

***"Hail, Glory of the Patriarchs,
Steward of God's Holy Church,
who didst preserve the Bread of Life
and the Wheat of the Elect."***

~ from the Little Office of St. Joseph

This is a commission I recently completed for Fr. Larry Richards and St. Joseph's Church/the Bread of Life Community for the 150th anniversary of their parish. I was asked by Fr. Larry Richards to depict St. Joseph with the Child Jesus in front, while St. Joseph pointed to His Sacred Heart shown as the Eucharistic Host. The IHS on the Host is an iconic Christogram that means "Jesus Hominum Salvator", or, in English, "Jesus, Savior of Mankind." The boy Jesus points to His Eucharistic Heart with one hand while the other is raised in blessing, and His Halo bears the words "I AM" signifying the Divine Name of God revealed to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. As in some of my other images of St. Joseph, I have here depicted him as a young man wearing a tallit (or Jewish prayer shawl), to represent his great piety and godliness as a just observer of the Law of Moses as well as reveal the Divine Nature of Christ, as Jews wear the tallit while they read from the Torah, the word of God. In this image, St. Joseph points to the Word of God Himself and presents Him to the viewer. The lily staff is a reference to St. Joseph's purity as the chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It also references the traditional story of Joseph being chosen as the husband of Mary when his staff miraculously sprouted with lilies, designating him as the one chosen by God. The six-pointed stars in his halo are a reference to Joseph's royal Davidic lineage and his green and white clothing also reference the line "the just man shall blossom like the lily" which is from the Responsory of the Feast of St. Joseph.

St. Joseph of the Bread of Life

© Cecilia Lawrence

March 21st 2017

Acrylic, Ink, Gold Leaf

18 x 30 inches

37½ Hours