



S. Joseph – Bethlehem - Palestine – Church St Joseph

## "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)

### PREMISE

By means of this conference I am paying a debt to Jesus' foster father, St. Joseph of Nazareth, the "Providential protector of our Order" ... In previous years, I have spoken much about the fraternal communion aspects within OCDS, with reference to chapter 3 B of the *Constitutions* or to St. Teresa (2015). However, I have not spoken much with respect to nº 31 a, which was inserted in the OCDS Constitutions in January 2014. St. Joseph has been somewhat forgotten.... When I realized that this Congress would take place in the city of San José, I immediately saw an opportunity to pay my debt towards Saint Joseph.

I thank Lucienne OCDS from Brazil for the translation from Portuguese to English this conference. Also to fr Donald Kinney OCD for the revision of the text.

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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<sup>1</sup>...

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 attentive to the 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 Joseph<sup>2</sup> 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 to the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

His name appears in the so-called "Gospels of the childhood" of Jesus (Mt 1-2 e 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 to Jesus (Mt 1, 18-25). He accompanied Mary to Bethlehem (Lk 2, 17), He was present in the grotto 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 2,22ss) 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

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<sup>1</sup> Filipinas, 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." Access April 7, 2016::[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/pt/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150116\\_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/pt/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150116_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html).

<sup>2</sup> The name Joseph means "he who puts together" "to add or increase".

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 e Lk 1,26-38).

Matthew, in his genealogy, keeping in mind especially the Letter to the Hebrews<sup>3</sup>, 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 themes elaborated in the Gospels. Jesus is the Messiah, descendant of David<sup>4</sup>, Son of God<sup>5</sup>.

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 e Lk 1,26-38). Using the literary genre *midrash*<sup>6</sup> they furnish us with important elements for the understanding of the person of Joseph of Nazareth. They make a pedagogical rereading of texts from the Old Testament, interpreting them and applying them to the present<sup>7</sup>. 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,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Patrizia I. Micelli, *I modelli di Giosefologia nella storia della teologia cristiana*. (Todi: Tau ed., 2015) p. 2-18.

<sup>4</sup> With respect to the understanding of Jesus as "Son of David" in Matthew and in the initial *kerigma* 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 18,38ss). The title "Son of David" attributed to Joseph in Mt 1,20 e Lk 1,27 will be one of the most important Christological name used to praise Jesus, proposed or identified in the N.T. Paul will be the one to use it more frequently. Cf. Patrizia, id., p. 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> 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, id., p. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> The literary technique *midrash* comes from the Hebrew *darash*, which means "to inquire, seek or study". The *midrashim* are comments of ancient Biblical texts realized 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 decrease the historical value of Jesus' birth, but try to clarify this new fact at the light of the OT to point out the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

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

or the prophets, Mary, Joseph. The extraordinary birth of Jesus<sup>8</sup> introduces the Covenant between God and his people into its definitive phase.

## 2. Joseph, the “Just Man” (Mt 1,19)

Matthews 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 OT to be just is to be emerged 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 of 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 does 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 all believer. After the exile to Babylon (598-538 a. C), the concept of justice became evermore influent in the normative relationship among people, meaning a greater participation in and proof of God’s justice. In the period after the OT, the word “justice” takes on a connotation of goodness, grace, with the impartial judgement of God<sup>9</sup>. 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 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 sincere heart<sup>10</sup>.

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 and thirst for justice” (5, 6), for they will be justified 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 Matthews 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 perceived the pregnancy of Mary who had been promised him in marriage<sup>11</sup>, before they ever had a conjugal relation (Cf Mt 1, 18). He has nothing to do with this

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<sup>8</sup> Coincidences and similarities between the words used in both narratives are important. Both Mathew 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 e 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).  
<sup>9</sup> cf H. Seebass, *Justicia*, em, *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, v. II, (Ed Sígueme: Salamanca 1990, 3 ed) p. 405-407.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Francisco- Bento XVI, *Lumen Fidei* 9-14.35.

<sup>11</sup> The tradition of matrimony in Israel comprehends two distinct parts. The first (*qidushin*), that is, “consecration” because the woman was “consecrated” to her spouse, it was the official engagement between the two young people, who, normally,

pregnancy, but being a just man, he does not want to expose her publicly<sup>12</sup>, as would have it Jewish Law and traditions. His first thought was to send her away secretly, without making use of public rejection<sup>13</sup>. 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<sup>14</sup>. 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" Matthews 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).

### 3. Pilgrim of faith with Mary

If "the just 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 transforms 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 revelation<sup>15</sup> and appear at least four times in Matthew's Gospel (*Mt* 1,20s; 2, 13.20.22). This makes Joseph an heir to the Faith of Abraham and the Patriarchs of the OT 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

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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) p. 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Patrizia, id., Op. Cit., p. 18-20.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> X. León Dufour, *El anuncio a José*, en *Estudios de evangelio* (Barcelona: Estela: 1969) p. 61-75.

<sup>15</sup> The OT relates a few notable dreams: that of Salomon (1 Kings 3,15), of Mordecai (Esther 1,10; 10,3), de 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 e At 16,9; 18,9; 23,11; 27,13.

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<sup>16</sup>.

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 to 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 31 a)

"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 silence<sup>17</sup> 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<sup>18</sup>. His attitude makes him a master of prayer and silence (Cf. Vida 6, 8): his physical closeness to Mary and Jesus teaches us how to live in their company and 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. A silence permeated by love, revealing a pure heart heedful to the

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<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris custos* (=RC), 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Regra de S. Alberto*, 21; *Const. OCDS 31 a*.

motions of the Holy Spirit. A silence that allows living the depth of his own mission<sup>19</sup>, 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<sup>20</sup>. 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”<sup>21</sup> 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 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; Jo 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 3,23ss*)<sup>22</sup>. 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. 34ss*), 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

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<sup>19</sup> Paulo 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”.

<sup>20</sup> “La mayor necesidad que tenemos para aprovechar es de callar a este gran Dios con el apetito y con la lengua, cuyo lenguaje que él más oye, sólo es el callado amor”. San Juan de la Cruz, *Avisos Gerona 1,10*.

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

<sup>22</sup> Here lies the importance of Joseph in Christological study of the title “Son of David” (*Mt 1,1; 9,27; 15,22; 20,30-31; 21,9*).

festivities. It is important to remember that education in 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 Ef 6,4).

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.<sup>23</sup> 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"<sup>24</sup>.

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 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 reprehends 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 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<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Paulo 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. João Paulo II, *Redemptoris custos*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Jeronimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, *Summario de la excelencias del glorioso S. Joseph, esposo de la Virgen María* (1597). BMC XV-XVII, p. 403.

<sup>25</sup> 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](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



## 6. Joseph's work, an expression of love

Work is inherent to the human condition. In the Bible, human work is synonym of 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. *Ecclesiastes* 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* = AL 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; "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 (Mc 6,3) and son of a carpenter (Mt 13,55). Thus, Joseph is a carpenter (gr. = *tekton*; cf. Mc 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<sup>26</sup>, 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 "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<sup>27</sup>.

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

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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. 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 to God's plans.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Patrizia I. Micelli, op. cit., p. 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ravasi, G. *Giuseppe, il padre di Gesù* (Roma: San Paolo 2014) p. 57-65.

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?

### 7. Joseph and Saint Teresa of Jesus

In St. Teresa’s *Life*<sup>28</sup>, 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 (Ribeira 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 devout to him” (*Life* 6, 8). Her devotion to Saint Joseph will inspire the “renewal of the veneration to St. Joseph in Western Christianity”<sup>29</sup>.

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 devoted him her first foundation. After the Saint’s death, many nuns added “Saint Joseph” to their religious names. Furthermore, in the Spanish America of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> Cf.: T. Alvarez, *San José, em, Diccionario de Santa Teresa* (Burgos: ed. Monte Carmelo 2002) p. 385-391.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. João Paulo II, *Redemptoris custos*, 25.

Likewise, Teresa was the inspiration for Fr. Jerome Gracián's work, *Josephina*, written for the Carpenters of Rome in 1609<sup>30</sup>. A work that had a decisive influence on the devotion 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 greatly disseminated in 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.<sup>31</sup> 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<sup>32</sup>, so is it for pastoral of the family and spiritual life. These areas need a deeper study of the presence of St. Joseph.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ed. del P. Silverio de S. Teresa. Tomo II, *Obras del P. Jeronimo Gracian de la madre de Dios* (Burgos: el Monte Carmelo 1933). Biblioteca mística carmelitana 16. p 373-483.

<sup>31</sup> The popes who left important marks in the teachings of the Church on Saint Joseph are: Pope [Pius IX](#), by proclaiming St. Joseph patron of the Church (December 8, 1870) and St. John XXIII, by invoking the protection of St. Joseph on Vatican Council II and adding the memory of the saint after the name of Mary in Eucharistic Prayer I (1962). The II Vatican Council 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 of March 19 and May 1<sup>st</sup>, 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), 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 Paulo II took an important step in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph publishing the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris custos* (=RC - August 15, 1989), - immediately after the Marian year and during the centennial year of the encyclical on St. Joseph of Leon XIII, *Quanquam pluries* (August 15, 1889). RC is an essential document for the study of Joseph in our time. It elaborates on the theme of Joseph's pilgrimage in faith (1-16), his exemplariness for the family (17-21), at work (22-24), for 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 (Ángelus 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 of the current year, he will sign and decree the insertion of St. Joseph's name after that of Mary in the Eucharist prayers II, III, and IV.

<sup>32</sup> 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 because Joseph, in my point of view,

Restoring Mary and Joseph in their mission as lay people and as a family is fundamental<sup>33</sup>. 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, educate and together 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'* (= LS, 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 arise 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 sii*, 242).

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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". Em, Patrizia I. Micelli, *Op.cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> *Amoris laetitia* 66. "The covenant of love and fidelity lived by the Holy Family of Nazareth illuminates the 52 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)".

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 OCD

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