"

"Bethel Park."

"What neighborhood?"

"Oakhurst."

"Where in Oakhurst?"

"Marshall Road."

"Marshall Road! What was your address?"

"Three-nineteen."

“Three-nineteen? That’s just a few doors up the street from where I lived! Wait, did you have a brother named Fritz?”

It turns out that he grew up on the same block as the Hahn family, and our brothers were close friends.

So, like St. Joseph, I can look back in my own history and see this collaboration prefigured. God is good, provident, and good-humored.

I am honored to appear in these pages with so many contributors I number among my heroes. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. Their messages are as varied as their lives. But together they form an integral vision of what it means to be a faithful, faith-filled man in our times, which are no less daunting than the reign of King Herod.

For men living in such times, Joseph is a model, a patron, an intercessor, a companion. His life of silence is instructive because it shows us how God works silently, surprisingly—yet reliably—in our own lives.

By all the titles he’s earned—by all the names he has borne—may St. Joseph be invoked today.

Dr. Scott Hahn

## Authors' Note

On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis declared 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph. This declaration occurred just days after agreeing to the contract for this book. Carrie and I believe that the timing is not a coincidence but an affirmation from the Holy Spirit that this mission we have been waiting ten years to launch would come to fruition in conjunction with the pope's announcement, and subsequently published during this year dedicated to St. Joseph. We also believe that the timing of you reading this book is not a coincidence but rather an inspired movement of the Holy Spirit, activating you to join us in this mission.



# Preface

## Carrie

Wiping his shoes as he shuffled through the door, he glanced in my direction. I could tell he was pondering something deeper than the lawn he had just mowed.

“I’ve been thinking,” he began.

I smiled from the other side of the cluttered counter, where I stood arranging the dirty dishes in the washer. It’s rare that my husband initiates a conversation with *I’ve been thinking*. Most interactions start as they end, one long stream of consciousness, words trailing like a tortoise behind the swift hare of his thoughts.

With intense clarity and an irresistible gleam in his eye, Duane continued, “I’ve been thinking about the state of our nation—our world—and I can clearly see where we have gone wrong. Men are not allowed to be men. If you watch the news or read past the headlines, it’s so clear. Men have forsaken virtue and forgotten how to lead. Where did the strong men go? Those leaders who were willing to lay down their lives for the greater good? Look at the mess. *My* mess, the mess of all the men who have failed to do what is right. Men who for decades failed to see their critical role as protector and provider. Am I wrong? Or have we abandoned our post?”

I smiled again. His conviction was compelling. This *man*, who had himself grown up without a father, had eyes to see it. He watched his family struggle with the heartbreaking consequences of abandonment. With the grace of conversion, he recognized the familiar void.

Duane is a good man. He works hours into the night on projects that he did not finish at the office so that he could have dinner with his family. He is a man who wakes up with our hungry baby in the wee hours of the morning. He is a man who sacrificed his promising and cherished military career so our expanding family could move back home. He is a man committed to keeping his primary post.

“This is where we need to exert our efforts,” he continued. “The real change needs to start here. Men must stand up and do the right thing. There are faithful brothers, husbands, and fathers out there. We need a voice. Otherwise, our silence is like the abdication of Adam in the garden. We must battle against apathy and fear; we must battle for real manhood. The world needs examples of faithfulness. Someone needs to offer it.”

“You received all this while mowing the lawn?” I teased, reaching for his hand and affirming his conviction. “Sounds like you have a book to write. You’re being called to encourage other men to keep their sacred post.”

This time *he* smiled, and with a nudge, he reminded me that I am the writer in the family.

“We can write it *together*,” I countered. “I owe you for all that help with statistics in college.”

So here we are. Writing a book . . . together . . . and with

other brothers, in Christ, who collectively share this compelling conviction.

### **Duane**

I am not a perfect man, father, or husband. I am nowhere close. I struggle every day. With all the joys that come from a large family, there are daily opportunities for stress. Financial strain, exhaustion, endless chores; did I mention the financial burden?

Over the years, there have been more sleepless nights than I wish to count. I worried about making ends meet or even how to get through another month. Those anxieties easily spilled over to interactions with Carrie and our kids. I constantly felt like I was falling short in my role as husband, father, provider, and protector.

After losing my job, our savings, and nearly our home, I had to face these anxieties head on. What I learned was that in the same way God provided for Joseph in his times of uncertainty, he also provided for me. It took growing in obedience, courage, faithfulness, and patience on my part. When things became difficult, I had to cling to God's grace and stand and fight for my family. Slowly, this daily obedience bore fruit. After months of feeling like a failure, I began to experience a greater freedom in my vocation. God knew where he was leading us. His only condition was that I rely on him and not abandon my post in the process. Over time, I felt strengthened in my faith, in our marriage, and in our family, which gave me the courage to man my post. Don't get me wrong, occasionally I still lose sleep, but those nights are a lot less frequent.

Without a father to look up to, I have always been drawn to St. Joseph. I have a deep affinity towards him. In him, I see a tremendously strong and resolute man that risked everything for Mary and Jesus. Talk about being called into a stressful situation. Your future bride is pregnant with the Son of God, and you are called (in a dream) to take care of them. I don't know about you, but I would not be sleeping soundly enough to dream with the stress and burden that he carried. Yet, St. Joseph does not run, he does not make excuses, he does not look for the easy way out. Instead, he faces it head on. He becomes the earthly father and the example to all men for how we should bear our responsibilities and risk everything for those in our care.

However, when it comes to the man who risked everything to be a father to the Son of God, not much is recorded about him. Joseph was presumably with Jesus almost all the time. He would have had a profound impact on our Savior. I can imagine both of them in Joseph's workshop together, working side by side, as I do with my own children. There is something sacred about this time together. Jesus would have learned so much about being a man from his earthly father.

Despite St. Joseph's profound influence, we Catholics are still a little cloudy on where he fits into our faith. While recently putting our youngest son, William Joseph, to bed, he humorously reinforced this reality. His nightly routine that week was to list all those who love him. After listing our family, he rounded out the long list with Jesus and Mary. We gently reminded him not to forget his patron, St. Joseph, to which he wondered aloud, "Who is that?"



“Mary’s husband. The head of the Holy Family,” Carrie explained, trying to jog his four-year-old memory.

“Oh, that guy,” Will replied with a drowsy sigh.

*Oh, that guy.*

Like my son, most of us have heard about St. Joseph, but we don’t really *know* him. Yes, we see him every Christmas quietly kneeling in front of the plastic manger wearing his humble tunic, sitting across from his well-composed wife, who does not look at all like she just gave birth. Beyond that, we struggle to explain him. *Oh, St. Joseph, he is the guy who was Mary’s husband even though she is a virgin. I mean, he is Jesus’s father, but not his real father.*

Our limited understanding seems to fall terribly short. Joseph is the patron saint of the Universal Church, the patron saint of fathers, the patron of workers and of families—to just name a few! As head of the Holy Family, St. Joseph’s role is vital. His leadership protected our Mother and guided our Savior. While it is understandable that we struggle to explain him, it is now time that we get to know him. In a world in need of strong men, St. Joseph is *the Man* who leads the way.



## Moving Through This Book

For years, I have benefited from the protection of St. Joseph. Every time I struggled with work, started a new endeavor, or had a child, St. Joseph showed up offering extraordinary protection and timely intervention. His enduring example of masculine virtue is outlined in the Litany of St. Joseph, which is the backbone of this book. Each merit offers a small glimpse into the virtue modeled by this silent saint. Practices that offer ordinary men like you and me a roadmap to follow, leading us on an extraordinary mission.

To offer this roadmap, we have enlisted the help of Catholic leaders—faithful, strong men who have stories to tell and wisdom to share as they have struggled through life’s challenges and learned to adopt the virtues of St. Joseph.

Each chapter begins with a quotation from St. John Paul II that relates to the virtues inherent in St. Joseph’s life. Sharing an admiration and love for St. Joseph, St. John Paul II is the virtuous patron of our family’s ministry: The John Paul II Healing Center.<sup>1</sup> Following each quotation is an intro-

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<sup>1</sup> The John Paul II Healing Center was founded by Carrie’s dad, and fellow contributor, Dr. Bob Schuchts. Carrie serves as a presenter for many of the center’s events, while Duane has served as a long-time business consultant for the ministry. The Healing Center serves priests, religious, and lay people through healing conferences, retreats, and resources.

ductory overview of each particular virtue and a relatable testimony by a man who has found encouragement in the example of St. Joseph in his roles as a husband, father, son, brother, priest, or protector. Included at the end of each chapter are questions for reflection, a *Mobilizing the Mission* challenge, and a prayer for living out that specific virtue.

This book is not a resource; it is a mission, our mission. Flanked with a new band of brothers, it is time to fulfill your calling and *man your post!*

## Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Jesus, hear us, Jesus, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

Renowned offspring of David, pray for us.

Light of Patriarchs, pray for us.

Spouse of the Mother of God, pray for us.

Chaste guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.

Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us.

Diligent protector of Christ, pray for us.

Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.

**Joseph most just**, pray for us.

**Joseph most chaste**, pray for us.

**Joseph most prudent**, pray for us.

**Joseph most courageous**, pray for us.

**Joseph most obedient**, pray for us.

**Joseph most faithful**, pray for us.

**Mirror of patience**, pray for us.

**Lover of poverty**, pray for us.

**Model of workers**, pray for us.

**Glory of home life**, pray for us.

**Guardian of virgins**, pray for us.

**Pillar of families**, pray for us.

**Comfort of the troubled**, pray for us.

**Hope of the sick**, pray for us.

**Patron of the dying**, pray for us.

**Terror of demons**, pray for us.

**Protector of Holy Church**, pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Jesus.

He made him the lord of his household, and prince over all his possessions.

**Let us pray:**

O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever.

**Saint Joseph, pray for us.**

## CHAPTER I

# Joseph Most Just

*“Being a just man . . . he [Joseph] wishes to dissolve his marriage in a loving way. The angel of the Lord tells him that would not be consistent with his vocation; indeed it would be contrary to the spousal love uniting him to Mary.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Pope St. John Paul II

Joseph was a just man. How do we know? Because the Bible tells us so. Verbatim. Scripture, which is thin on details of the great saint, explicitly tells us that Joseph was just. Justice, one of the four theological virtues, was an inherent quality in creation. In the beginning, man was created with what Pope St. John Paul II refers to as a state of original justice.<sup>2</sup> This means that original man, wholly integrated as a person, ordered everything to the glory of God and the good of every creature.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Families,” February 2, 1994, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_02021994\\_families.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html).

<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II, “The Mystery of Man’s Original Innocence,” General Audience, January 30, 1980.

The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, forfeited this justice through sin and rebellion. But the *Fairest Love*<sup>3</sup> between Joseph and Mary helped to restore God's justice. In refusing to subject Mary to shame, Joseph pledges friendship to God and creation. He practices the moral virtue that consists of the "constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor."<sup>4</sup>

Each of us are challenged by Joseph's example of justice. In his witness as head of the Holy Family, Joseph modeled this virtue for Jesus. As Jesus grew, he witnessed the tender and righteous acts of his earthly father through the trusting relationship Joseph had with God. As Joseph followed the heavenly Father's promptings, God led the Holy Family into uncharted territories. Jesus also witnessed Joseph's love of neighbor as he cherished Mary by living out their chaste love. Jesus knew justice because he experienced it firsthand in his school of love, his family. Steeped in virtue and one with the Father's will, Jesus knew who he was and what he was called to do.

As you read this chapter on justice, Mike will share his story of learning to live justly with the help of many holy examples. The imperfect but wholehearted devotion that he witnessed modeled for him the *Fairest Love* of Joseph and Mary. In return, Mike ordered his life *to the glory of God and the good of every creature* and has become a model of justice for many.

While you read his testimony, I encourage you to contemplate your own life experiences. Is your life ordered to the glory of God? Where are you on the journey toward justice?

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<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Letter to Families."

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1807.



At the end of this chapter, there will be opportunity for reflection, prayer, and a challenge to accept your mission so that you may experience deeper blessing and restoration in your own journey toward becoming a just man, like Joseph (and Mike).

## **Step Up to the Plate**

*Mike Sweeney*

My father was my first hero. He was a *just* man like St. Joseph. He is one of a handful of holy examples of righteous men in my life. These holy men have modeled sacrifice and personified justice. They have offered me direction in my own journey to becoming a just man, like St. Joseph.

My journey began on July 22, 1973. On the night of my birth, my dad put a baseball bat next to me in the incubator and sat outside the hospital all night, tearfully praying for a miracle. As an aspiring Major League Baseball player with the California Angels, my dad gave up his aspirations of playing in the big leagues to raise his family. He sacrificed his dreams so that we could live ours. As the second of eight children born to Mike and Maureen Sweeney, I was two months premature and weighed only four pounds. The doctors told my parents that I only had a 50 percent chance of survival.

My mother, a prayer warrior, began praying the Rosary for my life and then asked the hospital to call a priest. “If God is going to call my baby to heaven, please call Fr. O’Connor to come baptize him.” I was baptized that day in the hospital. I became a beloved son of God and a member of his holy

Catholic Church. God wrote my name in the Book of Life and called me to be a saint. Fr. O’Conner became the first of many priests in my life who showed me the sacrificial love of Jesus in the sacraments.

The next morning, in the UC Irvine Hospital, only one mile from Angel Stadium where my dad would have played baseball, the doctors informed my parents that their prayers had been answered. Their baby boy was going to live. The connection to angels never left me. I often wonder if an angel appeared to my father that night, like the reassuring angel that appeared to St. Joseph. God had a plan that was bigger than the bleak circumstances that each of these men initially faced.

As a child, my parents built a home around our Catholic faith. Our growing family never missed Sunday Mass. My parents taught us that Sunday was made for the family to go to Mass together, to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and then to come home for a grand slam breakfast cooked by mother’s hands. My mom was the greatest example of the Blessed Mother modeling holiness, modesty, humility, and a great love for Jesus. My father exemplified strength, hard work, humility, faith, and the selflessness of St. Joseph every single day. Growing up, I always said that I wanted to be a man like my father, and I wanted to marry a woman like my mother. We didn’t have too many material possessions, but I felt like we were rich beyond earthly measure. I once heard this sentiment summed up in these perfect words: “The rich man is not the man who has the most; it is the man who needs the least.” My parents made sure we were never in need.

When I was seventeen years old, I was drafted by the

Kansas City Royals and reported to Baseball City, Florida. This was the first test of my faith outside the umbrella of my parents' love. On that first Sunday, there was no question that I was going to Mass. Even while my teammates slept in or went to the beach, I looked in the phone book to find a church. I found that St. Ann Catholic Church in Haines City had Mass at 9 a.m. I begged one of my teammates, who was headed to the beach, to drop me off at church. I paid him three bucks in gas money for the ride.

God was at work because I encountered another example of St. Joseph at St. Ann Catholic Church, Fr. Domingo Gonzalez. Father Domingo had left communist Cuba to bring Christ to the people in the United States. After the 9 a.m. Mass, Fr. Domingo engaged me in conversation. I told him that I was new with the Royals and didn't have a ride back to the baseball complex. He told me that if I could wait until after the 10:30 a.m. Spanish Mass, he would give me a ride. I happily accepted his offer. Before I climbed out of his car, Fr. Domingo said, "Mijo, I will pick you up at 7:30 a.m. next Sunday." When I asked why so early for 9 a.m. Mass, he said, "We will have breakfast and fellowship before Mass. After the Spanish Mass, we will have lunch and I will bring you back." What a special time that was for me. Each Sunday, I attended two Masses and had fellowship and formation with a holy priest! I later found out that my parents were praying for God to send me an angel. Fr. Domingo was that angel.

On September 4, 1995, I made my major league debut. However, I soon realized that my career was not going as I had planned. Heading into spring training in 1999, there

were rumors going around that my time with the Royals was nearing an end. I approached my manager, Tom Burgmeier, to ask if this was true. He told me, “Son, you have zero chance of making the team this year.” This ton of bricks hit me on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 1999. I went to the Church of the Nativity in Overland Park to pray. My heartbreak turned into tears. I had hit rock bottom. As I was praying, I was drawn to a sticker on my Bible of a tandem bicycle. God asked me, “Have you truly placed Jesus in the center of your life, on the front seat of your tandem bike?” Then I clearly heard, “You need to get on the back seat, simply trust in Me, and pedal your heart out!” At once I had peace, recalling the words of Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” I hadn’t felt that kind of peace in a long time. That night, I surrendered my life completely to Christ. With the consolation of the Lord, I felt the call to live justly for the Lord. This commitment included the decision to practice purity and prepare myself for either marriage or the priesthood.

That night was transforming. I found a new freedom in Christ that allowed me to relax and perform like an all-star on the field and a saint-in-the-making off the field. I became consumed with Christ and immersed in the Holy Bible. Success followed. I not only made the Royals team that year but went on to play in five Major League Baseball All-Star games and was eventually inducted into the Kansas City Royals Hall of Fame in 2015.

My commitment to purity was not without challenges and persecution. One day in 2001, while on a team bus ride,

one of my teammates shouted to me, in front of the whole team, “I have been on this team for two years and I have never seen you date a girl. Tonight, after the game, I saw a beautiful girl hanging over the dugout with a sign that said, ‘All I want for my birthday is Mike Sweeney.’ Then I saw you crumble up the paper with her phone number. What’s wrong with you Sweeney? Are you gay?”

Even though I turned red with rage and I wanted to fight, I heard the words in my heart, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). Despite my great embarrassment, I was proud that I could quietly bear this affliction for Christ. In the ensuing days, as we would shake hands with teammates after a win, I still wanted to rip this teammate’s arm off with each shake.

Then one day, in my role as team chapel leader, I gathered my teammates for chapel. I went around the locker room and invited everyone on my team, intentionally skipping over my teammate who had embarrassed me on the bus. As I passed him over, he said to me, “Hey Sween-Dog! Aren’t you going to invite me to chapel today?”

I responded, “Brother, why should I waste my breath. I have invited you every Sunday over the past two years and you have never come. Why should I invite you today?”

“Well, maybe today was going to be my first day coming to chapel,” he replied, then gestured to speak with me privately. “Sweens, are you upset with me?”

“Yes, absolutely I am upset with you! You broke my heart in front of my teammates. Man, I lived a life I wasn’t proud of for a long time, but God called me to live a life of chastity and purity as a Catholic Christian.”

With tears in his eyes he said, “Sweens, I am really sorry

for what I said. I am married with three children and I wish I had the faith you have. Will you forgive me?"

Reconciled, we gave each other a big hug and went into the chapel together. That day an amazing friendship was formed.

Living justly eventually had its tangible reward off the field. Early in my career, I had met the daughter of former major league player Jim Nettles, who was our bullpen coach in Kansas City. Shara Nettles was someone I could see myself with, but I knew I was not ready for marriage at that early stage in my career, so Shara and I parted ways. Thankfully, we met again in 2001 in her hometown of Seattle, where my second MLB All-Star game was held. All those years of living in chastity seemed to prepare my heart for this moment.

At a special family dinner after the Home Run Derby, I invited Shara to join us. When I saw this radiant woman walk into the restaurant, I jumped from my chair and hugged her as if I never wanted it to end. I felt the Holy Spirit say, "This is the one I have been preparing you for over the past couple of years, the one you have been praying for." Pushing my brother Richard out of the chair next to me, I asked Shara to sit with me at dinner. That night, I realized she was the one I had been waiting for. We were engaged within six months, and nine months later, I married my soulmate.

Shara was the spouse God had chosen for me and he could not have chosen a better one. She is everything I ever dreamed of, and then some. I found a partner for life, a holy, modest, beautiful, and humble woman like my mother. Together, we have been completely open to life. We are overjoyed with our three boys and three girls, ranging from ages one to sixteen.

Faith is at the center of our family life. One of my favorite things to do is to wake up early and cook breakfast for the kids (to give Shara a break). Once the children are driven to their respective Catholic schools, Shara and I take Ryan Burke, our youngest, to daily Mass. In the evening, we pray the Rosary as a family. I believe that our prayer time together is what makes our family clock tick. We also encourage our kids to pray from the heart so that they can have a personal relationship with Jesus. Our children know that we are not as interested in their earthly success as we are in their eternal joy. While my boys want to be professional baseball players like their dad, they also know I will love them even if they never play another game of baseball. We want them to be faithful followers of Jesus first and foremost.

God has been so gracious to me and has blessed me more than I deserve. He has graced me with the gift of faith in his Son, the gift of marrying a holy woman like my mother and having six children with her, who are living life with their eyes fixed on eternity. As a family, we seek holiness through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that came upon us at Baptism, fueled with Jesus in the Eucharist in Holy Mass and surrounded by a faith-filled community. My deepest desire is to help my spouse and children get to heaven by providing for them, praying with them, teaching them, protecting them, and guiding them in the ways of faith. My life is an ongoing journey to become a just man, like St. Joseph. I want to be a saint, not so that I am remembered by the Church, but so that I can live eternity with Jesus in heaven. Baseball is what I did, but a follower of Jesus is who I am. My primary vocation is to lead my family along the same

path to justice in the footsteps of my father and the many holy priests I have encountered along the way (Fr. Domingo, Fr. Martin Latiff, Fr. Burke Masters, and others). I know my parents hit a home run through their example of faith. As for me, I will never stop swinging for the fences.

St. Joseph, Most Just, *pray for us!*

### **Engaging the Message**

1. Pray with the following passage from Psalm 37:27–28.

“Depart from evil, and do good;  
so shall you abide for ever.  
For the LORD loves justice;  
he will not forsake his saints.”

- Read the Scripture passage once and become familiar with the text.
  - Slowly read the passage a second time.
  - Very, very slowly read the passage a third time, paying attention to the words and phrases that rest in your heart. What is God speaking to you through this passage?
2. What men in your life have exemplified the virtue of justice?
  3. What choices have they made that you admired?
  4. How has their example inspired you to live more justly?



## **Mobilizing the Mission**

If there is a man in your life (father, brother, teacher, coach, priest, or friend) that exemplifies justice, thank him for his holy example.

## **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son, Jesus, our Savior, to restore righteousness and reconcile us to you. Please forgive me for all the times I failed to act justly, clinging to evil desires instead of your just promises. Please, reveal any places of disorder in my life. I give you permission to order my desires and convict me of wrongdoing. By your grace, grant me the courage to act justly and become a man with a heart like St. Joseph. Amen.

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**Mike Sweeney** is a five-time Major League Baseball All-Star first baseman and was inducted into Kansas City Royals Hall of Fame in 2015. He now works as a special assistant to the GM for the Kansas City Royals and also is the founder of Catholic Baseball Camps and the San Diego Saints Baseball where he “uses the greatest game ever played to share the Greatest Story ever told.” Mike is a practicing Catholic and daily communicant who speaks around the world about his love for Jesus and his holy Catholic Church. Mike has been married to his wife, Shara, for over eighteen years, and they are blessed with six children.