

Commentary on the earlier 'St. Joseph' Icons



St. Joseph is not usually depicted in iconography other than in the Nativity Feastday icon or to the side in an icon portraying the Holy Family.

In this iconographer's earlier icons of St. Joseph, Jesus is shown as holding Joseph by the beard; a tender gesture of trust and love for the man He chose as His guardian and foster-father on earth; a gesture that children will often do in their fascination with a longer beard. Jesus blesses Joseph with his right hand.

Joseph holds one of his traditional symbols, the flowering staff –

One or Three White Flowers represents Joseph's virtue, holiness, innocence, and obedience to God: "he did as the angel commanded" (Mt 1:24; see also Mt 2:14,21,22). The white flower also represents his faithfulness to Mary, as well as his chastity and sexual purity because he respected her virginity and remained celibate throughout their marriage: "he had no relations with her" (Mt 1:25a).

Flowering Staff. There are a number of apocryphal or non-scriptural texts that describe Joseph as the one especially chosen by God to be the husband of Mary. The imagery is drawn from an incident when Aaron's staff sprouted with almond blossoms as a sign that he was especially chosen by God (Num 17:23).