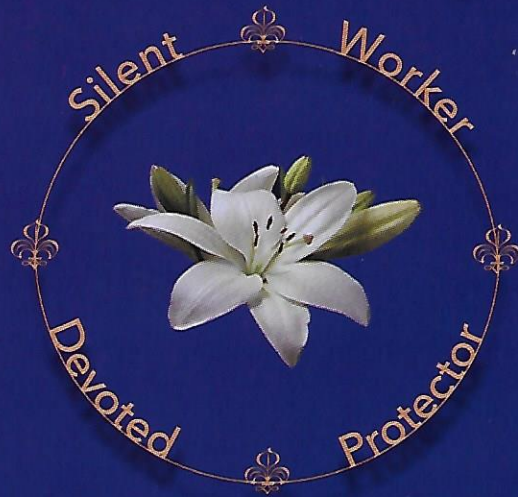




Saint Joseph



Carmel Clarion

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- Cover photo: Wood carved statue of St. Joseph and the child Jesus. Monastery of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Washington, DC**

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From the Provincial Delegate

When Joseph proposed to Mary, I imagine he thought he would live a normal life. They would marry, settle down, raise a family and live happily ever after. God, however, had other plans. When Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, he intended to divorce her quietly. God revealed to him that all this was in his plan, and Joseph took Mary into his home.

The birth wasn't easy either. Because of the required census, the baby was born in the poverty of a manger during the course of a difficult journey. Not long thereafter, the child was in danger. Once again God revealed to Joseph in a dream that he should take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Now they were refugees.

Life for this unusual family proceeded somewhat uneventfully until the child was lost during a pilgrimage. They searched for him until they found him in the temple where he was about his Father's business. Mary and Joseph were understandably anxious about the boy's welfare. Throughout the years Joseph would cherish Mary and Jesus; he would protect and provide for them. His love was genuine and his parenting real.

Even though Joseph fades into the background we can, nonetheless, safely assume that he was a sensitive and compassionate man, an upright just man, a man of profound integrity, a hard worker and good provider. God turned Joseph's

life upside down yet he was flexible enough to accept the mystery of God's will in his life; he obeyed without question. Like Abraham, his ancestor, Joseph was a man of faith.

Joseph let go of his dreams and embraced God's dreams. Joseph put aside his plans and accepted God's plans. Joseph gave up his projects and took on God's projects. He is for us a model and a protector. Joseph lived in the presence of mystery. He was a man of silence, intensely attentive to the voice of God. He can teach us to pray. He was sensitive to God's inspirations and obedient to his will. Jesus called God, "Abba, Father." He would have first learned this from Joseph.

Our Holy Mother, St. Teresa of Jesus, had great devotion to this saint. She found him helpful in every way. Her rationale was that just as he commanded Jesus on earth, so Jesus continues to listen to him in heaven. May St. Joseph obtain for us the grace to embrace God's will in our hearts and in the events of our lives.

Fr. Salvatore Sciorba, O.C.D.

Pope Francis' reflection during the morning Mass at the Casa Santa Marta, commenting on the day's Gospel. Jesus, he explained, was born of Mary, the spouse of Joseph, the son of David. 18 December 2017

Christopher Wells, Vatican News

Joseph Believed and Obeyed

The Pope reflected on the emotions felt by Joseph when the signs of Mary's pregnancy appeared after she returned from the house of Elizabeth: He spoke of his "doubts," his "sorrow," of his "suffering," while all around him people began to murmur—the "gossip of the neighbourhood." He "did not understand," but he knew that Mary was "a woman of God"; and so he decided "to send her away quietly," not accusing her publicly. Such was his intention until "the Lord intervened," through an angel, in a dream, who explained how the child had been conceived in her through the Holy Spirit. And so "he believed and obeyed"; "Joseph fought within himself; in that struggle, the voice of God [is heard]: 'But get up'—that 'get up' [which is heard] so many times in the Bible at the beginning of a mission—'Take Mary, bring her to your home. Take charge of the situation; take this situation in hand, and go forward.' Joseph didn't go to his friends to be comforted, he didn't go to a psychiatrist so that he could interpret the dream. No... He believed. And he went forward. He took the situation in hand. But what must you take in hand, Joseph? What was the situation? What was it that Joseph had to take up? Two things: fatherhood and mystery."

Taking Charge of "Fatherhood"

First, the Pope continued, Joseph had to take charge of "fatherhood." And this is already implied in the genealogy of Jesus, which explains how he was thought to be the son of Joseph:

"He took on a paternity that was not his own: it came from the Father. And he went ahead with that fatherhood and all it signified: not only supporting Mary and the Child, but also raising the Child, teaching him his trade, bringing him up to manhood. 'Take up a paternity that is not yours, but God's.' And this, without saying a word. In the Gospel, there is not a single word spoken by Joseph. A man of silence, of silent obedience."

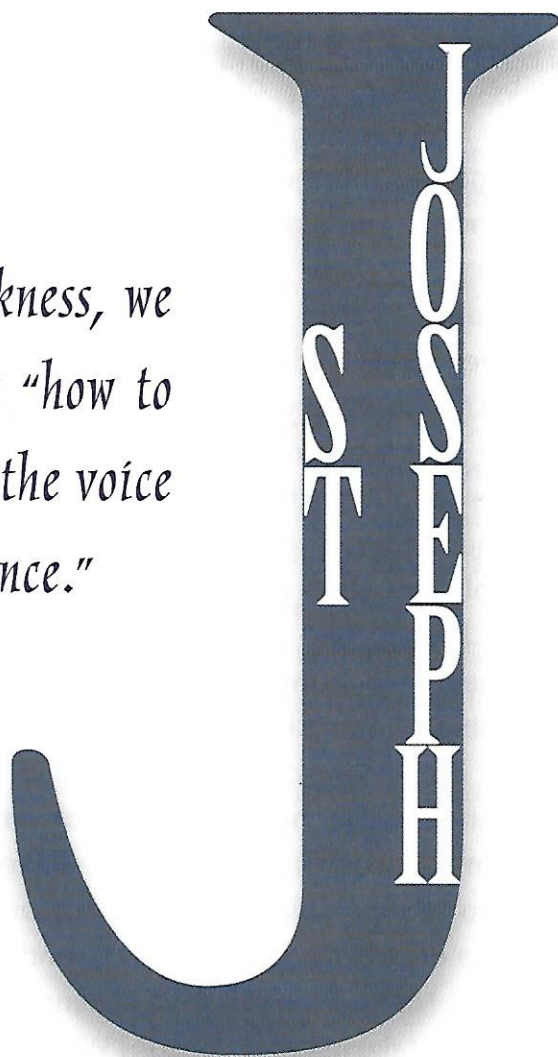
Taking in Hand the Mystery of Leading People Back to God

Joseph is also the man who "takes in hand" the mystery. The first reading explains that it is the mystery of "bringing the people back to God," the mystery of the re-Creation—which, as the liturgy tells us, is "even more wondrous" than the first.

“Joseph took in hand this mystery and helps: with silence, with his work, up to the moment when God called him to himself. It is said of this man, who took up fatherhood and mystery, that he was the shadow of the Father, the shadow of God the Father. And if the man Jesus learned to say ‘daddy,’ ‘father,’ to his Father who he knew as God, He learned it from life, from the witness

of Joseph, the man who took care of [him], the man who raised [him], the man who carried forward every paternity and every mystery, but took nothing for himself.” This, Pope Francis said, is “the great Joseph,” whom God needed to carry forward “the mystery of leading the people anew to the new Creation.”

In difficulties, in troubles, in darkness, we learn from St. Joseph who knew “how to walk in darkness,” “how to listen to the voice of God,” “how to go forward in silence.”





Joseph's Way

*“Joseph by your silence
you speak to us, persons of so many words;
By your modesty,
you are superior to us, persons of so much pride;
By your simplicity,
you understand so many deep and hidden mysteries;
By your self-effacement
you are present in all-decisive moments of man's history.”*
—Bossuet

I am paying a debt to Jesus' foster father, St. Joseph of Nazareth. In previous years, I have spoken much about the fraternal communion aspects within the OCDS, with reference to chapter 3B of the Constitutions or to St. Teresa (2015). However, I have not spoken much with respect to no. 31a, which was inserted in the OCDS Constitutions in January 2014. St. Joseph has been somewhat forgotten. Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, O.C.D.

The title of this conference was taken from the apostolic exhortation *REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS* (August 15, 1989, RC 17) of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the person and mission of Saint Joseph in the life of Christ and of the church. His life inspires us in our own mission as witnesses of the living God acting in history whenever he finds someone as willing as Mary and Joseph; I will also point out some of his attitudes, which will help us follow “Joseph's way.”

During the course of history, wonderful things have been written about St. Joseph. Holy Mother Teresa had a special devotion to him, calling him “my father and master” (*Life* 33:12; 36:6, etc.) and greatly encouraged others to venerate him. Popular piety often invokes him as the patron of a happy death or even as a help in financial needs; monasteries and convents appeal to him for vocations and people ask his intercession to find a job, etc. ...Even Pope Francis recently confided that when he has a difficult problem to solve, he places a written request under the picture of St. Joseph sleeping.¹

But is this all? Is this not reducing his person to someone who helps us when in need? How can Joseph of Nazareth inspire the vocation of OCDS members today? How can he be a model of faith and attentiveness to the

¹ Pope Francis in the Philippines, January 15, 2015, Meeting with families: “I would further like to say something personal. I love Saint Joseph very much because he is a strong and silent man. On my desk is his picture, sleeping, and while sleeping, he watches over the church. Yes! he can do that, we know. When I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and stick it under Saint Joseph so he can dream about it. This is like saying: pray for this problem.” <::https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/pt/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150116_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html> Access April 7, 2016.

signs of God, impelling us to make him present in our families, in our workplaces, in the midst of such a secular, individualistic and even atheistic society?

Starting with his particular vocation in the history of salvation, we find in the Gospel that Joseph is closely linked to Mary's "pilgrimage of Faith" in the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus. He is his legal father who deeply lived silence in the practice of his profession as carpenter. Finally, I will point out some ways in which St. Joseph can inspire our vocation and mission of making God better served today according to the Teresian Carmelite charism.

1. JOSEPH'S VOCATION IN THE STORY OF SALVATION

First, it is important to situate the person of Joseph² in the history of salvation. He appears to be embedded in the history and traditions of the Israelite people for "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:6). United to the mystery of Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Jesus, he is closely associated with the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

His name appears in the so-called "Infancy narratives" of Jesus (Mt 1:2 and Lk 1:2) and indirectly in some other texts. It is known that Joseph was a descendant of the house of King David (Mt 1:20; Lk 2:4; 3:23), a professional carpenter (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3) and a just and faithful man (Mt 1:19) who was betrothed to Mary. When she became pregnant, before they were living together, he went through a crisis of faith, but afterwards, he took her as his wife. (Mt 1:19-20,24; Lk 1:27-34; 2:5). He was the one who confers a name on Jesus (Mt 1:18-25). He accompanied Mary to Bethlehem (Lk 2:17), He was present at the manger when Jesus was born (Lk 2:7) and he was there when the shepherds came in adoration (Lk 2:16). He took Mary and her child to the Temple (Lk 2:22) and with them fled to Egypt (Mt 2:13-15). As soon as the danger was over, he led them back to Nazareth (Mt 2:19-23). There he settled with his family and Jesus grew in "stature, in wisdom and in grace" (Lk 2:39-40). Joseph appears again after the pilgrimage of the Passover feast in Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve years old and stayed behind in the Temple where he was found three days later. Luke writes that returning to Nazareth, Jesus was obedient to Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:41-52). This is the last we hear about Joseph in the Gospels.

Despite having few facts about Joseph's life, he plays a very prominent role in the Gospels of the childhood. He is especially important in the genealogies (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38) and in the narrations of the annunciation and birth of Jesus (Mt 1:18-25 and Lk 1:26-38).

Matthew, in his genealogy, keeping in mind especially the Letter to the Hebrews³, presents Joseph, belonging to the House of King David, as the legal guarantee to the Messiah, thus accomplishing the prophecies made to David (2 Sam 7:1, Ch 17). Matthew's Gospel divides the genealogy of Jesus into 3 groups of 14 generations (v. 17): from Abraham to David (1:2-6), from David to the deportation to Babylon (1:6-11) and from Babylon to Christ (1:12-16). This forms the basis for the development of the whole story of salvation, linking Joseph to the work of salvation as the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, legally responsible for his wife's child. Luke's genealogy goes from Jesus to Adam and then to God, with specific intention of stressing the universality of Jesus' action. Together, the two genealogies give us the understanding of Joseph's role in the story of salvation and introduce two Christological

² The name Joseph means "he who puts together," "to add or increase."

³ Cf. Patrizia I. Micelli, *I Modelli di Giosefologia Nella Storia della Teologia Cristiana* (Todi: Tau., 2015) 2-18.

themes elaborated in the Gospels. Jesus is the Messiah, descendant of David,⁴ Son of God.⁵

On the other hand, the Gospels of the Childhood give a narrative interpretation of the annunciation to Mary and to Joseph and of the birth of Jesus. (Mt 1:18-25 and Lk 1:26-38). Using the literary genre *midrash*⁶ they furnish us with important elements for the understanding of the person of Joseph of Nazareth. They offer a pedagogical rereading of texts from the Old Testament, interpreting them and applying them to the present.⁷ They thus announce the extraordinary event and "work of the centuries" which is the Incarnation of the Son of the Almighty. They demonstrate the divine loyalty throughout history and the accomplishment of the promises. To achieve this, they use very specific persons: Abraham, Moses, or the prophets, Mary, Joseph. The extraordinary birth of Jesus⁸ introduces the covenant between God and his people into its definitive phase.

2. JOSEPH, THE "JUST MAN" (MT 1:19)

Matthew's uses a singular expression when referring to Joseph: he was "just" (Mt 1:19). What does it mean to be just in Biblical terms and in the Gospel of Matthew?

In the Scriptures the word "just" has a very broad meaning. According to the Old Testament to be just is to be immersed in the Word of God transmitted by the wisdom of the People of Israel and whoever adheres to God's plan (Job 1:13; 17:9), faithfully observing his Commandments (Gn 7:1). Just is synonym for being a pious, holy and God-fearing man (Ws 15:31), someone always ready for the calling of God (cf. Ps 5: 4). The just is also compared to a tree planted by streams of water whose leaves do not wither (cf. Ps 1); he lives by his faith (Hab 2: 4) and in the faith of Abraham, the father of numerous nations (cf. Gn 13, 16; 15:5; 22:17). Biblical faith is the memory of divine action in history. It is open to the future and throws light on the path of the believer; hope dominates the life of each and every believer. After the exile to Babylon (598-538 BC), the concept of justice became ever more influential in the normative relationship among people, meaning a greater participation in and proof of God's justice. In the period after the Old Testament, the word "justice" takes on a connotation of goodness, grace, with the impartial judgment

⁴ With respect to the understanding of Jesus as "Son of David" in Matthew and in the initial kerygma of the church, Jesus is thus presented as "descendant of David" in his human nature (Rm 1:3-2 Tim 2:8; Ap 22:16) or even as "Son of David" (Mt 1:1-20; 9:27; 12:23; 20:31; 21:25; Mk 10:47; Lk 18:38). The title "Son of David" attributed to Joseph in Mt 1:20 and Lk 1:27 will be one of the most important Christological names used to praise Jesus, proposed or identified in the New Testament. Paul will be the one to use it more frequently. Cf. Patrizia, 13-14.

⁵ Luke's genealogy largely highlights the aspect of the divinity of Jesus. Jesus is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit (Lk 1: 26-38) which demonstrates his divinity. Joseph is Jesus' presumed father (Lk 3: 23), that is to say, he was considered as Joseph's son. His true Father was revealed at the time of his baptism (cf. Lk 3:22). Cf Patrizia, 14-15.

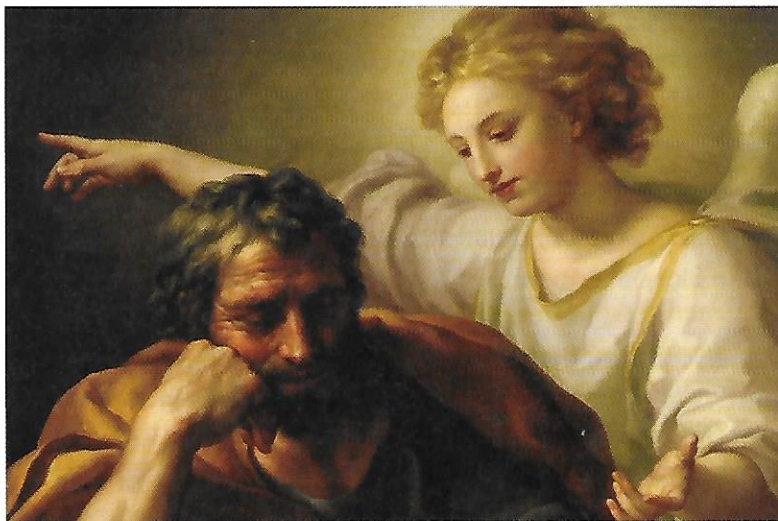
⁶ The literary technique *midrash* comes from the Hebrew *darash*, which means "to inquire, seek or study." The *midrashim* are Commentaries of ancient Biblical texts by Hebrew exegetes. They tried to deepen their comprehension of certain texts and actualize their meanings to apply them to life. The use of *midrash* always implies a real fact. When using this method, the evangelists do not minimize the historical value of Jesus' birth, but try to clarify this new fact in the light of the Old Testament to point out the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

⁷ According to exegetes, among the texts of the OT which served as a base for a deepening understanding of Jesus' birth, we have Gn 17:18 referring to the birth of Isaac and Judg 13, referring to the birth of Sampson. The story of Moses' vocation (Ex 3:4) as well as that of Gideon are also related (Judg 6).

⁸ Coincidences and similarities between the words used in both narratives are important. Both Matthew and Luke mention "wife" or "pledged to be married" (Mt 1:18 and Lk 1:27) which, according to Jewish law, indicate the relationship between Mary and Joseph at the time she becomes pregnant. There existed a marital contract (some kind of engagement, which lasted at least a year) and without having lived together under the same roof as man and wife, Mary became pregnant. Mary's name appears twice in Matthew and four times in Luke; the work of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20 and Lk 1:35); Matthew refers to Joseph as "Son of David" and Luke as "from the house of David," Mary is virgin (Mt 1: 23; Lk 1: 27). Among the differences, we show the most significant: in Matthew, Joseph gives the name to Jesus (1: 25) and in Luke, Mary does (1: 31).

of God.⁹ Thus, the pious and religious person understands that the God of his ancestors cares for him and allows himself to be found. Thus, the just person seeks to recognize God's signs in the experiences of his daily life, for he is light and will be found by those who look for him with a sincere heart.¹⁰

Based on a Jewish view of justice, Matthew's Gospel affirms that justice is fundamental in Jesus' teaching. He came "to fulfill all justice" (3:15), submitting himself to John's baptism; proclaiming blessed "those who hunger for justice" (5: 6), for they will be satisfied by God. Jesus summons all to conversion in order to enter the Kingdom and demands that his disciples' justice "surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees" (5:20). So, when Matthew qualifies Joseph as "just" (Mt 1:19), he attests his faithful and constant observance of the *Torah*, making it his joy, respecting God's teachings and living in justice toward himself and others. Joseph became aware of the pregnancy of Mary who had been promised him in marriage,¹¹ before they ever had a conjugal relation (cf. Mt 1:18). He has nothing to do with this pregnancy, but being a just man, he does not want to expose her publicly,¹² as Jewish Law and traditions would have it. His first thought was to send her away secretly, without making use of public rejection.¹³



The Dream of St. Joseph. Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779)

Joseph's faith is hereby being tested. He does not know what to do (cf. RC 3). As soon as the divine messenger reveals that Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18-20), he is taken by a feeling of awe for such divine action taking place in her. He did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife," (Mt 1:24). His justice consists in entirely committing himself to God's plans. Because of this commitment, he solves the problem of Jesus being born fatherless, which would have been a disgrace in human eyes.¹⁴ As a descendant of David, Joseph accepts to be a legal father and together with Mary, the servant of the Lord; he participates in the beginning of the New Covenant. For this reason, the qualification "just" Matthew gives to Joseph takes on a religious meaning. Joseph faces a supernatural fact and being just, he simply accepts in silence and in faith a mystery that is far beyond his comprehension and his being. He "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt 1:24) initiating "Joseph's way," a way that permits him to pursue in eloquent silence the path of compliance to the will of God (cf. RC 17).

⁹ Cf H. Seebass, *Justicia*, ed. *Diccionario Teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, v. II (3 ed. Salamanca: Sígueme 1990) 405- 07.

¹⁰ Cf. Francisco, *Lumen Fidei* 9-14.35.

¹¹ The tradition of matrimony in Israel comprises two distinct parts. The first is *qidushin*, that is, "consecration" because the woman was "consecrated" to her spouse; it was the official engagement between the two young people, who, normally, were 12-13 years old. This first ceremony meant a new situation for the woman: even living in her father's house for one more year, she was considered the "wife" of her future husband and whatever betrayal was considered adultery. The second part (*niss'in*), that is, "to take," "to carry," was the moving of the wife, who was taken to her husband's house (cf. Mt 25,1:13). This was the ceremony, which sealed the definite stage of Hebrew matrimony. Cf. Ravasi, G. *Giuseppe, il Padre di Gesù* (Roma: San Paolo 2014), 14-15.

¹² Cf. Patrizia, 18-20.

¹³ The Book of Deuteronomy is clear in such cases: "If the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel" (Dt 2:21-22). It seems that at the time of Joseph, this law was less severe; nevertheless, the guilty one became scarred and marginalized forever.

¹⁴ X. León Dufour, *El Anuncio a José*, in *Estudios de Evangelio* (Barcelona: Estela: 1969) 61-75.

3. PILGRIM OF FAITH WITH MARY

If “the just man lives by faith” (Hab 2:4), this faith is light to the heart’s eyes and requires courage, trust and abandonment to the One who moves it, so that he might see the way to the encounter with God (cf. *Lumen Fidei* 22.14). The dynamics of faith transform whoever believes into a pilgrim in quest for the encounter with God.

A pilgrim of faith like Mary his wife (cf. LG 58; RC 4. 5. 6. 17), Joseph is guided by dreams: they are instruments of divine revelation¹⁵ and appear at least four times in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 1:20; 2:13, 20:22). This makes Joseph an heir to the faith of Abraham and the Patriarchs of the Old Testament and like them, he obeys God’s will in faith (Lk 1:24).

Participating in the messianic hope of the people of Israel, Joseph puts himself in the hands of God as soon as he receives the message of the angel in a dream. Now he knows that Mary, his wife-to-be, is pregnant by the work of God. At first he hesitated, he did not know what to do. But now, knowing God’s plan, he accepts to cooperate and does as requested by the divine messenger (Mt 1:24-25), saying yes, just as Mary had done. He thus becomes a pilgrim of faith like Mary, like his people.¹⁶

This decision safeguards the marital bond with Mary and confirms his own vocation: he is again called by God to live the love that unites him to Mary, betrothed to him, now taking her as his wife and caring for her and the child as his foster “father” (cf. RC, 18-19). This we find in Mt 2:13-22. Joseph appears as protagonist and rigorous performer of the saving actions of God with respect to the Holy Family. Complying faithfully and promptly with God’s instructions: he takes Mary as his wife (Mt 1:24); he gets up at night, takes the child and his mother and leaves for Egypt, escaping from the massacre of the Innocents (Mt 2:14). He comes back from Egypt (Mt 1:20-23) and settles in Nazareth so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled: “He will be called a Nazarene” (Mt 2:23). His active and docile cooperation in God’s work of redemption is an attitude of justice that comes from faith and service to the mystery of Incarnation (cf. RC 8. 31).

4. JOSEPH, MASTER OF SILENCE AND PRAYER (CONST. OCDS 31A)

“Joseph’s way” (RC 17) is characterized by the mystery of silence. The Gospels do not record even one word he spoke. Beyond all words, they transmit what Joseph “did” (cf. RC 25). He is a man of silence¹⁷ who responds to the calling of the Almighty, involving his entire being acting with justice. On the other hand, he is at the same time a man of his word, who is present in the vicissitudes of Jesus’ childhood. In all circumstances, Joseph “listens to the signs of God in history,” in a setting of attentive silence and hope where is found a worship of justice.¹⁸ His attitude

¹⁵ The OT relates a few notable dreams: that of Solomon (1 Kings 3:15), of Mordecai (Esther 1:10; 10:3), of Judas Maccabeus (2 Maccabees 15:11-16), of Daniel (Daniel 7), of Joseph of Egypt (Gn 37:5; 42:7). In the NT, Mt 1:20; 2:13-19-22; 27:19 and At 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 27:13.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 17: “In the course of that pilgrimage of faith which was his life, Joseph, like Mary, remained faithful to God’s call until the end. While Mary’s life was the bringing to fullness of that fiat first spoken at the Annunciation, at the time of Joseph’s own ‘annunciation’ he said nothing; instead he simply ‘did as the angel of the Lord commanded him’ (Mt 1:24). This first ‘doing’ became the beginning of ‘Joseph’s way.’ The Gospels do not record any word ever spoken by Joseph along that way. But the silence of Joseph has its own special eloquence, for thanks to that silence we can understand the truth of the Gospel’s judgment that he was ‘a just man’ (Mt 1:19). One must come to understand this truth, for it contains one of the most important testimonies concerning man and his vocation. Through many generations the Church has read this testimony with ever greater attention and with deeper understanding, drawing, as it were, ‘what is new and what is old’ (Mt 13:52) from the storehouse of the noble figure of Joseph”; cf. *Amoris Laetitia* 65.

¹⁷ Rosalba Manes made a beautiful meditation on that theme, *La Melodia del Silenzio; la Testimonianza di Giuseppe di Nazareth* (Roma: Libreria Editrice Murialdo, 2014). I took up a few ideas here.

¹⁸ Cf. Rule of Saint Albert, 21; Const. OCDS 31a.

makes him a master of prayer and silence (Cf. *Life* 6:8): his physical closeness to Mary and Jesus teaches us how to live in their company and practice spiritual friendship.

In silence, Joseph leaves room for God, clearing the way to surrender himself to him and not turn his back on God's Word challenging him (cf. Mt 1, 20:21; 2,13:20). His silence reveals his docility, readiness, and receptiveness to this Word. This is a silence permeated by love, revealing a pure heart heedful to the motions of the Holy Spirit. It is a silence that allows living the depth of his own mission,¹⁹ because acting out of love means having the attention of God who understands the language of "silent love," as recommended by Saint John of the Cross.²⁰ This silence leads him to a dedicated accomplishment of the mission entrusted to him.

Joseph with his silent testimony invites us to make ourselves familiar with the living Word of God in the Scriptures and to its work in daily issues, trying to live them theologically. To develop such an attitude, it is necessary to be attentive, to become "contemplatives in the accomplishment of one's own mission" (Const. OCDS 17). This is why he has much to tell us today, a time when words and information are used in excess and do not always lead to wisdom and concrete action. From interior silence, we learn to pay attention to the voice that comes from above. From his exterior silence, which makes him ever-attentive to Mary and Jesus, placed under his guardianship, we learn to be attentive to those around us. Based on these two dimensions of Joseph's silence, let us learn to serve God and promote stability around us.

5. JOSEPH'S FATHERHOOD

Joseph is the "foster"²¹ father of the Son of God by flesh, born of Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit. His fatherhood is legal thanks to his marriage to Mary: he is the husband, and Mary is his wife (cf. Mt 1:16. 18:20; Lk 1:27; 2:5; cf. RC 7).

As he becomes a father, Joseph is the one who confers on Jesus his human identity. He protects and defends him in his childhood and adolescence being as close to him as a shadow; his way of being a father reflects the paternity of God. As soon as he assumes the paternal mission, the law recognizes this fatherhood and Jesus is known in the Gospels as the "son of Joseph of Nazareth" (cf. Lk 3:23; 4:22; Jn 1:45; 6:42). Because he is a descendant of the house of David, his fatherhood gives Jesus legitimacy to be the Messiah (cf. Mt 1:16; Lk 3:23).²² In effect, with Jesus' birth begins the responsibility of the couple to care for the child, conforming to Jewish laws: the presentation at the Temple and conferral of a name as predicted by the angel (Mt 1:25 21; Lk 2:21 29-32, 34), thus inserting Jesus into "King David's family" (Lk 2:24; 1:27); he also takes part of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the major festivities. It is important to remember that education in a Jewish context leads to a life fulfilling God's will expressed in the Law, specially sharing in the holiness of God. (cf. Heb 12:10-11; cf. Eph 6:4).

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Allocution*, March 19, 1969; cf. RC 26: "The total sacrifice, whereby Joseph surrendered his whole existence to the demands of the Messiah's coming into his home, becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life. It was from this interior life that very singular commands and consolations came, bringing him also the logic and strength that belong to simple and clear souls, and giving him the power of making great decisions—such as the decision to put his liberty immediately at the disposition of the divine designs, to make over to them also his legitimate human calling, his conjugal happiness, to accept the conditions, the responsibility and the burden of a family, but, through an incomparable virginal love, to renounce that natural conjugal love that is the foundation and nourishment of the family."

²⁰ "What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God with our appetite and with our tongue, for the language he best hears is silent love." *The Sayings of Light and Love* 3.132. The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross.

²¹ From Latin *putabatur* = considered or thought to be that which is not in fact.

²² Here lies the importance of Joseph in the Christological study of the title "Son of David" (Mt 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9).

Continued on page 15

I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph and earnestly recommended myself to him. I saw clearly that as in this need so in other greater ones concerning honor and loss of soul this father and lord of mine came to my rescue in better ways than I knew how to ask for. I don't recall up to this day ever having petitioned him for anything that he failed to grant. It is an amazing thing the great many favors God has granted me through the mediation of this blessed saint, the dangers I was freed from both of body and soul. For with other saints it seems the Lord has given them grace to be of help in one need, whereas with this glorious saint I have experience that he helps in all our needs and that the Lord wants to us understand that just as He was subject to St. Joseph on earth—for since bearing the title of father, being the Lord's tutor, Joseph could give the Child command—so in heaven God does whatever he commands.



The Book of Her Life 6:6

St. Joseph the Worker
Monastery of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Washington, DC



St. Joseph,

You received God's message from an angel in a dream. Help us to rest in the Lord in openness to God's voice in the depth of our hearts.

Strengthen our lives in our world, so fraught by new demands and challenges amidst new discoveries and achievements.

Accompany us as you lovingly accompanied Jesus and Mary, helping us to rise with joy to do God's will as it is revealed to us.

We confidently ask your intercession in our present needs in Jesus' name.

Amen

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Beacon, NY

St. Joseph,

Image of the Merciful Father and Foster Father of Jesus, show us how to love, honor and obey Our Heavenly Father as you did. Help all fathers to instill in their children the virtues of uprightness and openness to God's grace. Remind us of the Biblical principles of love of God and love of neighbor.

Help our efforts to be kind and forgiving, to be reconciling and willing to make amends by turning the other cheek. Let us imitate your gentle, compassionate heart that seeks to alleviate the sufferings of others.

Enfold us and those we love in your prayer, O Father Joseph. Obtain for us the daily bread of grace we need for this life, so we can be a healing presence to all those we meet.

Amen

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Carmel of Port Tobacco

Hail Joseph,

Hail Joseph Son of David, the just and the chaste,
Wisdom is with you;
Blessed are you among all men and blessed is Jesus,
the fruit of Mary, your faithful spouse.
Holy Joseph, worthy foster-father and guardian
of Jesus Christ and of the holy Church,
pray for us sinners and obtain divine
Wisdom for us from God,
now and at the hour of our death.

Amen

Memorare to St. Joseph

Remember, O most pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, my beloved patron, that never hath it been heard that anyone invoked thy patronage and sought thine aid without being comforted. Inspired by this confidence, I come to thee. Ah, despise not my petition, dear foster-father of our Redeemer but accept it graciously.

Amen

St. Joseph,

You gave up your will and your plans for your life when you freely accepted the invitation of the Lord to take Mary into your home and become the foster father of Jesus.

Help us to accept God's will as we face the many hardships of life. Teach us to love Jesus as you did and to love others in our effort to obtain peace and justice in our families and in our world. Hold our intentions close to your heart as you once held the child Jesus. We pray in his name.

Amen

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Carmel of St. Joseph
Terre Haute, Indiana



Prayer for Success in Work

Glorious St. Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with gratitude and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop, by means of labor, the gifts received from God; without recoiling before weariness or difficulties to work, above all, with purity of intention, and with detachment from self, having always death before my eyes and the account which I must render of time lost, of talents wasted, of goods omitted, of vain complacency in success so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all for Mary, all after the example, O Patriarch St. Joseph. Such shall be my watchword in life and death.

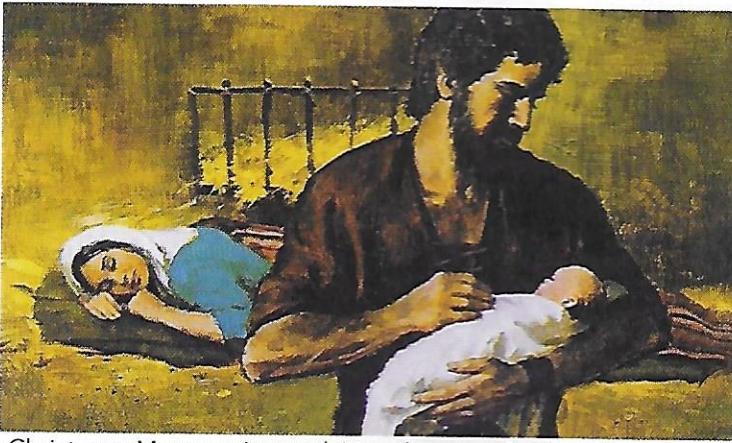
Amen

Prayer for a Happy Death

O glorious St. Joseph, behold I choose thee today for my special patron in life and at the hour of my death. Preserve and increase in me the spirit of prayer and fervor in the service of God. Remove far from me every kind of sin; obtain for me that my death may not come upon me unawares, but that I may have time to confess my sins sacramentally, and to bewail them with a most perfect understanding and a most sincere contrition, in order that I may breathe forth my soul into the hands of Jesus and Mary.

Amen

Joseph's fatherhood, even if a foster father, does not mean that Joseph only plays the role of a father. He is effectively a father.²³ He fully exercises his mission committed to the work of educating his son, sustained by a deep and unequalled love. This made Fr. Jerome Gracián declare: "I am sure that if we put all the love biological fathers have for their sons in a plate on a scale and in the other, only the love of Joseph for Jesus, the love of Joseph would be greater."²⁴



Christmas: Mary resting and Joseph caring for the Infant Jesus

His legal paternity is equal in dignity to biological paternity: he introduces the child into history, takes an active part in his human growth, in view of leading him to assume his mission of universal salvation. He helps his Son grow and become who he is called to be. He achieves this especially by forming the interior, the spiritual life, his thoughts, his will. He protects him as a child, going to Egypt and from there returning to Nazareth. He does not abandon Jesus, when as a teenager of 12 he remains in Jerusalem (Lk 2: 43-47); together with Mary, he suffers and worries while looking for the Child,

later found in the Temple discussing with the doctors of the law and drawing amazement at his wisdom. While Mary questions Jesus, Joseph remains silent, without understanding the mission and words of Jesus: "Didn't you know I had to be about my Father's business?" (Lk 2:49). Henceforth, Jesus starts preparing Mary and Joseph for his mission; he is submissive to them, but conscious that "his food is to do the will of his father" (Cf. John 4:34).

While exercising his paternal mission, Joseph teaches men to give paternity its due value, recognizing it as a gift, a dynamic participation in the fascination of the human and spiritual growth of children. This is an education that proceeds from the emulation of dependable witnesses, lovers of goodness, truth and beauty transmitted by concern and solidity. For this reason, Joseph is so important to redeem the complementary and reciprocal relationship between man and woman in education and family life in harmony and conforming to God's plans.²⁵

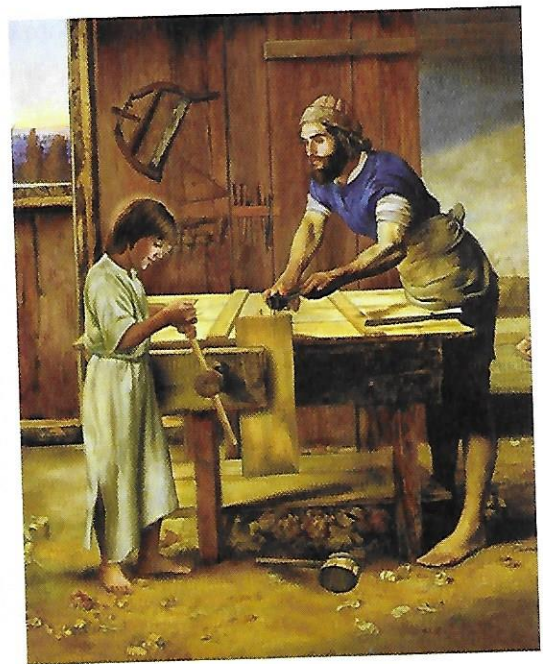
²³ Paul VI, Hom. 19 Mar. 1966: "St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that, as the church's liturgy teaches, he 'cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation' and is truly a 'minister of salvation.' His fatherhood is expressed concretely in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it; in having used the legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, of his life and work; in having turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house." Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 8.

²⁴ Jeronimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, *Summario de la Excelencias del Glorioso S. José, Esposo de la Virgen María* (1597). BMC XV-XVII, 403.

²⁵ Pope Francis summarizes important aspects of fatherhood in family life that can readily be applied to Joseph, with the due differences. A father should be present in the family, close to his wife and children, share joy and sorrow, have the capacity to wait and forgive, *know how* to punish without humiliating. A father is patient when his children fail or stumble: they know they have a father waiting for them, despite their faults. Francis, *General Audience*, February 4, 2015 in <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/pt/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150204_udienza-generale.html> (access April 4, 2016). The Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* in turn shows that the paternal mission complements the maternal mission in the family: "A mother who watches over her child with tenderness and compassion helps him or her to grow in confidence and to experience that the world is a good and welcoming place. This helps the child to grow in self-esteem and, in turn, to develop a capacity for intimacy and empathy. A father, in turn, helps the child to perceive the limits of life, to be open to the challenges of the wider world, and to see the need for hard work and strenuous effort. A father possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity who demonstrates affection and concern for his wife is just as necessary as a caring mother. There can be a certain flexibility of roles and responsibilities, depending on the concrete circumstances of each particular family.

6. JOSEPH'S WORK, AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

Work is inherent to the human condition. In the Bible, human work is synonymous with cooperation with the deeds of God (cf. GS 34; *Laborem Exercens*, 25) and appreciation is shown for work well done, the ability and dedication of the laborer, the craftsman (Cf. Eccl 38:26-28,30). It declares happy the father who works to provide physical well-being, stability and peace for his family with "the fruit of his labor" (Psalm 128, 1:2; Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 23-24). Hardships at work are part of the human condition in the task to rule and subdue the world (Gn 1:28).



By the fact that Jesus accepts work, he redeems work; he "worked with human hands," says the GS (22). "At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption" (RC 22). Jesus was known as a carpenter (Mk 6:3) and son of a carpenter (Mt 13:55). Thus, Joseph is a carpenter (Gr. = tekton; cf. Mk 3:6; Mt 13:55), since, according to Jewish tradition, the father hands down his profession to his son. The meaning of the word tekton, according to some scholars,²⁶ is a manual worker, a craftsman who works with hard material: wood, stone or iron. Contemporary authors tend to recognize Joseph as being an artisan and constructor, that is, he had many abilities in the art of carpentry and construction, a type of factotum, being an artisan and constructor. Let us keep in mind that at that time professions were not specialized and classified as they are today. Joseph provides for his family with this basic human activity, part of the manual labor that was a "daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth" (RC 22). Financially, he was not poor, reduced to misery in the way of a slave or unskilled laborer; neither did he belong to the middle class, as was defended some years ago by some authors. He lived modestly depending on the incoming demand for his work in the rural environment of Galilee.²⁷

Thus, Joseph could provide for his family with his manual labor (cf. Psalm 128,1-2). It was in the practice of his profession that, in the company of Mary and Jesus, Joseph lived holiness in the world. On this subject, Bl. Paul VI made this beautiful declaration: "This is all about the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state of life, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: Joseph. He is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies; ...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need for great things—it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic" (RC 24).

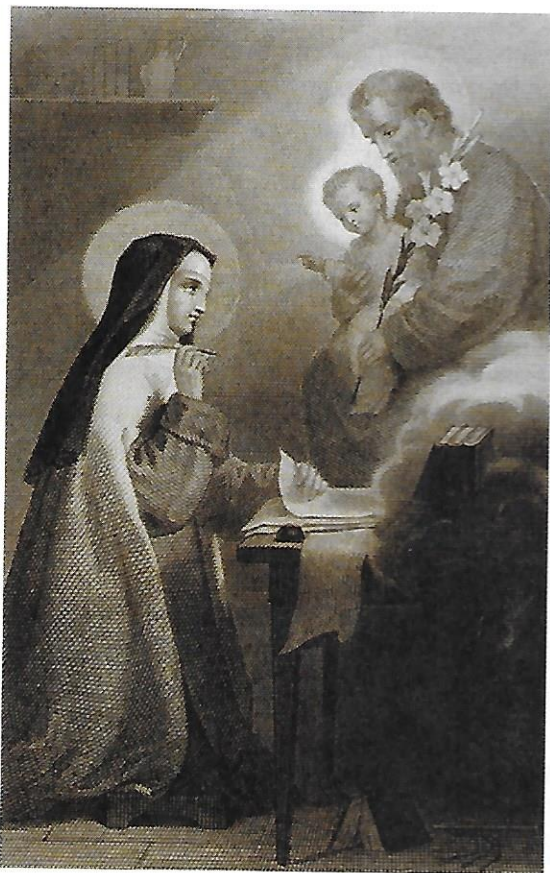
What could the Church need more than authentic witnesses of Christian values in all states of life?

But the clear and well-defined presence of both figures, female and male, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 175). Many societies accuse today's family educational system of excluding the father image from the education of children. Use of authoritarian, overbearing, chauvinist attitudes is frequent. The man/father, in many social contexts, has been set aside, reduced to a mere income producer (how many emigrate to other countries to be able to maintain their families in their own country of origin!...); his role in education becomes inferior to that of the woman. For this reason, Joseph is so important to redeem the complementary and reciprocal relationship between man and woman in education and family life in harmony and compliance with God's plans.

²⁶ Cf. Patrizia I. Micelli, 24-25.

²⁷ Cf. Ravasi, G. *Giuseppe, il Padre di Gesù* (Roma: San Paolo 2014). 57-65.

7. JOSEPH AND SAINT TERESA OF JESUS



St. Teresa's Devotion to St. Joseph

In St. Teresa's *Life*,²⁸ St. Joseph appears in three significant situations: her cure from paralysis when she was 26-27 years old, in 1542 (cf. *Life* 6); her conversion at 39, in 1554 (cf. *Relation* 30 and *Life* 6:6); and at the foundation of the Carmel dedicated to him in 1562, when she was 47 years old (cf. *Life* 32,11). St. Joseph will also be present during some mystical graces (cf. *Life* 33, 14) and during the foundations of 9 monasteries dedicated to him during Teresa's lifetime (totaling 15). To prove her devotion, her first biographers (Ribera and Gracián) state that she always took an image of the Saint with her on her trips and entrusted to him one of the doors of the monastery after the foundation.

Teresa acquired a deep devotion to the Saint after listening to Biblical texts. He is the "Glorious Patriarch" (*Life* 6:8) and "foster father" of Jesus (*Life* 6:6), having fatherhood authority over Him and serving Him and Mary. "I know not how anyone can think of the Queen of the angels, during the time that she suffered so much with the Infant Jesus, without giving thanks to St. Joseph for the services he rendered them then" (*Life* 6:8; cf. 6:9).

The most important testimony given by Teresa on the Saint is her own experience with him, who, as she herself puts it, "helps us in all necessities" (*Life* 6:6). Besides this aspect, Joseph appears a silent

model and master of prayer, for he lived side by side with Jesus and Mary and served them. "Those who give themselves to prayer should in a special manner have devotion to St. Joseph. He who cannot find anyone to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious Saint for his master, and he will not wander out of the way" (*Life* 6:8). She invites others to experience "the great good that results from commending oneself to this glorious patriarch and being devoted to him" (*Life* 6:8). Her devotion to Saint Joseph will inspire the "renewal of the veneration to St. Joseph in Western Christianity."²⁹

Another fundamental facet of this relation between Teresa and Saint Joseph was the impulse given to the devotion to Saint Joseph. In Avila, no church or convent had ever been dedicated to him (cf. *Life* 36:6). Teresa dedicated her first foundation. After the Saint's death, many nuns added "Saint Joseph" to their religious names. Furthermore, in the Spanish Americas of the 16th-17th century many towns formed then were named after Saint Joseph. We can witness this in the very city in which this Congress is taking place, founded in 1777 (OCDS 2016 - San Jose, CA). Likewise, Teresa was the inspiration for Fr. Jerome Gracián's work, *Josephina*, written for the carpenters of Rome in 1609³⁰ a work that had a decisive influence on the devotion to and doctrine of Saint Joseph in the following centuries. This work is divided into 5 books, which develop specific titles taken from the Gospels referring to Saint Joseph: 1) husband, 2) father, 3) just man, 4) receiver of the angels' visit and 5) beneficiary of revealing dreams. The first litany of Saint Joseph with 49 invocations is also attributed to Fr. Gracián. Later (1602), Mary of Saint Joseph will reduce it to 33 invocations in her book for the formation of novices. Those litanies were widely disseminated in

²⁸ Cf.: T. Alvarez, "San José," in *Diccionario de Santa Teresa* (Burgos: ed. Monte Carmelo 2002) 385-91.

²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 25.

³⁰ Cf. *Obras del P. Jeronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios, Vol. 2* (Burgos: El Monte Carmelo 1933) 373-483.

various European languages. Such facts show the great influence St. Mother Teresa had in the way the devotion to Saint Joseph was spread by those who knew and lived with her.

We should have given greater emphasis and made a better coverage on how the church in its devotion and teachings developed its understanding of Saint Joseph during the centuries after Teresa until our days. However, such a feat would require a greater span of time and space than what we now have.³¹ Therefore, we will limit ourselves to drawing some conclusions from this our reflection.

ST. JOSEPH LIVES MERCY, HEEDFUL TO THE GOOD HE CAN DO

Current theological thinking about St. Joseph considers his relation with many dogmatic, moral, social, doctrinal and pastoral themes. His presence is fundamental to Christology, Mariology, and ecclesiology,³² so is it for pastoral theology of the family and the spiritual life. These areas need a deeper study of the presence of St. Joseph.

Restoring Mary and Joseph in their mission as lay people and as a family is fundamental.³³ Mary's mission as wife and mother, and Joseph, as husband and foster father of Jesus, enlighten the life of families. We learn to live the pilgrimage of faith from them with docility to the will of God; we learn the Kingdom's justice, which leads them to mutual respect as bearers of a mystery. We learn to welcome each new life with reverence, to educate and together

³¹ The popes who left important marks on the teachings of the church regarding Saint Joseph are: Pope Pius IX, by proclaiming St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church (December 8, 1870) and St. John XXIII, by invoking the protection of St. Joseph on Vatican Council II and adding the memorial of the saint after the name of Mary in Eucharistic Prayer I (1962). Vatican Council II mentions him only once in its documents (LG 50).

Blessed Paul VI enhanced the figure of Joseph, bringing him closer to the life of men and women. In his homilies and exhortations for the feasts of St. Joseph (March 19 and May 1), he points out the virtues to be imitated in Saint Joseph: humility (March 19, 1965), readiness in complying with the will of God (March 19, 1965), the human experience of work that guarantees the survival of the Holy Family, family stability and human education (March 19, 1964). He also propose to emigrants that he be their protector and model (Allocution, September 6, 1965).

S. John Paul II took an important step in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph publishing the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (August 15, 1989), immediately after the Marian year and during the centennial year of the encyclical on St. Joseph of Leo XIII, *Quanquam pluries* (August 15, 1889). RC is an essential document for the study of Joseph in our time. It elaborates the theme of Joseph's pilgrimage in faith (1-16), his exemplariness for the family (17-21), at work (22-24), for the interior life (25-27) and as a conclusion reflects on his patronage for the church (28-32).

Pope Benedict XVI gave us St. Joseph as a model of silence (Angelus, December 18, 2005; December 30, 2012). In addition, Pope Francis, initiating his pontificate on the feast of St. Joseph in 2013, highlighted his guardianship, his ability to listen and be attentive to the signs of God in history in order to discern and take wise decisions. On May 1, 2016 he will sign and decree the insertion of St. Joseph's name after that of Mary in the Eucharist prayers II, III, and IV.

³² The theologian Karl Barth has an interesting way of looking at the role of St. Joseph in the church. "In the same way I am hostile to the development of Mariology, I am favorable to that of Josephology. This is because Joseph, in my point of view, had towards Christ the same role as that developed by the church. I am aware that the Roman Church prefers to compare its mission to that of Mary. It offers its message to the world in the same way the Virgin gave us Christ. However, this comparison is deceptive. The Church is unable to give birth to the Savior, yet must serve him with humility and modesty. And this precisely is the task of Joseph, who always maintains himself in the background, leaving all glory to Jesus. Such is the role of the Church." In, Patrizia I. Micelli, 212.

³³ *Amoris Laetitia* 66. "The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth illuminates the principle which gives shape to every family, and enables it better to face the vicissitudes of life and history. On this basis, every family, despite its weaknesses, can become a light in the darkness of the world. 'Nazareth teaches us the meaning of family life, its loving communion, and its simple and austere beauty, its sacred and inviolable character. May it teach how sweet and irreplaceable is its training, how fundamental and incomparable its role in the social order' (Paul VI, Address in Nazareth, 5 January 1964)."

accompany, being complementary and reciprocal in each one's own human and spiritual growth and that of the children.

Within the Teresian Carmel, we are urged to follow Holy Mother Teresa's counsel: take Joseph as our master of prayer (*Life* 6:8) and experience for ourselves the power of his intercession in our needs. His silent and discreet witness and physical presence so close to Jesus and Mary prompt us to imitate him and take him as an example for our lives and a synthesis of Christian life and one of prayer, which consist in constantly living in the company of Jesus and Mary. Thus, what Vatican Council II said of Mary is also applicable to Joseph: "The perfect model of this spiritual and apostolic life is the Blessed Virgin Mary, queen of the Apostles, living on this earth just as anyone else, concerned about family and work, she was constantly united to her Son and in a unique way cooperated with the work of the Savior" (AA 4).

I conclude with a paragraph of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015), in which he points out a virtue of St. Joseph, that of tenderness. It helps us in the mission this Congress means to arouse and strengthen, that of "bringing God back into the world through our Carmelite mission." This we will accomplish together with Mary Queen of the whole creation, and with Joseph who both cared for Jesus and cared for our ailing world.

Through his work and generous presence, he cared for and defended Mary and Jesus, delivering them from the violence of the unjust by bringing them to Egypt. The Gospel presents Joseph as a just man, hardworking and strong. But he also shows great tenderness, which is not a mark of the weak but of those who are genuinely strong, fully aware of reality and ready to love and serve in humility. That is why he was proclaimed guardian of the universal Church. He too can teach us how to show care; he can inspire us to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us (Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*, 242).

In our efforts to be agents of mercy, let us do all the good that is possible (cf. EG 44-45), under the guardianship of Joseph de Nazareth!

Thank you very much!

Fr. Alzinir Francisco Debastiani, O.C.D.

Rome, April 10, 2016, Third Sunday of Easter – Jubilee of Mercy

Praying Like Saint Joseph: The Essential Heart of Masculine Prayer

AUTHENTIC MASCULINITY - Many of you who are reading this have an idea of the tremendous amount of ink that has been spilled over this topic in recent years. And not without reason: the past half-century has seen an unprecedented gutting of our cultural understanding as to what it means to be a man, which historically has been a cornerstone of every culture's sense of self-understanding. When it is not actively cheering for the disappearance of men, or at least expressing the wish that they become just like women, the secular world presents young men today with a few unflattering and manifestly unsatisfying models, all of which seems to be constructed around various varieties and degrees of hedonism.

In the Church today, there have been many valiant attempts to push back against this false choice and present an alternative model, one that fulfills man's deepest desires, honors his identity, and presents him with a model worth striving to emulate. Unfortunately, these attempts sometimes end up injecting more confusion and uncertainty into the discussion. We come across in various places accounts of the Knight, the Provider, the "Manly Man" who loves to hunt and fish and camp and wears a beard and smokes cigars and drinks bourbon...the list of iterations goes on, all of them well and good in their place, yet still ringing a little hollow, still failing to satisfy the deepest longings of our heart.

A man's identity as a human being, his identity as a man, is found solely in his relationship to Jesus Christ. And because his life of prayer is his relationship to Jesus Christ, if he wants to understand and embrace and grow into his authentic identity as a man, he needs to establish his interior life of prayer on firm ground. Saint Paul admonishes the Philippians to pattern their lives on his, just as his life is patterned on that of Christ. The Church in our era has presented to her sons an additional pattern after which to model their own lives, as men and as Christians. That model is Saint Joseph. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke have but a few words to say about the head of the Holy Family, but in them we find a rich, compelling model of how men (and women) are to live in deep, prayerful intimacy with Our Lord; in other words, they tell us how Saint Joseph prayed and how we ought to pray.

The first essential to praying like Saint Joseph is to remain rooted in Scripture. Jesus is the Word made Flesh, and we cannot know him, much less be in relationship with him, unless we turn continually to Scripture. This is how Saint Joseph lived. In the first chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel, Joseph is described as "being a just man." Commenting on this passage, Pope Benedict XVI writes, "Psalm I presents the classic image of the 'just' man. We might well think of it as a portrait of the spiritual figure of Saint Joseph. A just man, it tells us, is one who maintains living contact with the word

of God, who 'delights in the law of the Lord.' He is like a tree, planted beside the flowing waters, constantly bringing forth fruit. The flowing waters, from which he draws nourishment, naturally refer to the living word of God, into which he sinks the roots of his being. God's will is not a law imposed on him from without; it is 'joy.' For him the law is simply Gospel, good news, because he reads it with a personal, loving openness to God and in this way learns to understand and live it from deep within."

Here is a little-known secret of the interior life: living rooted in Scripture like this is really easy. In October of 2016, Pope Francis canonized Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, whose spiritual writings are shot through with biblical citations, allusions, and imagery. Elizabeth was a lover of Saint Paul, and she read and prayed over his writings to such an extent that only about two years after she "discovered" him, his epistles had become so incorporated into her soul that she rarely expressed herself in her own words when a citation of him would do. The Word became her words. And do you know how much time each day she had for the private spiritual reading where this transformation took place? About ten to fifteen minutes. That's all! You do not have to become an exegete or a hermit to let your life be transformed by Sacred Scripture. You don't even have to follow a particular methodology or system. If you make a firm resolution, and follow through on that resolution, to set aside ten to fifteen minutes each day to prayerfully read and ponder the Word, especially the New Testament and the Psalms, in whatever way you find works best for you, you will be building the foundation of your prayer life right alongside Saint Joseph, using his tools and his methods.

Silence, properly understood, is not an absence of noise, but a loving attentiveness to God

After "just," the adjective we most often find associated with Saint Joseph is "silent", and silence is the second essential of praying like the Glorious Patriarch. If Scripture is the foundation of Saint Joseph's prayer life, then silence is the framework that surrounds and supports the entire structure. It envelops his life, but it does so in such a way that it clues us into what is essential about the practice of silence.

We live in a very noisy world, one in which we have smart phones, social media, 24/7 cable TV, Netflix, and Amazon Prime. I am not going to discuss these today. Instead, I want to talk about what it really means to be silent before the Lord, because, as many of you know, it can be frustratingly difficult to carve out genuine, physical silence when you're working, raising a family, or engaged in ministry. But do you know what? Nazareth was not a quiet place either, and Joseph the Silent lived and prayed in the midst of a bustling, noisy village.

Silence, properly understood, is not an absence of noise, but a loving attentiveness to God. It is not a physical state, but rather an attitude of soul. The silence of Joseph in the Gospels is not defined by the lack of recorded words, but by the sacred authors' depiction of him as being alert for God's voice and prompt to carry out God's will. This is a silence that can be fostered and put into practice both in the monastic cell and at the construction site. It means perceiving the natural world around us through faith, closing our eyes to natural causes and opening our ears to hear of their supernatural origin. It means encountering all the trials and travails of our life in a spirit of hope, firmly fixed on the knowledge of the Resurrection and the promise of the Kingdom. And it means

speaking and acting solely out of supernatural charity. Fair warning: it takes time and effort and persistence and patience to reorient yourself to encountering the world in this fashion. It will not happen overnight. However, if you persevere in it, then more and more, little by little, the natural will become the supernatural, the commonplace shall become the extraordinary, and the mundane circumstances of your life will become the habitation where God dwells with you and permeates your life with his peace.

But this authentic silence can only reign in our souls, as it did in Saint Joseph's, if we rid ourselves of noise. What is the greatest source of noise in our lives? It is sin! Sin is what happens when we stop listening to God and start listening to other voices, until that demonic chorus drowns out everything else. Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity compares an imperfect soul, a soul disordered by sin, to an instrument that it perpetually out of tune. The musician constantly has to adjust the strings, but he remains unable to draw forth music. All that comes out is discordance.

In order to purge your soul of noise and reestablish yourself in the silence of Christ, you need to frequently avail yourself of the Sacrament of Confession. This begins by making a good examination of conscience. It is necessary to perform this act before every sacramental confession, but I highly recommend the ancient and laudable practice of making an examen daily. This accustoms us to pausing each day, re-attuning our ear to the voice of God, silencing the discord around us, and drawing the focus of our memory, intellect, and will back onto him. Now we are ready to step into the confessional. Here,

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we become like Saint Peter in the courtyard of Caiaphas. His loud protestations and denials of Our Lord are the cacophony of sin that pollutes our soul. But then something extraordinary happens. Jesus turns and casts his silent gaze upon us. And in this silent gaze we hear the words that our souls most desperately yearn to hear, a message that arises from out of eternity, from out of the silent song that lives in the heart of the Most Holy Trinity: "I absolve you of your sins. You are forgiven. Go in peace." All protestations are silenced, all denials cease. All that remains are the silent tears of a grateful heart made whole.

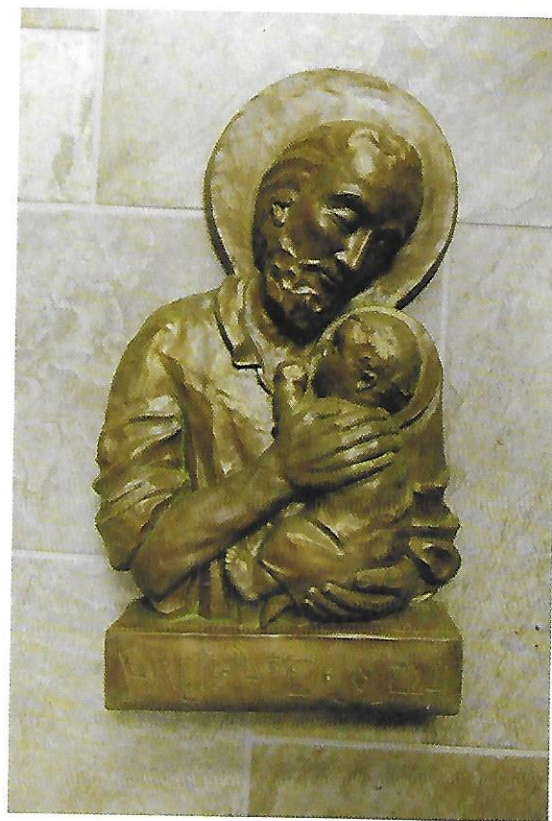
Saint James tells us that faith without works is dead, and by that same token, prayer that does not give rise to good deeds is no prayer at all. This brings us to the third and final essential of praying like Saint Joseph: the work of service. Saint Joseph was a carpenter. Now, this doesn't mean that he was crafting bespoke rocking chairs and coffee tables to be purchased by hipsters coming up from Jerusalem. No, biblical archeologists tell us that Joseph was a carpenter in the sense that he worked with roofing beams and fashioned farm implements. His labor was directly ordered to the work of building and cultivating. This task of building and cultivating was also the work he accomplished as head of the Holy Family, exercising authority and leadership over Jesus and Mary.

In the work of building, one exercises a mastery over the material, but it is a mastery without possession, done ultimately out of service to the owner of the house. This dynamic of mastery without possession, of authority exercised in a spirit of service, defined the entirety of Saint

Joseph's life. Blessed Paul VI tells us that Saint Joseph's fatherhood is expressed "in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it; in having used the legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, in his life and work; in having turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house."

In living thus, Saint Joseph carried out the vocation to which all men are called by nature and by grace. In the order of nature, man was originally called, with woman as his helpmate and companion, to know, enjoy, and help perfect creation in accord with God's will. Like Saint Joseph, Adam before the Fall was given mandate to build up and cultivate the earth. In the order of grace, the Christian man is entrusted with a supernatural mandate to build up and cultivate the Body of Christ. Here again, Saint Joseph gives us an example par excellence. His prayer and his labor, indeed his entire life, had as its object the safeguarding of the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, in providing them not only with physical safety and necessities of life, but with everything necessary to grow "in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." For his entire adult life, Saint Joseph was entrusted with the incomprehensible task of fostering, nurturing, and safeguarding the vocations of both the Christ and the Immaculata.

This work of the building and cultivation of grace and sanctity among those whom God has legitimately entrusted to his authority is the central fruit that a man is called to bear



Sculpture by Mother Mary Joseph, O.C.D. +
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and to nourish by his life of prayer. For many, this will mean, first and foremost, his wife and children. For others, it may take the form of a parish, or a religious community, or a workplace, or a classroom, or simply those friends who spontaneously look to him as a spiritual mentor.

Whatever the case may be, he is called to be neither a tyrant nor a deserter. Rather, he is to courageously take up the task of bringing about the fulfillment of the Divine Will and fostering the life of grace in every person and circumstance of his life.

It doesn't stop there, either. While this may be the central fruit, every work a man accomplishes in his entire life, big or little, constitutes a commission from Almighty God, for the building up and cultivation of his Kingdom and his Creation.



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Whether he is fixing a gutter, sitting at the head of the family table, going over a budget, writing a paper, studying for an exam, or even manning a check-out register or scrubbing a toilet, he is exercising power and authority over a realm that has been entrusted to his care by the Creator. This is not just a nice idea or motivational claptrap: this is the truth, and it applies not just to men, but to all human beings called by God to be members of the Body of Christ! Pray then like Saint Joseph, and never forget who your Master is, and for whose sake the work is to be accomplished.

Br. Joseph Gannon, O.C.D.
Washington, DC

Joseph:

He who puts together

He who increases

He who adds

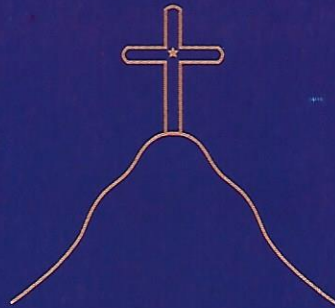
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*In communion with the church and the Order,
who venerate him as their "provident Protector,"
members of the Secular Order find in Saint Joseph
an incomparable protector to whom they can entrust
the hopes, the struggles, and the work of every day.*

— Constitutions 30