

LENTEN EXAMEN AT ST. JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP

Lord God, a prophecy in Sacred Scripture (Isaiah 62:5) says “***your builder shall marry you.***” The spiritual practice of an examination of conscience calls us to look within ourselves and honestly assess our participation in the ongoing “building” and necessary renovation and maintenance of our discipleship.

We humbly come before you in our hearts, O Heavenly Father, our creator. Through Baptism we are yoked to Jesus, your Son who is Mercy Incarnate. We invoke the Holy Spirit to give us profound insight.

In this Year of St. Joseph—a craftsman a builder to whom you entrusted the Holy Family, we now reflect on the work of his hands, his heart and holy faith. A carpenter’s workshop in biblical times would often be attached to their home. May this examination of conscience bless us with a sense of housekeeping for our souls and prepare us to seek your sweet Mercy in the healing sacrament of Penance.

Prayerfully, let us reflect on what might constitute what makes a workshop, so that we can be about the work of contrition and then bring our need to be forgiven before our loving God.

WORK BENCH: A solid table for the craftsman’s trade is essential. Our Catholic faith brings us to the altar of sacrifice, our place of worship. Have we/I been faithful to Sunday Mass and holy days of obligation, attentive and actively participating when attending Mass? As we speak the Holy Name in our liturgy, help me realize whether I have kept a reverent use that name, or taken it in vain?

STOOL OR SEAT: Sometimes a carpenter sits to ply his trade. Lord, help me reflect on my stance in daily life, my attitudes and patterns of behavior. Am I aware of your presence in my heart, home, family, workplace and neighbors? Do I make time to pray to Jesus so that the carpenter’s Son, Jesus can teach me His ways? Do I sit and spend time with the people I love, or am I often too busy to stop? Am I a workaholic, too consumed with material things? Have I been lazy, sitting too long when there’s work to be done in contributing to my family, parish or group of friends? Do I find myself sitting in judgment of others; become cynical, sarcastic or aloof, disinterested and cold?

LEVEL: Carpenters know how important balance in their craft. Am I a peace-maker, or do I let anger, resentment or un-forgiveness of past hurts turn me into a negative influence on others? Have I learned to balance self-care (proper rest, nutrition and recreation, for my health) and tendencies to being selfish (gluttony, over-indulgence in drugs/alcohol or sexual excess/lust?)

SQUARE: Do I love the law of the Lord? Like St. Joseph, do I seek to be upright/righteous before you, Lord? Does my pride or fear of failure/insecurity keep me from a deep, genuine desire for holiness, which is everyone's call? Do I speak up to defend the innocent, do I hold myself to a high standard of human rights—even for those with whom I disagree or groups toward which I am prejudiced in some way?

SAW: St. Joseph would have used a saw daily. Do I find myself using my tongue for “cutting remarks” to insult or mock people? Or have I developed the virtue of prudence to control what I say?

TOOL BELT: Worksite, contracted carpentry was common in Nazareth as King Herod hired local builders for projects in Jerusalem. Carpenters wear a tool belt where a cincture or rope ties back garments and has been symbolically linked to the virtue of chastity. St. Joseph, help us examine and admit and impure tendencies, thoughts or action, alone or with others.

HAMMER: In the hand of a skilled builder, hammers are a valuable tool. The same instrument that drove nails into the hands and feet of Christ are a vivid reminder of the ways we can improperly use force. Have I manipulated others, abused my position of authority over others (even my own children) or bullied people for my own gain without gentleness or consideration for others' feelings?

NAILS: Jesus Christ and His foster-father were familiar with nails as a method of bringing pieces of wood together. Have we been sharp, hyper-critical or mean to people? Or, with what we call sins of omission, have I chosen not to connect people, instead, letting them languish when an opportunity arose where I could build a bridge?

SAND PAPER/PLANE: Lord, you who are still forming and shaping us as disciples, show us where our “rough edges” of impatience and impropriety cause splinters in situations. By your grace, heal us and remove the “plank” from the eyes of our conscience so that we will become more kind.

CLAMPS/GLUE: Builders use these items to hold pieces of a project tightly together while adhesive sets. Have I use humor in a way to put others down and thus been counter-productive to the building of your Kingdom?

MEASURING STICK: Is my language, vocabulary and tone with people a good measure of respect? Or do I speak in ways that embarrass others and demean myself by being vulgar? As I now seek the forgiveness you offer so generously, do I show others mercy?

STAIN/FINISH: As a final touch, works in wood are often given a coat of finish. Lord, send out your Spirit and pour your grace over me now as I ready myself for confession of my sins. I praise you for NOT being “finished with me yet.” So I humbly ask to be covered in the saving Blood of Christ, shed for my salvation on Calvary’s Cross.

Seal the joy that comes to me in this new start, and inspire me to keep working diligently with your sanctifying grace.

**St. Joseph the Worker, Holy Carpenter of Nazareth and
Universal Patron of the Church, pray for us!**

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.... Amen!