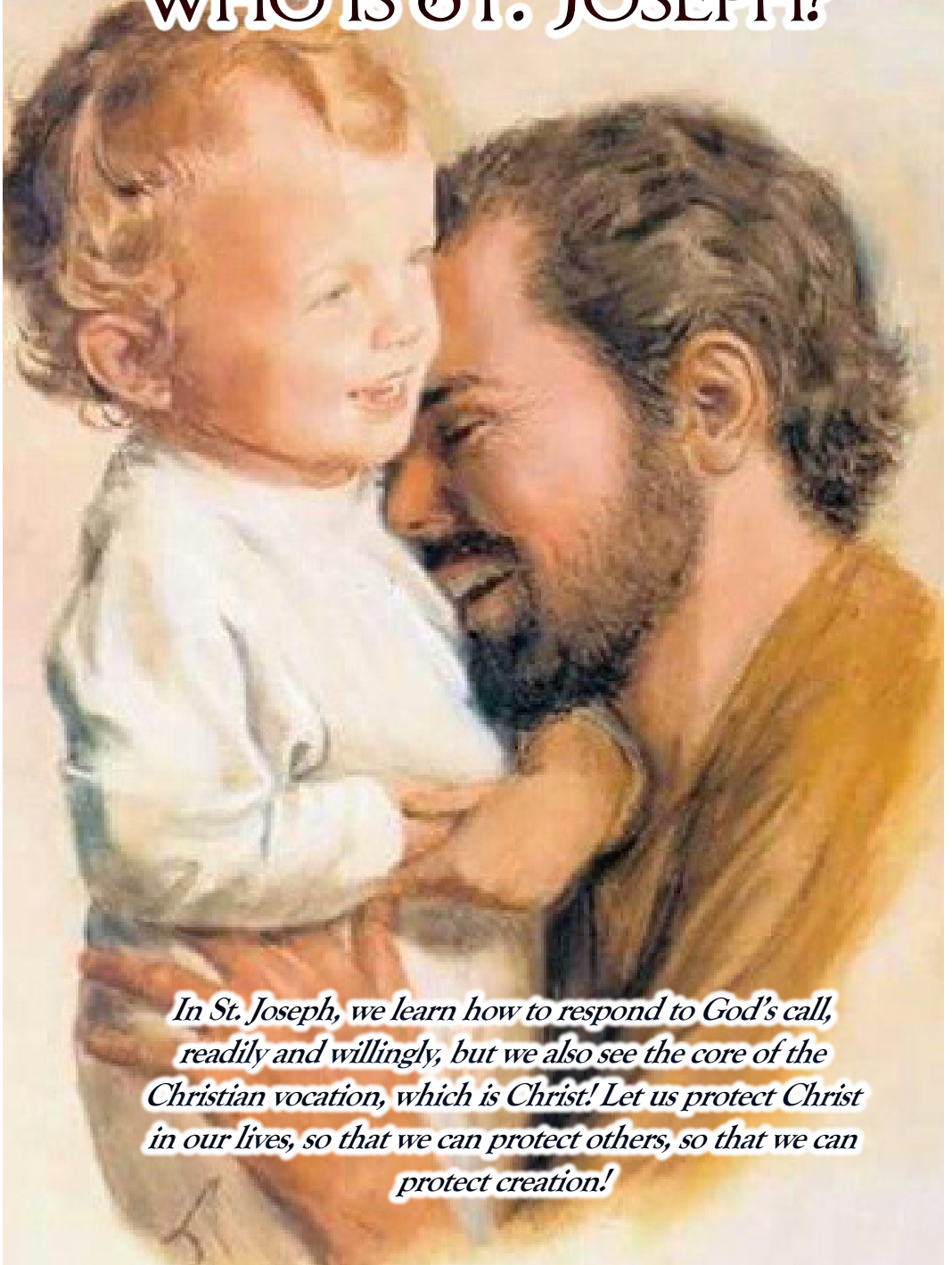


WHO IS ST. JOSEPH?



In St. Joseph, we learn how to respond to God's call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!



Preface

St. Joseph, a great saint, assumed a very important role in God's plan of Salvation along with the Blessed Virgin Mary. His life speaks volumes about God's fatherly love, protection and faithfulness. Thus, looking into his life, his virtues and his intercessory role in the Church is a worthy endeavor that will surely enrich and strengthen our faith.



☪☪☪ St. Joseph in Magisterium ☪☪☪

Title	Description	Date
<i>Quemadmodum Deus</i>	<i>Pope Pius IX declares St. Joseph to be Patron of the Universal Church.</i>	<i>December 8, 1870</i>
<i>Inclytum Patriarcham:</i>	<i>Liturgical norms for the celebration of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church</i>	<i>July 7, 1871</i>
<i>Q u a m q u a m pluries</i>	<i>Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Devotion to St. Joseph</i>	<i>Aug 15, 1889</i>
<i>Le Voci</i>	<i>Saint Joseph is named Patron of the Second Vatican Council</i>	<i>March 19, 1961</i>
<i>Redemptoris Custos</i>	<i>Apostolic exhortation in St. Joseph by John Paul II.</i>	<i>Nov 24, 2013</i>
<i>Homily on the Feast of Saint Joseph</i>	<i>Pope Paul VI preaches on the person of St. Joseph and his many virtues.</i>	<i>27 March 1969</i>
<i>Angelus Address on March 19, 2006</i>	<i>Pope Benedict XVI considers the importance of the person of St. Joseph.</i>	<i>Mar 19, 2006</i>
<i>Paternas vices</i>	<i>Pope Francis inserts the name of Joseph into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV</i>	<i>May 1, 2013</i>

❧❧❧❧ *The Life of St. Joseph in Scriptures and Sacred Tradition* ❧❧❧❧

The Genealogy of St. Joseph

St. Joseph, though poor, was noble; the purest and best blood of Israel flowed in his veins. He descended from the royal house and family of David. The Genealogy of St. Joseph is given by two of the Evangelists, Saints Matthew and Luke.

St. Matthew gives the natural genealogy and traces the descent of St. Joseph down from Abraham.

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac....and Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Mt 1:1-16).

St. Luke gives the legal genealogy and traces the line of St. Joseph up to Adam.

“When Jesus began his ministry he was about thirty years of age. He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi...the son of Adam, the son of God (Lk 3:23-38).

Here we see that St. Matthew calls St. Joseph the son of Jacob, and St. Luke styles him the son of Heli. Most of the Fathers and learned commentators explain the discrepancy as follows: Jacob and Heli were half-brothers, sons of Hesta. Heli died without heir; and by the Law of Moses, his brother Jacob was obliged to marry the widow. St. Joseph, who was the real son of Jacob, according to the above Law, was also styled the son of Heli, and hence was of the royal house and family of David. St. Joseph alone transmitted to the Messiah the rights to the sceptre and throne of Israel. Here we see the important part St. Joseph had before the eyes of the Almighty in the scheme of Redemption.

His Birthplace and Trade

Two cities, Bethlehem and Nazareth, claim the honour and glory of having given birth to the foster-father of Jesus and “husband of Mary.” The learned are divided in opinion. However, St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers, as well as modern critics, hold that St. Joseph was born in Bethlehem.

Of the trade of St. Joseph, all we know for certain from the Gospel is that he was son of an artisan. The Almighty has therefore given to the world an example in the person of St. Joseph, how the most exalted sanctity can be combined with toil and manual labour. No doubt, while his hands were employed in labour, St. Joseph’s heart and soul were adoring, praising, and glorifying God.

The Espousal of St. Joseph with the Blessed Virgin Mary

That the marriage of St. Joseph with the Blessed Virgin Mary was a true and valid one is proved from the Sacred Scriptures, and by the constant tradition of the Church. At three years old, the Blessed Virgin was presented by Sts. Joachim and Anne in the Temple to God. The Virgin Mary then lived there in silence and prayer, absorbed in holy contemplation, communing with her God. Eight years after her Presentation in the Temple, her pious parents were called to their reward, and the holy child was committed to the care and guardianship of the priests of the sanctuary.

Having reached the age of fourteen, the Jewish maidens, according to the Hebrew rite, were obliged to leave the Temple; and hence the priests, who were the guardians of the Blessed Virgin in the place of her deceased father, decided on Mary’s future state of life. When she reached the age of fourteen, according to the Law of Moses, an heiress was obliged to marry one of her own tribe and family, that the property and inheritance may be retained in the same family, and not pass to strange hands. “And all women,” says the Law, “shall take husbands of the same tribe that the inheritance may remain in the families (Num. 36:8). The Blessed Virgin being an heiress, conformed to the above Law, and the choice fell upon St. Joseph of the same house and tribe of David, her kinsman in the second degree

of consanguinity or first cousin.

A learned and pious author thus narrates the espousal of the Blessed Virgin: “The priests held a consultation about the future state of the Blessed Virgin...At last, by divine inspiration and instinct, they resolved to give her in marriage to some man worthy and proper to preserve her virginity; the choice fell upon Joseph of the same family and tribe.

The Blessed Virgin, long before her espousal had made a vow of perpetual chastity, had consecrated to God the purity of her body and soul, and as she lived in the Temple it is most probable that the priests were aware of her vow, and hence by divine inspiration selected St. Joseph as the guardian and protector of the Virgin’s purity.

The Blessed Virgin, assured and enlightened by a clear revelation from the Almighty that her vow of chastity would be respected, obeyed the counsels of the priests, and consented to the holy alliance with St. Joseph. St. Joseph is said to have made a vow of perpetual chastity at the age of twelve years.

The age of St. Joseph at his Espousals with the Blessed Virgin Mary

The age of our holy Patriarch, at the time of his holy Espousal with Mary Immaculate, is disputed among the early Fathers, as well as among modern critics. St. Epiphanius, with many others of his time, hold that St. Joseph at the time of his marriage was an octogenarian. “A man of over eighty took the Virgin, selected by Divine Providence to guard her.”

This opinion is generally rejected, and its origin is ascribed to apocryphal books, as well as to the fancy of painters, who in ancient times, depicted St. Joseph as a venerable old Patriarch, with a long white flowing beard to gain more veneration for our Saints. A learned author writes: “St. Joseph is sometimes painted as an old man on account of his chastity of mind and body, as the wise man says, a spotless life is old age; or he was painted an old man in the origin of the Church, when Mary’s perpetual virginity had not as now become deeply rooted in the hearts of the faithful.”

In the physical, as well as in the moral and supernatural order, the Infinite Wisdom of God suits the means to the end. The high and noble destiny of St. Joseph was to be the guardian of the Blessed Virgin; to be her help and companion in the long and fatiguing journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, before the Birth of our Blessed Saviour; to be the support of Mary and the Divine Infant in the flight into Egypt; and more still, for years in Egypt a strange land, without a friend, as well as at home in Nazareth, to maintain by the labour of his hands the Mother and the Child. Such being the heavenly appointed mission of St. Joseph, we may well conclude that his age and strength were suited to the duties of his mission, thus verifying the prophesy of Isaiah, “A young man shall dwell with a virgin.”

A man of eighty years could not well take care of, or support himself, much less discharge the above important and onerous duties. In one word we may say, that it is the received opinion, and this opinion is founded upon reason and authority, that St. Joseph at the time of his espousal, if not in the prime of life, as some hold, was at least young, strong, and robust.

The Annunciation to St. Joseph

At first sight, the narrative about the Annunciation to St. Joseph conveys to the mind the impression that St. Joseph doubted the fidelity of his holy spouse and that seeing her pregnant he was thinking of putting her away privately, that she might not be stoned to death, which was the usual punishment for an adulteress among the Jews.

A deeper and careful study, however, shows that St. Joseph never for a moment doubted the fidelity of Mary the Immaculate Mother of God. This could be gleaned from the sacred texts, by the unique events connected with the lives of Mary and Joseph, and by the authority of many Fathers and learned critics.

In the first place we can easily believe that St. Joseph, who was of the royal house and family of David, from which the Messiah was to spring, knew well from the Prophets and from the history and traditions of his nation, that the Redeemer of the human race was

to be born of a virgin; and that the time announced by the Prophets was at hand. The whole Jewish nation was at this time anxiously looking out for the birth of the long-expected Saviour. Secondly, the extraordinary circumstances regarding his marriage with the Blessed Virgin, the secret inspirations and revelations regarding this mysterious union, which without doubt, were communicated to himself, to Mary, and to the priests, must have, at least, dimly foreshadowed to him the dignity of his bride.

But it may be asked, if St. Joseph did not doubt the fidelity of our Blessed Lady, how do we explain the text which tells us that he was thinking of putting her away privately, and that God even sent down an Angel from heaven to dissuade him from his purpose? The text is well explained as follows, and the reply appears satisfactory, if not convincing.

Take first the case of the Apostles. They had been in the sacred company of Jesus for years. They had seen with their eyes the stupendous miracles wrought by the Saviour of the world. They had heard Divine Wisdom issuing from the sacred lips, divine intelligence beaming in sacred eyes. At the Crucifixion they saw the sun darkened, they heard the earth quake, and saw the dead rise from their graves. Yet during the Life of our Blessed Saviour, at His Death, and after His Resurrection, they were ever hesitating, wavering in faith and needed the coming of the Holy Spirit to believe fully and to realize the magnitude of the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Death of the Redeemer of the world. In like manner, though St. Joseph had learned and knew much about the coming of the long-expected Messiah from the Prophets, the traditions of his nation, the unique circumstances of his Espousal with the Virgin-daughter of Sion, and from Mary herself, it was only when he saw with his eyes the great fact of the Incarnation, that his mind fully realized the stupendous Mystery. Awe-stricken by the presence of the majesty of God, he deemed himself unfit to live in such close intimacy with Jesus and Mary; and hence he was meditating on the private separation mentioned in the Gospel narrative.

Joseph wished to depart from her for the same reason that Peter kept off our Lord from him, saying: ‘ Depart from me, O Lord, for I

am a sinner;’ for the same reason that the Centurion kept Him from his house, when he said: ‘ Lord, I am not worthy that Thou should enter under my roof.’ But why privately, and not publicly? Lest the cause of the divorce should be asked. For what answer would that just man make to that stiff-necked people? If he should say what he knew to be true, that he had every proof of her purity, would not the incredulous Jews ridicule him and stone her?”

The agitation was no suspicion of infidelity, it was a kind of overpowering awe; and as Mary and Joseph equally shared that fear or doubt, which went no further than awe, the angel did not reprove them as faithless or incredulous; nor did the Lord chastise them, as He did Zachary, he only told them by the voice of the Archangel not to fear. Joseph, son of David, fear not.

St. Joseph and the Journey of the Blessed Virgin from Nazareth to Bethlehem

St. Joseph lived at Nazareth; but being of the royal house and family of David, they were ordered to be registered in Bethlehem, which was called the City of David. Journeying to Bethlehem for the census in obedience to the orders of legitimate authority, Joseph fulfilled for the child the significant task of officially inserting the name “Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth” (cf. Jn 1:45) in the registry of the Roman Empire. This registration clearly shows that Jesus belongs to the human race as a man among men, a citizen of this world, subject to laws and civil institutions, but also “savior of the world.”

Origen gives a good description of the theological significance of this historical fact:

“Since the first census of the whole world took place under Caesar Augustus, and among all the others Joseph too went to register together with Mary his wife, who was with child, and since Jesus was born before the census was completed: to the person who makes a careful examination it will appear that a kind of mystery is expressed in the fact that at the time when all people in the world presented themselves to be counted, Christ too should be

counted. By being registered with everyone, he could sanctify everyone; inscribed with the whole world in the census, he offered to the world communion with himself, and after presenting himself he wrote all the people of the world in the book of the living, so that as many as believed in him could then be written in heaven with the saints of God, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever, Amen."

It is believed that this long journey of about eighty miles over a mountainous country was travelled by Mary and Joseph in about five days. We can well imagine with what tender care, reverence, and love, St. Joseph ministered to the Mother of Jesus during this long and tiring journey. The shades of evening were falling thick and fast on Bethlehem, enveloping the little village in its somber mantle, when Mary and Joseph arrived at their destination. Needless to say, the holy Virgin was fatigued and exhausted, yet resigned and joyous.

At Bethlehem, nobody recognized Mary or Joseph. No inn or lodging-house would open its door to shelter Mary from the winter's blast. Not even one kind hand was found to offer the smallest refreshment to the holy travellers worn out from the fatigues of the long journey. After passing from inn to inn, and door to door; after repeated refusals, quite wearied out and exhausted from the fatigues of the long journey, Mary and Joseph, in calm, serene, and joyous resignation to God's Divine will, left the inhospitable city; and retired into a cave in a rock to seek shelter from the winter's blast, and to seek repose for their wearied limbs. In this cave or stable, which served to shelter the brute creation, the ass and the ox, the Eternal Son of God, the long-expected Messiah, the Redeemer of the world was born!

In these trying circumstances, in these privations, on whom did Mary lean for help? On St. Joseph.

Who liberally supplied all her wants? St. Joseph.

Whose hands prepared the royal cradle of state, the rude manger, for the birth of the Redeemer? St. Joseph's.

Who, first after Mary, with reverential love, looked into the Divine countenance of the Savior of the world, and adored Him? St. Joseph.

Here in the crib at Bethlehem, the glories and privileges of St. Joseph expand before the soul! Not only does the Mother of God look to him for every help and comfort, but the Son of God Himself, to Whom thousands of thousands minister, and to Whom ten thousand times a hundred thousand pay homage, needs and accepts the services of St. Joseph.

The Birth at Bethlehem

As guardian of the mystery “hidden for ages in the mind of God,” which begins to unfold before his eyes “in the fullness of time,” Joseph, together with Mary, is a privileged witness to the birth of the Son of God into the world on Christmas night in Bethlehem. Luke writes:

“And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Lk 2:6-7).

Joseph was an eyewitness to this birth, which took place in conditions that, humanly speaking, were embarrassing – a first announcement of that “self-emptying” (cf. Phil 2:5-8) which Christ freely accepted for the forgiveness of sins. Joseph also witnessed the adoration of the shepherds who arrived at Jesus’ birthplace after the angel had brought them the great and happy news (cf. Lk 2:15- 16). Later, he also witnessed the homage of the magi who came from the East (cf. Mt 2:11).

The Circumcision

A son’s circumcision was the first religious obligation of a father, and with this ceremony (cf. Lk 2:21) Joseph exercised his right and duty with regard to Jesus. The principle which holds that all the rites of the Old Testament are a shadow of the reality (cf. Heb 9:9f; 10:1) serves to explain why Jesus would accept them. As with all the

other rites, circumcision too is “fulfilled” in Jesus. God’s covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was the sign (cf. Gn 17:13), reaches its full effect and perfect realization in Jesus, who is the “yes” of all the ancient promises (cf. 2 Cor 1:20).

Conferral of the Name

At the circumcision Joseph names the child “Jesus.” This is the only name in which there is salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). Its significance had been revealed to Joseph at the moment of his “annunciation”: “You shall call the child Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (cf. Mt 1:21). In conferring the name, Joseph declares his own legal fatherhood over Jesus, and in speaking the name he proclaims the child’s mission as Savior.

St. Joseph and the Flight into Egypt

As we have seen in a preceding section, St. Joseph was chosen by the Almighty to help and protect the Blessed Virgin in the long, tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem; and to supply the wants of Jesus and Mary at the Nativity. Far higher, holier, and more important now is the mission of St. Joseph. He is chosen by God to save the life of the Infant Savior. This is the next fact narrated in the Gospel in the Life of our great Saint. “And after the Magi departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt...But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. (Mt 11)

Jesus as God could protect Himself, and by His very breath wither His foes. His heavenly Father might have sent His Angel to slay the tyrant and his armed host, or to protect the Divine Babe with his outstretched wings; but no. Angels and heavenly Spirits were passed over. The adorable Trinity fixed upon our Saint for the holy work. Prompt and quick was the obedience of St. Joseph. St. Joseph’s assiduous care lightened the fatigues of the way. The length of the journey from Bethlehem to Heliopolis is computed at four hundred miles. Of this distance only some sixty miles were inhabited, the

rest of the way being a perfect wilderness. The still solitude that reigned round the Holy Family during this long journey was only broken, now and again, by the roaring of the wild beasts that roamed through the desert. The Holy Family had nothing to fear from the wild beasts. We can easily conceive how the lions, the lords of the forests, and other savage animals, recognized the God of nature and crouched to look the feet of the Infant Savior.

Great no doubt must have been the privations and sufferings of the Divine Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother during this long and tiring journey. St. Joseph was chosen by God to be their protector, and to lighten as best he could the burdens of the way.

The Return of the Holy Family from Egypt

Herod was gone, and quickly a heavenly messenger is dispatched by God to convey the news to the Holy Family. To St. Joseph alone the important information was communicated. Though gladdening and welcome was the news of returning to their fond country and home to the hearts of exiles, yet far happier was the Holy Family in hearing and obeying the will of the Almighty. Nothing daunted, by the well-known length of the journey, and its fatigues now known to them by experience, joyously and happily Jesus, Mary and Joseph set out on their way, anxious to breathe again the air of their native hills.

The Presentation by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph of our Divine Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple

According to the common and received opinion, the Presentation took place after the adoration of the Wise Men, before the flight into Egypt, and when our Divine Lord Jesus Christ was about forty days old. The distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem is about six miles; this was the first journey of the Holy Family and was performed before the Child Jesus was forty days old. Lovingly and tenderly did Mary fold in her warmest mantle the Divine Child; and every now and again St. Joseph, to help the delicate Mother, carried in his arms the Infant Savior of the world. The love and care of St. Joseph lightened for Jesus and Mary the fatigues of the journey. They arrive

at Jerusalem, and the gates of the Temple open wide to receive the Lord of Glory.

All Heaven was looking down in reverential awe, as St. Joseph took Jesus in his arms and presented Him to His Eternal Father. The Father accepts the infinite praise, homage, adoration, and love rendered to Him, in behalf of all mankind, by His “well-beloved Son.” Holy Simeon, who had received a promise from God, that his eyes, before being closed in death, would see the Savior of the world, “came by the spirit into the Temple,” by revelation recognized the Redeemer of the world, took into his arms, out of the hands of St. Joseph, the Child Jesus, and then, in an ecstasy of supreme happiness, raised his eyes to heaven, “blessed God,” and prayed Him to take away his soul, for his eyes had seen the Savior of the world. Having discharged his duty to the Eternal Father and His Incarnate Son, holy Simeon turned to the “father and mother “ of Jesus, and with uplifted hands “blessed them,” and congratulated them, on being chosen by God, to be the holy parents and guardians of the Redeemer of the world.

On this occasion, Mary, though an Immaculate Virgin, to fulfil all justice, to conceal her exalted dignity and unique privileges, as well as to give an example of profound humility, made the usual sin-offering and burnt-offering of a “pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.”

At the Presentation in the Temple, it was the happy privilege of St. Joseph to redeem the Infant Jesus. This was prescribed by the Law of Moses: “And every first-born of men thou shalt redeem with a price” (Exod. 13:13); “for a male shall be given five sides: for a female three” (Lev. 28:6). The above fact though not mentioned by any of the Evangelists, no doubt took place, in order to fulfil the Law of Moses. On the occasion of the Presentation in the Temple, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were consoled, at the signal revelations made to Anna the Prophetess. She too, like holy Simeon, was led by the spirit into the Temple, and by divine inspiration recognized and adored the Savior of the world.

After the Presentation in the Temple, and having fulfilled to the letter the Law of Moses, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth. No surprise

that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph “wondered” at these heavenly manifestations and inspirations; month after month, year after year, each event more striking than the preceding, intensified the love of St. Joseph for the Savior of the world. We can well conceive, then, the care, reverence, and awe with which St. Joseph ministered to the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary in their journey homeward.

The hidden Life of St. Joseph

After the return from Egypt, few are the facts recorded in the sacred text about our holy Patriarch. With such shining lights before his eyes, with such models as Jesus and Mary ever in his presence, no wonder that the Life of St. Joseph was “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. iii. 3); no wonder that few facts and fewer virtues of our Saint are recorded by the Evangelists; nor are we then to be surprised that, after the losing and finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple by his “parents,” a single word is not said in the Gospels on the life and death of our holy Patriarch. With the examples of Jesus, Mary and Joseph before our eyes, let us love to be hidden and unknown; let us do all our acts solely and purely for the greater glory of God, to please God alone; let us shun the esteem and praise of the world.

After the memorable occasion of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, the Gospel, as we have seen, says, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth; and the last word about St. Joseph is—Jesus “was subject to them” that is, Jesus, after having completed His twelfth year, lived under the authority and guardianship of His reputed father St. Joseph, and His holy Mother the Blessed Virgin.

At this distance of time and place we can contemplate and meditate on the Holy Family at Nazareth. We can see St. Joseph, forgetful of himself, busily engaged to maintain in comfort and happiness the Mother and the Child. We can see the Child Jesus, from time to time even, helping with His Divine Hands, St. Joseph in his workshop. We can contemplate the Blessed Mother, assiduous in keeping her house neat and clean, and every way in her power, making happy the Son and the Husband. Now and again, Mary and Joseph would kneel, and with reverential awe, look into the Divine countenance of the Saviour of the world, and adore, love, and render supreme

homage to the Incarnate and Eternal Son of God. The eyes of all heaven were riveted on the “Holy House,” when Jesus, Mary, and Joseph knelt, prayed, and adored the Eternal Father.

The Death of St. Joseph

Where, and at what age, the holy soul of St. Joseph winged its flight to the bosom of Abraham, we know not for certain, as the Gospel is silent. As to the precise time of the death of St. Joseph, the ancient Fathers differ in opinion. Some are of opinion that he lived to a very old age, and that he witnessed the Passion, Death, and the Ascension of our Blessed Lord. This opinion does not appear to accord with reason; for if St. Joseph witnessed the Passion and Death of Jesus, his name would most probably be mentioned by the Evangelists; and, secondly, our Blessed Lord, at dying, would leave His holy Mother in the charge of her faithful husband, and hence would not have confided her, as He did, to St. John the Evangelist.

The common opinion therefore is that St. Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, a little before the public Ministry, or preaching of our Blessed Lord. That is, the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived together at Nazareth for eighteen years after the Finding in the Temple; and that St. Joseph died when Jesus was about thirty years of age. This opinion is conformable to reason; for during the Sacred Infancy, and up to the time of His public Ministry, the name of St. Joseph is mentioned by the Evangelists in connection with all the great events of our Blessed Lord’s Life; yet, after the public Ministry, the name of St. Joseph, does not even once occur in any of the Gospels; thereby clearly indicating that he was no longer alive. Besides, it would not appear fitting, that the Jews could point to the reputed father of the Saviour, when the preaching, and stupendous miracles of Jesus went to prove Him the Son of God, and that His Father was in heaven.

Some of the Titles of St. Joseph

Mirror of Patience, Lover of Poverty, Model of workmen, ornament of the domestic life, guardian of virgins, Pillar of families, Solace of the afflicted, hope of the sick, Patron of the dying, terror of demons, Protector of Holy Church— who do all of these praises refer to? They all refer to the greatest saint in the Catholic Church—aside from Mary, but related to her—the Glorious saint Joseph!

Master of Interior Life:

A title given to him by St. Teresa herself, meaning, to grow in our interior life, our spiritual life, our intimate union with God, St. Joseph can play an indispensable role!

Hence, why not beg good St. Joseph for the grace to make huge strides in your interior life; he is waiting, ready and willing to grant you this excellent request!

Teacher of Prayer:

Related to being the “Master of the Interior Life” is that of being the “Teacher of prayer”. Joseph acquired a most profound interior life of prayer and without a doubt lived the injunction of Jesus: “It is necessary to pray always, without losing heart” (Lk. 18:1). Prayers in the morning, prayers with Jesus before work, prayers before meals, prayers in the synagogue, prayers on the way to the Temple in caravan, prayers in family, the Psalms with Jesus and Mary, private and spontaneous prayer - all of these were offered by good St. Joseph with fervor, humility and purity of intention. Mind-boggling, staggering the human imagination, ineffable and beyond words is the following: Joseph also taught Jesus to pray!

In His Human nature, Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and man. He learned to walk, eat, work, and speak. Therefore, it was both Mary and Joseph that taught Jesus human words by which he could speak to God the Father. “Abba”—meaning “Father” was most possibly one of the first words that St. Joseph taught Jesus so that he could begin to speak in human words to His Father and eventually teach the whole world to say, “Our Father...”

Patron of Spouses (Husbands):

In a world in which unfaithfulness is rampant and rapidly spreading its evil poison and wreaking havoc on the family that should be the “Basic building block of society”, the “Domestic church”, St. Joseph teaches husbands the extreme importance of being faithful to their wives and living out the vows that they made on their wedding day before God, the Church and before His spouse. “I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in health and in sickness, riches and poverty, until death do we part...” St. Joseph, help men to treasure and cherish their wives as the very “apple of their eye”.

Patron of Fathers:

Equally important was the role that St. Joseph played as “Foster-Father” to Jesus, the “Son of the living God”. May earthly fathers take good St. Joseph as their model! May they provide for their family as St. Joseph did by his constant and strenuous work. Finally, may they protect the family from physical, moral, and spiritual dangers.

Patron of Workers:

As a result of Original Sin, all must work and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. (Gen. 3). Tedious, boring at times, demanding to the point of exhausting, grinding—all of these can be notes of daily work! St. Joseph, went through it all! Up before dawn, opening the shop, starting with prayer, working from dawn till dusk—this would be the daily rhythm of Joseph as well as Jesus!

Enough for the schedule, but what about the tenor of the work? Hard, demanding, exhausting manual work of a Carpenter! Pounding nails, sawing wood pieces, sanding down to size, lifting heavy furniture, Saint Joseph did it all! At the end of the day, most likely he arrived home sore to the point of exhaustion, drenched with sweat, hair filled with sawdust, hands engraved with deep callouses—this would be the “hard-working” and faithful worker, Saint Joseph! May we rediscover the importance of hard, dedicated, concentrated work!

Idleness is the workshop of the devil! None of that in Joseph’s

workshop! Rather, our attitude should be the sober but motivating words of St. Paul: “Work out our salvation in fear and trembling!”

Patron of Families:

Interconnected with Joseph’s role as spouse and “foster-father” is his pivotal importance, his hinge-work in the cohesiveness of “The Holy Family”. St. Joseph’s presence to his family was very important. Being present means, not simply physical presence—although this is key—but also emotional, moral, spiritual, psychological, joyful and concerned presence! Put simply, Good Saint Joseph was totally available to God at all times and at the same time, he was totally available for Mary and Jesus. His mere presence was total and all-encompassing. He was a cohesive glue that sustained the peace and unity and harmony of the “Holy Family.”

Terror of Demons:

A striking tribute to Glorious Saint Joseph. St. Ignatius Loyola, in the two Standards, depicts a striking contrast, Jesus raising His Standard and inviting all to follow; then Satan, ugly, in Babylon, the city of confusion seated on a dunghill! In our battle against “the enemy of our salvation” (St. Ignatius); the roaring lion, seeking to devour us, Satan or Prince of this world, we must muster as much ammunition in our arsenal to defeat the devil. St. Joseph can run quickly to our aid. In the official Rite of Exorcism, the holy name of St. Joseph is invoked! At the mere name of Powerful Saint Joseph, the leagues of God’s enemies take to their heels and disappear!

Patron of Purity and Christian Courtship:

Indeed, the most important decision in ones’ life is both profession, and even more important, vocation. In other words, the work-profession one will choose, and the future spouse that will be chosen. Sad to say, most in the modern society, choose the wrong mate, in the wrong time, in the wrong place and with the wrong intention. This amounts to disaster!

Parents as well as young people should beg earnestly of good St. Joseph, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be his spouse, to

enlighten them as to who will be the future spouse. The primary condition and intention should be to choose somebody who will be a bridge to heaven, both for the spouse as well as for the future children. O St. Joseph, pray for our youth, for purity and moral integrity!

Patron of those in Tribulation:

St. Joseph is admirable to the highest degree in his coping with and accepting trial after trial. He had a boundless and limitless confidence in God's all-abiding and ever-present Providential Plan.

Contemplate these scenes: the long trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem with a pregnant woman mounted on a donkey, rejection—probably many times seeking for lodging for the night, the birth in a poor, stinking, humid, abandoned animal refuge, a flight in the middle of the night to a foreign, alien, even hostile country where he had neither relatives, lodging, and knowledge of the language, and finally losing his foster-Son for three interminable days—these were among the many trials of St. Joseph. Instead of giving into despair, he humbly submitted his will to the will of Almighty God and God Himself, resolved problems that seemed almost impossible to resolve!

May good Saint Joseph, strengthen our trust in God in the midst of life's constant trials, tribulations, setbacks and failures! St. Joseph firmly believed: "The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall lack."

Patron of a Holy and Happy Death:

The most important moment of our lives is the moment of our death. Good St. Joseph can come to our rescue in this all too critical moment in our earthly pilgrimage! Why? For the simple reason that St. Joseph had the all-important grace to die in the arms of both Jesus and Mary. When? We do not know! But, having died in the arms of Jesus and Mary should spur us on to desire most ardently to do the same! May St. Joseph obtain for us the grace to die in the state of grace and to die in the arms of Jesus, Mary—and yes—the loving arms of good Saint Joseph!

Illustrious Son of David

In long ages, the prophecy was handed down that the Messiah was to spring from the seed of David, the great hero-king to whom the Jews looked back with such pride. Joseph was of the royal blood of David, and, as legal father of Jesus, handed on to Him as Foster Son, all the rights he himself inherited.

Mary, too, was of royal lineage, and through her the blood of David actually flowed in Christ's veins. Perhaps king David's chief claim to be remembered gratefully by men is this: that for nigh three thousand years he has taught the world to pray. No aspirations ever penned by man, probably, have been so widely and so fruitfully used as the hymns of the Royal Psalmist; and if to pray aright is to love God aright, and if to love God aright is to fulfil the object of our existence, then David, more than most men, has contributed to the final and essential welfare of mankind.

Light amongst Patriarchs:

A man may be called a Light to others when through his virtues, wisdom, elevation and strength of character, he exercises a beneficent, healthy influence on them. His effect is like that of sunshine: he draws out and develops the good qualities in others, causing flowers of the soul-of imagination, mind and heart-to bloom and fill the world with their fragrance. Sunshine kindles beauty on land and sea. So a man of God, one whose heart is a lamp to others because it is filled with light at the furnace of God Himself, produces beauty in those he influences.

That is why we call St. Joseph Lumen Patriarcharum-a shining light amongst the forerunners of Christ. He was one of the great pillars in that long line of God's servants who lived looking for Jesus. Joseph led God Himself through the desert to the Land of Promise, that is, to the hearts of His faithful ones; a land to be conquered by Jesus, by hard fighting and a bitter struggle.

Spouse of the Mother of God

St. Joseph was the Spouse of God's Mother, but by a wonderful anomaly, also Guardian of her Virginity. Just as in Mary are combined miraculously two seemingly incompatible things, motherhood and virginity; so in Joseph, to be Mary's husband and yet shield of his wife's virginity. He was spouse of a Virgin-Mother.

It was a marvellous position for a man to occupy, and we know a little of what it meant for St. Joseph. He was constantly thrown into circumstances that called for the exercise of blind, heroic trust in God.

Foster Father of the Son of God

Foster father of God's Son; the visible representative of the real Father, God. When a father sends his son to be educated abroad, he appoints a tutor to take his place, to be in loco parentis; so when the Eternal sent His son into creation to be trained in a life of poverty and misery, He selected a tutor for Him - a man to take His own place - and that man was St. Joseph. What a dignity! Educator of the Son of God!

Head of the Holy Family

We measure the confidence we place in others by the value of the things we entrust to their care. If we send away jewellery or other precious things, we select trusted persons to be our messenger. Parents will give beloved children into the keeping of those only on whom they can implicitly rely. Measured by this test, how God trusted St. Joseph, placing under his care the greatest and most valued of His treasures: Mary, His best-beloved Spouse, and Jesus, His Son!

Joseph Most Courageous

What courage he had! A man entrusted with a very valuable diamond to bring it safely across the sea will feel the responsibility of his charge. And he is told to cross the desert in flight. That desert is a hard one even for strong men to face; Joseph must convey the

delicate Mother and the new-born Babe across it! What faith, what lion-hearted courage the man had!

Pillar of Families

Literally, Pillar of families. He is a strong column on which families can rest as upon an unshakeable foundation. Trust in him, recourse to his intercession, is a sure source of strength for the Christian family. If a father or mother chooses St. Joseph to be in a special way the patron of their household, if they have recourse to him in every necessity, they will find him a friend on whom they can rely—a column of support in their hour of need. So, too, religious families or communities will find in him a sure source of strength in their troubles.

Solace of the Afflicted

St. Joseph can comfort the sorrowing, because he has suffered. The story of his life is meagre in details, but it tells of sorrow all through, as is the case always with close friends of Jesus. St. Joseph knows the sorrows of life; and because he has learned from Jesus the secret of charity for the miserable, he is pre-eminently our refuge and consolation in trouble. Experience proves his right to this blessed title.

Hope of the Sick

Ponder on the fact that St. Joseph was the one man selected to preside at the central scene in history - the entrance of God Himself as Man into the visible creation. No wonder, then, if the Church feels great reverence for this man, and believes he is powerful to assist us by his prayers. If Jesus chose his arm to support Him in His infancy, what graces will He not lavish upon him? Jesus is generous and grateful; what, then, shall Joseph have for reward? Joseph's dignity will only be properly appreciated by intense faith and men often spend their lives without intense faith.

St. Joseph must help us to see this point of view. We want him, who held Jesus so firmly in his arms, to let us hold Him, too; to get us audiences frequent and close with the Divine Child, that we may see

His smile and live for Him alone. ‘The health of the soul consists in the love of God. (St. John of the Cross.)

St. Joseph, Patron of the Dying

St. Joseph has a unique claim to the position of patron of a happy death, since he died the most blessed of deaths, assisted by Jesus his Judge, and Mary, that Judge’s Mother. The soul nearing the end of its pilgrimage has special difficulties to face: weariness, heaviness, despondency arising from sickness; attacks of demons, who are more earnest and persistent when death approaches, in order, if possible, to make the soul relax its grip upon God just when it is about to enter into possession of Him for ever. This weakness of physical nature and strength of spiritual foes call for special assistance. Hence these two titles of St. Joseph, Hope of the sick, Terror of demons.

Protector of the Holy Church

As Patron of a happy death, as the saint who by his prayers secures that supreme grace for those who pray to him, he is the Protector of Holy Church, guarding her interests at the very important moment in the life of her children, keeping watch at the portal between time and eternity, and snatching from destruction the souls that at that narrow gate are in risk of being torn from the Church for ever.

During the years that God’s Church may be said to have consisted of only three members, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, St. Joseph was evidently its Protector; he guarded the seed from which the world-wide (or Catholic) Church was to spring up later on. The first beginning not only of the physical Body of Jesus, but also of His Mystical Body, of which we are the members, was formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. St. Joseph, who has been protecting by prayers and intercession this Mystical Body, has acted as heavenly Patron and Protector of the Church of Christ.

THE VIRTUES OF ST. JOSEPH

1. A Just Man, A Husband

At the angel's annunciation to him, St. Joseph said nothing. He simply "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt 1:24). And 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). The "just" man of Nazareth possesses the clear characteristics of a husband. Luke refers to Mary as "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph" (Lk 1:27).

The Gospels set before us the image of husband and wife. According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages: first, the legal, or true marriage was celebrated, and then, only after a certain period of time, the husband brought the wife into his own house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her "husband." The fact that Mary was "betrothed" to Joseph was part of the very plan of God. This is pointed out by Luke and especially by Matthew. The words spoken to Joseph are very significant: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20). These words explain the mystery of Joseph's wife: In her motherhood, Mary is a virgin. In her, "the Son of the Most High" assumed a human body and became "the Son of Man."

Addressing Joseph through the words of the angel, God speaks to him as the husband of the Virgin of Nazareth. God's messenger was clear in what he said to Joseph: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife into your home." Hence, what had taken place earlier, namely, Joseph's marriage to Mary, happened in accord with God's will and was meant to endure. In her divine motherhood Mary had to continue to live as "a virgin, the wife of her husband" (cf. Lk 1:27).

In the words of the "annunciation" by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife's indescribable vocation; he also heard once again the truth about his own vocation. This "just" man,

who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the Chosen People, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband's love, was once again called by God to this love.

“Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife” into his home (Mt 1:24); what was conceived in Mary was “of the Holy Spirit.” From expressions such as these are we not to suppose that his love as a man was also given new birth by the Holy Spirit? Are we not to think that the love of God which has been poured forth into the human heart through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm 5:5) molds every human love to perfection? This love of God also molds - in a completely unique way - the love of husband and wife, deepening within it everything of human worth and beauty, everything that bespeaks an exclusive gift of self, a covenant between persons, and an authentic communion according to the model of the Blessed Trinity.

Joseph, in obedience to the Spirit, found in the Spirit the source of love, the conjugal love which he experienced as a man. And this love proved to be greater than this “just man” could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart.

Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God, and gave her a husband's “gift of self.” Even though he decided to draw back so as not to interfere in the plan of God, Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God.

2. Industriousness

Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. In our own day, the Church has emphasized this by instituting the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1. Human work, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work too has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation,

and has also been redeemed in a special way. At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption.

In the human growth of Jesus “in wisdom, age and grace,” the virtue of industriousness played a notable role, since “work is a human good” which “transforms nature” and makes man “in a sense, more human.”

The importance of work in human life demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to “help all people to come closer to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world, and to deepen...friendship with Christ in their lives, by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King.”

What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: “St. Joseph 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 of great things-it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic.”

3. Virtue of Religion

The same aura of silence that envelops everything else about Joseph also shrouds his work as a carpenter in the house of Nazareth. It is, however, a silence that reveals in a special way the inner portrait of the man. The Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph “did.” Still, they allow us to discover in his “actions” - shrouded in silence as they are - an aura of deep contemplation. Joseph was in daily contact with the mystery “hidden from ages past,” and which “dwelt” under his roof.

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.

This submission to God, this readiness of will to dedicate oneself to all that serves him, is really nothing less than that exercise of devotion which constitutes one expression of the virtue of religion.

Furthermore, in Joseph, the apparent tension between the active and the contemplative life finds an ideal harmony that is only possible for those who possess the perfection of charity. Following St. Augustine's well-known distinction between the love of the truth (*caritas veritatis*) and the practical demands of love (*necessitas caritatis*), we can say that Joseph experienced both love of the truth—that pure contemplative love of the divine Truth which radiated from the humanity of Christ—and the demands of love—that equally pure and selfless love required for his vocation to safeguard and develop the humanity of Jesus, which was inseparably linked to his divinity.

5. Joseph Most Pure

Purity of heart is the result of intense love of God. Sin (which dims the soul's purity) is an inordinate seeking of created things, a choosing of some gratification which we know God's law forbids. The soul that loves God intensely will ever seek to do His will as perfectly as possible. "He that loves me keeps my commandments." Now St. Joseph's soul was ablaze with intense love of God. As a result of the extraordinary graces bestowed upon him to fit him for his high office he desired only the perfect accomplishment of God's Will. Hence, he led a life of marvellous purity—walking ever in God's presence, a man of ceaseless prayer and unbroken union with God. We too, if we would achieve purity of soul, must seek to walk in God's presence.

6. Joseph Most Prudent

Prudence is one of the supreme virtues of a Ruler. The Patriarch Joseph was sold by his brethren into slavery, but through the special grace and providence of God rose to be the Chief Minister of Egyptian Pharaoh, in which high office he displayed such prudence that the king gave him complete charge of his household—with authority to dispense as he pleased the royal property. Now he was the prototype of the other and greater Joseph who also by special grace and providence of God rose from a humble station to be the Master of God's own household—with such authority vested in his hands as was never before entrusted to any living creature—whether man or angel: authority, namely, to direct, guide and instruct the Child that was God Himself and to determine His actions and His mode of life. God's Obedience. God came on earth to teach us humility:— and He began by practising it Himself. To do this He wished to be submissive—to bow Himself down in entire obedience beneath the sway of His own creature: and the person chosen to act as His Superior—to wield authority over Him—was Joseph the Carpenter of Nazareth. What a position it was! What marvellous prudence it called for! But Joseph acquitted himself well. And what was the secret of his success? Just this, he “cast his care upon the Lord” and the Lord provided for him. He kept in close touch with God by prayer, and all went well. The Divine Child who was his charge was also his Instructor. The Child in whose Presence he lived, with whom he came into daily contact, was the Source of all his strength. So it is with us. We too are guardians of Jesus—His fortunes are in our hands. But He Himself is the Light that will guide us in discharging our duty. For He is still living in our midst in the Blessed Sacrament; and the immediate personal service He wants from us is adoration.

7. Joseph Most Courageous

Joseph arose and took the Child and His mother by night and retired into Egypt (Mt. 2:14). What courage he had! A man entrusted with a precious child to bring safely to another land will feel the responsibility of his charge. Herod went after the child's life and St. Joseph was called to protect him. What a responsibility! And he

is told to cross the desert in flight. That desert is a terrible one for strong men to face; Joseph must convey the delicate Mother and the new-born Babe across it! What faith, what lion-hearted courage the man had!

8. Joseph Most Obedient

Christ has conquered the world by His Obedience. And His earthly Guardian and Helper, St. Joseph, must resemble Him by the perfect practice of this difficult and fundamental virtue. Obedience is the surest test of humility: and on humility all Christian virtue must rest.

9. Joseph Most Faithful

St. Joseph was the Foster Father who held the Child Jesus in his arms and close to his heart—so that the divine Heart was beating very close to his own. Who then could better understand the law of Charity which was the centre and essence of Christ's teaching? Who is more faithful in carrying out that law to the full? Service. Jesus has taught us both by word and example that the highest use we can make of our faculties is to consecrate them to God in the service of others. Just as He, the greatest of men, came to render service and finally to die in discharging His duty to the race—falling stricken on the battlefield in the war against sin and the powers of evil; so He taught us also to spend our lives in rendering service. And the highest mark of esteem and affection He can bestow upon you is to give you ample opportunity for laboring effectively to help your fellow-creatures in their needs of body or soul. Since Jesus loves His dear Foster Father so well, He gives him endless opportunities of helping souls, and St. Joseph carries out the work by promoting the activity of God's grace in the interior life of those that appeal to him for help. He obtains for them the gift of prayer.

10. Mirror of Patience

St. Joseph's soul is a Mirror reflecting the patience and gentleness of the Heart of Jesus; and through devotion to him we are brought into ever closer contact with that Divine Heart and partake more fully of its inexhaustible riches. Christ's love is divine, even His human love; because it is the love of a divine Person. Just as it is a divine

Person who shed His blood and died on the cross for our salvation, so it is a divine Person that loves through the organs and faculties of the Man Jesus. A divine Person is interested in us, is occupied about us, is solicitous for our welfare, but in a thoroughly human way.

11. Lover of Poverty

The stable of Bethlehem is indicative of the great secret of Christianity, for there we find on the one hand great poverty, cold, hunger, wretchedness; and on the other hand, God Himself made Man. The road to God is through lowliness, poverty, mortification, humility. God manifests his divine countenance to the meek and the simple; just as on Christmas night He drew the veil of heaven for the wondering eyes of a few poor shepherds. If we upholster our minds with the rich cushions of pride and self-esteem and are afraid of the hard wood of humility and simple truthfulness, then Jesus leaves us to enjoy our comfort alone, without His company. He fares poorly; and if you would have the benefit of His conversation you must be content to share the hardships of His life. And it is in Jesus' company that we will find Joseph, that is, in poverty and suffering and humiliation. So, you must lower yourself if you want to be admitted to His friendship. St. Joseph teaches us to get rid of our pride—else we cannot be his friend, nor be at our ease with him—nor with Jesus.

12. Model of Workmen

Mankind depends for existence on its workmen. Now St. Joseph is the Model of workmen because in his life of toil he practised those Christian virtues so excellently; and the workman who wishes to make a right use of life and to travel safely on the road to God must imitate St. Joseph in the practice of those virtues. He must therefore be strictly just in his dealings with others—giving to every man his due; he must be chaste and temperate in home life. He must be prudent in managing his affairs, avoiding extravagance and providing carefully for the maintenance and education of his children.

DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH

The Meaning of Devotion

Devotion means a perfect willingness to fulfill the will of God in all things; the readiness to perform all our duties and obligations towards God, no matter what the cost may be. It is concerned with honoring and serving God as He *deserves* to be honored and served.

But the word, devotion, conveys a different meaning when we speak of a person having devotion to a particular saint. Thus it can be said that some people are devoted to Saint Anthony or Saint Patrick.

Cardinal Newman is particularly helpful in explaining the true connotation of devotion to a saint. His thought can be summarized thus: we *believe* that all the canonized saints are in heaven and that they were outstanding in the practice of their religion when they were on earth. This is something we hold in faith. But whereas we believe that there are any number of saints in heaven, we do not claim to have a special devotion to all of them. It would be foolish to claim that every Catholic has a special devotion to a Saint Achilles or to a Saint Casimir, though no one would deny their being numbered with the blessed.

On the other hand, devotion to a particular saint always means that the saint in question is held in high personal regard. Not only do we have particular reverence for the saint, but we are spiritually fascinated by his life, works and virtues. Somehow, we are able spiritually to enter into his life; we seem to understand and grasp something of his unique spiritual genius. Not only that, but *we want to be influenced* by this saint because the way he lived and practiced virtue on earth is viewed as a thing of compelling beauty.

Being devoted to a saint implies a personal conviction that the saint is a significant person, that he has become a meaningful person in our spiritual march towards perfection. We are persuaded that he fully understands us and takes a personal interest in our spiritual and material needs, and that he is pleased to be able to help us on our way. By the grace of God, when we are led to have the attitude of reverent trust and confidence that we have been describing, is this

not the same as declaring that a strong personal bond of affection and friendship has been established between ourselves and the saint we hold in veneration.

The popes encourage us to have devotion to God's saints. Naturally it is not possible for us to have strong devotion to every saint. Because of our limitations, we must be contented to venerate many of the saints only in a general way. But in the providence of God, it is desired that we have more than a general devotion to Saint Joseph because of the remarkable services he performed for Jesus and Mary. This was underscored by Pope John XXIII in his talk to the Roman workers when he said:

All the saints in glory assuredly merit honor and particular respect, but it is evident that Saint Joseph possesses a just title to a sweeter, more intimate and penetrating place in our hearts, belonging to him alone... Here we are able to estimate completely all the greatness of Saint Joseph, not only by reason of the fact that he was close to Jesus and Mary, but also by the shining example he has given of all virtues...

Though the Church from the beginning was aware that Mary was given to be the spiritual mother of all, it is a fact that the consciousness of Saint Joseph as the spiritual father and protector of every Christian was only gradually arrived at. In the last one hundred years, the Church has taken ever more cognizance of the role of Saint Joseph. Quite obviously this devotion is a grace that has been reserved to this present age. Cardinal Newman tells us that the Church always had *faith* in Saint Joseph from the beginning, but that *devotion* to him was slow in developing.

Why Devotion to Saint Joseph is Highly Recommended

In encouraging her children to be more attentive in their devotion to Saint Joseph, the Church is, in the first place, concerned with the fulfillment of a debt of gratitude towards God. For the exalted dignity and the innumerable graces conferred on Saint Joseph are a splendid manifestation of the good and gracious God. They were not, if we may use the phrase, private graces bestowed on Joseph

for his personal benefit alone — they were given that he might be worthy of the office that he exercised towards our Saviour and towards Mary. Hence, ultimately, those graces and blessings are of advantage for all of us. Showing Joseph honor and respect and veneration are means of rendering glory and gratitude to almighty God for the merciful graces he poured out upon this saint.

The second reason why the Church encourages us to be devoted to Joseph is that he was a model in the heroic practice of all the virtues. The example of virtuous living that he gave in the exact fulfillment of the duties of his state of life is worthy of our reflection.

Read the gospel and you will see his faith, hope and charity practiced under trying circumstances. He was prudent in caring for his wife and the child; he showed great leadership in protecting them and assisting them. He was religious in every sense, with that delicacy and sincerity of conscience that is proper to the saints of God. He was just in his dealings with God and man. He was conspicuous for his fortitude and courage. He was truly outstanding in the practice of virginal chastity. More: he *protected* and *defended* Mary's virtue in the time of courtship and all during their life together. They had made a promise of chastity, and because they were resolved to live it for God they were blessed above all others. While Mary *inspired* him to practice this virtue perfectly, he, as a real man, understood the profound meaning of her inspiration and how it came from a heart that was steeped in the love of God. In protecting and defending Mary's honor and virtue, he proved himself to be more and more worthy of her love. It is often said that true love must be built on sacrifice and a spirit of unselfishness. Never was this realized as well as in the case of Mary and Joseph. Consequently, their love and affection was more chaste and more pure and more human even if virginal — and precisely because it was virginal it was the more sublime! It is the greatest example to the world that love between a man and a woman built on the love of God, and concerned primarily about the laws of God, is the most ennobling and the most rewarding type of love. It is the highest, truest, deepest understanding of the word love.

Time and again the Church has made it clear that Joseph is not a

saint for only a certain number of souls, but that he can help *all* men. Joseph is the patron of the universal Church and his patronage or fatherly protection is extended towards all who seek it. In a particular way certain classes of people will find in him a special patron: families, workers, husbands, virgins, the dying.

A Devotion Specially Reserved for This Modern Age

Devotion to Saint Joseph is a powerful antidote to many of the moral dangers of this age. Stirred by the workings of divine grace, the Holy Spirit has granted the people of God the inspiration and enlightenment necessary to discover in the person of Joseph a cure for the problems that afflict them. Among these problems can be mentioned: failure of men to accept the role of leadership in their homes; neglect of spirituality in marriage; lack of sanctification of labor by the working man; a general weakening of esteem for the practice of religion and virtue, especially purity.

Prayer to Saint Joseph

It goes without saying that the surest sign of personal devotion to Saint Joseph is manifested by praying to him frequently. His good friends have always called upon him in time of need, when in doubt or discouraged.

We are not only speaking of the prayer of petition. But here we are thinking of prayer on a deeper level. In this perspective, we should pray to Joseph in order to have a greater appreciation of the meaning of religion and the practice of virtue. More important still, we should pray to him to gain a better understanding of a genuine, authentic *Christian life* — that is, of a life which is lived in Christ and with Christ and for Christ.

THE SEVEN SORROWS AND JOYS OF SAINT JOSEPH

Description:

Among the many exercises of piety practiced in honor of St. Joseph, there is one generally known, namely, that of meditating on his Seven Sorrows and Seven Joys.

Historical Origin:

This devotion owes its origin to this celebrated event, never omitted by any historian of the Saint:

Two Fathers of the Franciscan order were sailing along the coast of Flanders, when a terrible tempest arose, which sank the vessel, with its three hundred passengers. The two Fathers had sufficient presence of mind to seize hold of a plank, upon which they were tossed to and fro upon the waves, for three days and nights. In their danger and affliction, their whole recourse was to St. Joseph, begging his assistance in their sad condition. The Saint, thus invoked, appeared in the habit of a young man of beautiful features, encouraged them to confide in his assistance, and, as their pilot, conducted them into a safe harbor. They, desirous to know who their benefactor was asked his name, that they might gratefully acknowledge so great a blessing and favor. He told them he was St. Joseph, and advised them daily to recite the Our Father and Hail Mary seven times, in memory of his seven dolours or griefs, and of his seven joys, and then disappeared.

THE SEVEN SORROWS

1. Joseph resolves to leave Mary (St. Matthew 1:18-19)

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

2. The Poverty of Jesus' Birth (St. Luke 2:6-7)

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she

gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

3. The Circumcision of Christ (St. Luke 2:21)

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

4. Simeon's Prophecy (St. Luke 2:34-35)

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

5. The Flight into Egypt (St. Matthew 2:13-14)

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

6. The Perilous Return from Exile (St. Matthew 2:19-22)

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee.

7. The Loss of Jesus in Jerusalem (St. Luke 2:42-45)

When he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

SEVEN JOYS OF ST. JOSEPH

1. The Annunciation to St. Joseph (St. Matthew 1:20-21)

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

2. The Birth of the Savior of Mankind (St. Luke 2:10-19)

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

3. The Holy Name of Jesus (St. Matthew 1:24-25)

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

4. The Salvation of Mankind (St. Luke 2:29-33)

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.” The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him.

5. The Toppling of the Idols (Isaiah 19:1)

Oracle on Egypt: See, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud on his way to Egypt; The idols of Egypt tremble before him, the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.

6. Family Life at Nazareth (St. Luke 2:39-40)

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

7. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (St. Luke 2:46-52)

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

Oh Blessed St. Joseph, you are the tree chosen by God not to bear fruit, but to provide shade. A protective shade of Mary, your spouse and a shade of Jesus, who called you "Father" and to whom you surrendered your all. Your life, woven of work and silence, teaches me to be faithful and true in all situations. It teaches me, above all, to wait with hope in darkness. Your seven sorrows and seven joys summarize your existence: it was the joy of Christ and Mary, it was the expression of your unconditional gift of self. May your example of a just and good Man accompany me at all times that I may bloom where God has planted me. Amen.

