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Pastoral Nature Notes
Father Joseph Backowski

Mr. Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee is one of my favorite backyard birds. Whether they are eating at the bird feeder or hopping around in tree branches near my deer stand in the dusky evening searching for one last hidden seed snack before bed; their little presence reveals a kind of meekness and quiet joy. The Chickadee, at first glance may not be much to look at, but his black cap and white eye patches might make you think of the thieving and cunning ways of the other masked forest creature, the raccoon. While Mr. Raccoon's face mask clearly reveals his temperament as an "Old West Bank Robber" of the forest, our Chickadee friends' mask and black helmet are signs of a deep gentle meekness. Quietly hopping from tree to tree and gently calling his little chips and once in a while his distinct song...Chickadee....dee...dee.... He certainly is one of the more subtle birds of the forest. In Spring, he and his mate carefully choose a small nesting cavity and they construct a gentle spongy nest of moss, lined with soft feathers in which to carefully raise their little ones. The Chickadee is nature's reminder to us of the meekness of the good St Joseph. He lives a hidden life, not masked and with a black helmet, but out of the lime light. No doubt Joseph knew of his royal lineage being descended from David. Yet he was more concerned with just being himself carefully doing his construction work, just as the Chickadee moves around, looking for food and carefully choosing a place to nest; Joseph doesn't look for notoriety. For this reason, God choose him to be the one to build a gentle home and a gentle family in which the Son of God could be raised. The home and family are not based on moss and feathers but on the gentle and faithful desire of Saint Joseph to always be pleasing before God. Each time we watch a meek little chickadee bouncing around a tree or on our bird feeder, may we always remember the meek and gentle Saint Joseph and pray to his Son that we may be more like him.