

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the feast of St Joseph the worker

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Good morning everybody. Hope you're okay. I'm sure many of you were out last night, pots and pans and singing, clapping, whatever for the NHS staff at 8 o'clock and I'd like to thank one of our parishioners who suggested me a few weeks ago that I might ring the bells at 8 o'clock which I now do every Thursday night at 8.

However, in a very fine piece recently by an ex member of the NHS, a professional, he wrote about the dangers of canonising the saints and miracle workers, the angels, which are terms which are often used for NHS employees and I think appropriately so, and the danger he pointed out which I thought was very, very good, he said that *"Being called a saint or miracle-worker might be very complimentary but it might come at a price: the sense that you must conform to the image of a saint. Saints endure pain. Saints appear to need little or no rest or sustenance. Saints do not ask for pay rises. What happens when people do die, as they must? The danger is that the personal experience of the staff is one of failure and depression."*

Now I thought those words were very appropriate because today we're celebrating the feast of another saint, a real saint too of our church, St Joseph the worker, the first of May. We were given this date by Pius the tenth, Pope Pius the tenth to counteract communism and May day celebrations that take place also on this day. And I feel that perhaps over the years that St Joseph too has suffered because of a lack of appreciation of the humanity that he has had in his wonderful, wonderful life - little of it that we do know.

"Let us recognise," says this same writer, *"that saints do have the same feelings as us - including confusion, uncertainty, fear and anger. One consequence of elevating NHS staff to the realm of the sacred is that we find ourselves in danger of forgetting an essential element of religion: forgiveness for being human." "Forgiveness for being human".* God bless everybody.