

St. Joseph: Your New Real Estate Agent

If you're having trouble selling your home, Kathryn Flanagan can offer two words of advice: St. Joseph.

After she put her home on the market, and it remained unsold for the first year, Flanagan decided she needed some extraordinary kind of help. She went to the St. Patrick's Guild, where they offered her some unusual advice. They told her to bury a statue of St. Joseph upside down in her front yard. She did that in November 1995; less than two months later she received an offer on the house.

Tim Doran, a spokesman for St. Patrick's Guild, says his store has six or seven St. Joseph products that can be used for home sale purposes. "The patron saint statue of Joseph has been around since day one for us," he says. "The idea of tying it to selling homes has only gotten popular in the last few years."

The statues range in size from a small plastic figure for \$1.95 to a larger plaster figure for \$9.95. However, the best-selling product is the St. Joseph home sale kit for \$6.95. It includes a three-inch statue, a prayer to St. Joseph and burial instructions.

Doran believes the new ritual is rooted in the fact that Joseph is the patron saint of carpentry and the

family, and is regarded as a protector and provider. "We don't want to get too commercial about religion," he says. "This particular tradition of selling the statue may be a little too commercial for some people."

Not for Jerry Micklewright. His company, called TWOS Home Sales, an acronym for The Way of St. Joseph, has sold 28,000 St. Joseph home sale kits in the last 18 months. The kits are even selling in hardware stores across the nation.

Micklewright discovered the sales power of St. Joseph in 1981, when he was trying to sell his home. Worried because he was carrying mortgages on both his old and new homes, he remembered that his father had told him to bury St. Joseph if he ever had trouble selling a house. After burying a statue from his Christmas Nativity scene, the home sold the next morning. Since then he's heard many stories about other people who have done the same thing, sparking his creation of a home sale kit, complete with instructions.

Says Micklewright: "I wanted to make sure it didn't sound like hocus-pocus. I firmly believe that those who ask St. Joseph to help them and truly believe that he's going to help them—boom, it just happens."

—Mike Paradiso