Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Leo XVI listens to participants in the "Cattedra dell'Accoglienza," a cultural and educational event, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican March 12, 2026. Addressing the group one week before the March 19 feast of St. Joseph, Leo reflected on Jesus' foster father's exemplary role as a responsible guardian for the Holy Family. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Matteo Pernaselci)

Courtney Mares

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Rome — March 13, 2026
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Pope Leo XIV has highlighted how St. Joseph, who is never directly quoted in the Bible, is an example for Christians of the importance of "being present."

In a speech on March 12, one week before the church celebrates the feast of St. Joseph, Leo reflected on Jesus' foster father's exemplary role as a responsible guardian for the Holy Family.

"This is exactly what St. Joseph did in caring for the family entrusted to him by the Lord," Leo told participants in an Italian conference promoting a culture of solidarity and hospitality.

"In him we recognize that welcoming is not only presence, but also guardianship. Guardianship means being attentive to others, respecting their choices and caring for them."

The pope noted that this posture of watchful care reflects the very nature of God, who Scripture presents as the tireless guardian of his people, echoing the words of Psalm 121, which describes the Lord as one who never slumbers in his watch over Israel.

"Joseph shows us that presence and guardianship are inseparable dimensions," the pope said. "It is not possible to guard without being present, and one is not present without assuming responsibility for the other."

Advertisement

Leo turned to the Gospel of Luke, recalling the moment when Mary and Joseph lost the child Jesus and spent three anxious days searching for him before finding him in the Temple, saying this "teaches us that the presence of the other is not automatic, but the result of constant searching."

"It has happened to each of us to lose someone or something we were very attached to. At that moment, we realized how precious that presence was," he said.

The same dynamic, he explained, can play out in the interior life. "We take for granted the presence of Jesus in our existence, until unexpectedly it seems that he is no longer where we left him. We feel a sense of loss."

"In reality, it is not he who is lost, but we who have strayed. When this happens, we are called to seek him with confidence, with the courage to travel unexplored paths, looking at the world with new eyes, filled with hope. In this way, we will stop looking for a God who suits us and instead encounter him where he dwells," Leo said.

The pope spoke in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace with participants in the "Cattedra dell'Accoglienza," a cultural and educational event organized in collaboration with Rome's Pontifical Lateran University and held in Sacrofano, a town north of Rome.

Leo encouraged the participants in the conference "to continue to create environments capable of promoting goodness and fraternity in the Christian community and in society."

"Cultivate the charism of welcome by listening to the Holy Spirit, whose fruit, as St. Paul tells us, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22)," he said.

"May Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph watch over you and intercede for you."