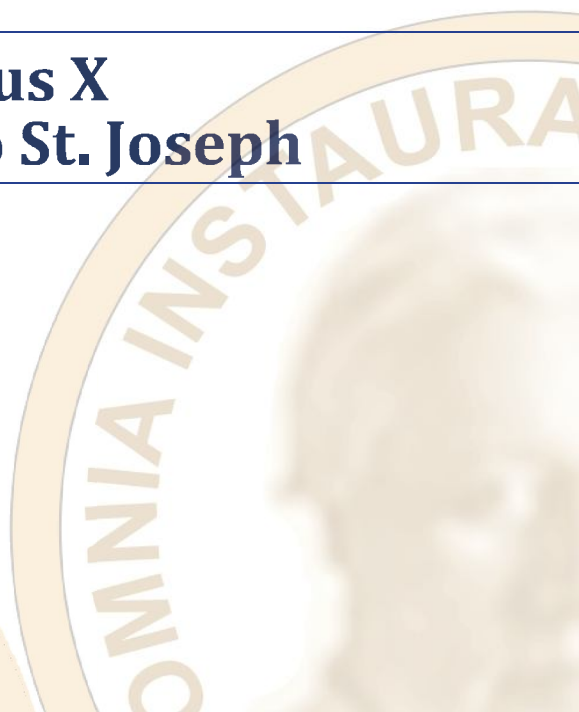


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# Society of St. Pius X Consecration to St. Joseph

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## **NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONSECRATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X TO ST. JOSEPH**

**His Excellency Bishop Bernard Fellay is happy to present a selection of texts in preparation for the consecration of the Society of St. Pius X to St. Joseph, the patron of the universal Church. This booklet is intended to offer you an opportunity to meditate on a few of the many writings on St. Joseph. You will find among the contents official documents of the Magisterium, Bossuet's two eulogies of St. Joseph, and Father Garrigou-Lagrange's commentary taken from *La Mère du Sauveur et notre vie intérieure* [The Mother of the Saviour and the interior life].**

**Fr. Alain-Marc Nély**

**Menzingen, January 21, 2013**

# Day One

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In his book *Summa de donis S. Joseph* [Summary of the gifts of St. Joseph], Isidore Isolani, a 16th century Dominican, demonstrated contemporary devotion to St. Joseph.

The Holy Ghost did not cease to move the hearts of the faithful until such time as the universal Church should joyfully renew its veneration for the blessed Joseph, founding monasteries and building churches in his honour. (...)

Jesus Christ, for His greater glory, destined St. Joseph to be the particular and the most important patron of the empire of the Church Militant. For this reason, before the day of judgement, all nations will recognize, venerate and adore the name of our Lord, and honour the magnificent gifts given by God to St. Joseph, gifts that He chose to leave hidden for a long period of time. (...)

Our Lord will send His light into the deepest secret of minds and hearts. Great men will examine the gifts of God hidden in St. Joseph's interior life, and they will find in him a treasure of ineffable price, greater than any found in the saints of the Old Law. (...)

The Vicar of Christ on earth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, will command that the feast of the foster father of Christ, the spouse of the Queen of the earth, possessor of very great sanctity, be commemorated in all the lands of the true Church. And thus he who is in the very highest ranks of heaven will not be placed lower on earth.

*Summa de donis S. Joseph, Part III*



## Saint Joseph in the writings of the Popes

St. Joseph seems to have remained very discreet for centuries. It was only in 1479, after St. Bernardino of Siena, St. Vincent Ferrer, Pierre d'Ailly, and Jean Gerson had sung St. Joseph's praises, that **Sixtus IV** (1471 – 1484) introduced his feast, March 19, into the Roman breviary. After Sixtus, **Innocent VIII** (1484 – 1492) raised the office to the rank of double, and a century

later **Gregory XIII** (1572 – 1585) extended the feast to the entire Catholic world and declared it a holy day of obligation. Around the same time, in 1522, Isidore Isolani wrote *Summa de donis* S. Joseph [Summary of the gifts of St. Joseph], St. Peter of Alcantara praised St. Joseph's sanctity, and St. Teresa of Avila, miraculously cured by the saint when she was 26, dedicated her first convent in Avila to him, as well as more than two thirds of the houses she founded later in life.

On March 17, 1521, a bull by **Leo X** (1513 – 1521) granted indulgences to pilgrims to Cotignac, where St. Joseph appeared together with Our Lady and the Child Jesus, on August 10, 1519. St. Joseph appeared there again alone on June 7, 1660.

**Clement X** (1670 – 1676) composed the hymn *Te Joseph celebrent* and raised the feast to the rank of double of the second-class.

**Clement XI** (1700 – 1721) rewrote the entire office of St. Joseph. In the meantime, the carpenters' guilds had requested that St. Joseph be declared their patron. Rome granted their request in 1680 and the commemoration of St. Joseph's patronage was added to the feast of March 19th.

Nevertheless, it was only slowly that devotion to St. Joseph touched the hearts of the faithful and gave rise to the development of prayers and pious works in his honour.

**Benedict XIII** (1724 – 1730) officially added St. Joseph to the Litany of the Saints on December 19, 1726.

**Benedict XIV** (1740 – 1758), inspired by St. Augustine, wrote: "*St. Joseph belongs to the saints of the New Testament. John the Baptist, on the other hand, belongs to those of the Old Testament, where he ends the list, just as Mary and Joseph begin the series of saints in the New Testament.*"

On May 31, 1783, **Pius VI** (1775 – 1799) had a miraculous painting, which had been attracting pilgrims since the 1670s, crowned in Kalisz, Poland. The painting was an imposing representation of the Holy Family, invoked by the name of St. Joseph of Kalisz.

**Pope Pius VII** (1800 – 1823) added St. Joseph to the prayer *A cunctis* on September 17, 1815.

A number of relatively recent papal documents call for Catholics to honour St. Joseph and pray to him. The main ideas of several of these documents are summarized below.

## **Pius IX**

DECREE OF APRIL 27, 1865, *URBIS ET ORBIS*

**Pope Pius IX** (1846 – 1878) had a great personal devotion to St. Joseph. On December 10, 1847, he named the third Sunday after Easter as the feast and the liturgy for the Patronage of St. Joseph. In 1854, he stated that St. Joseph, after Our Lady, was the best hope for the Church. Then he promulgated the decree of April 27, 1865.

In this decree, Pius IX attached to the month of March, dedicated to St. Joseph, the same indulgences that were attached to the month of Mary; in other words, a 300 days' indulgence for devotions to St. Joseph, on any day of the month, and a plenary indulgence for devotions carried out during the whole month, under the usual conditions of confession and Communion, and prayers for the Church.

#### DECREE OF DECEMBER 8, 1870, *QUEMADMODUM DEUS*

*“As God established the patriarch Joseph, son of Jacob, as governor over the whole of Egypt, to provide the people with grain for sustenance, so, in the fullness of time, when He was about to send to earth his only begotten Son to redeem the world, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first had been the type, and He made him the Lord and Prince of His household and all His possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures. Indeed, his spouse was the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of whom was born by the Holy Ghost Jesus Christ our Lord, who deigned to be reputed in the sight of men as the son of Joseph, and was subject to him. Him whom countless kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed. He most diligently reared Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.*

*“Because of this sublime dignity... the Church has always most highly honored and praised Saint Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God; always, in times of trouble, the Church has besought his intercession...*

*Accordingly, the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, solemnly declares St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church on this day (December 8) sacred to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, spouse of the most chaste Joseph.”*

This important act was confirmed in the Apostolic Letter *Inclytum Patriarcham* of July 7, 1871. However, by March 4, 1871, Cardinal Pie (1815 – 1880), bishop of Poitiers, had already communicated the papal decree to his clergy, in an *Instruction Pastorale* [Pastoral instruction]. In response to the question *“Why has devotion to St. Joseph appeared so late?”* the Cardinal replies, *“Devotion to St. Joseph was one of the gifts that the father of the family, with prudent economy, reserves among his treasures for a later date... The silence surrounding the name and the power of the blessed Joseph during the early ages of Christianity appears as an extension of the silence that surrounded his time on earth; it is a continuation of the hidden life whose splendors proved all the more amazing to the minds and the hearts of the faithful for having remained unrevealed.”*

## Leo XIII

### EXCERPTS FROM THE ENCYCLICAL *QUAMQUAM PLURIES*, AUGUST 15, 1889

In this encyclical, **Leo XIII** (1878–1903) first recalls that in times of great difficulty, the Church implored God and Our Lady with fervour and perseverance. He recognizes that Christian fervour has greatly cooled in his time, but points out that human means cannot remedy the grave dangers threatening the Church. He exhorts the faithful, therefore, to increase their prayers to Our Lady, particularly during the month of October, the month of the Rosary.

But the Holy Father had another purpose in this encyclical: to invite Catholics *“to invoke with great piety and trust, together with the Virgin-Mother of God, her chaste Spouse, the Blessed Joseph; and We regard it as most certain that this will be most pleasing to the Virgin herself.”* Devotion to St. Joseph is already widespread thanks to the efforts of numerous popes. But it must *“engraft itself upon the daily pious practices of Catholics and Catholic institutions,”* and Leo XIII provides the principal reasons for this:

*“St. Joseph was the spouse of Mary and he was reputed the Father of Jesus Christ. From these sources have sprung his dignity, his holiness, his glory... As Joseph has been united to the Blessed Virgin by the ties of marriage, it may not be doubted that he approached nearer than any to the eminent dignity by which the Mother of God surpasses so nobly all created natures... Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life's companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity...”*

Thus Joseph was, by divine will, the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. *“The Word of God was humbly subject to Joseph, He obeyed him, and He rendered to him all those offices that children are bound to render to their parents.”*

For his part, Joseph fulfilled the duties that nature lays on the heads of families. *“He set himself to protect with a mighty love and a daily solicitude his spouse and the Divine Infant; regularly by his work he earned what was necessary for the one and the other for nourishment and clothing; he guarded from death the Child threatened by a monarch's jealousy, and found for Him a refuge; in the miseries of the journey and in the bitternesses of exile he was ever the companion, the assistance, and the upholder of the Virgin and of Jesus. Now the divine house, which Joseph ruled with the authority of a father, contained within its limits the scarce-born Church...”*

For this reason the multitude of Catholics who compose the Church are confided specially to his care. *“It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ...”*

The Church recognizes that *“the Joseph of ancient times, son of the patriarch Jacob, was the type of St. Joseph, and the former by his glory prefigured the greatness of the future guardian of the Holy Family.”* Indeed, in the first patriarch, we may recognize the second: *“As the first caused the prosperity of his master's domestic interests and at the same time rendered great services to the whole kingdom, so the second, destined to be the guardian of the Christian religion, should be regarded as the protector and defender of the Church, which is truly the house of the Lord and the kingdom of God on earth.”*

All men of every rank and country can recommend themselves to St. Joseph: *“Fathers of families find in Joseph the best personification of paternal solicitude and vigilance; spouses a perfect example of love, of peace, and of conjugal fidelity; virgins find in him the model and protector of virginal integrity. The noble of birth will learn of Joseph how to guard their dignity even in misfortune; the rich will understand, by his lessons, the goods most to be desired and won at the price of their labor. As to workmen, artisans, and persons of lesser degree, their recourse to Joseph is a special right, and his example is for their particular imitation.”*

*“For Joseph, of royal blood, united by marriage to the greatest and holiest of women, reputed the father of the Son of God, passed his life in labor... Joseph, content with his slight possessions, bore the trials consequent on a fortune so slender, with greatness of soul... in imitation of the Lord of all things subjected himself of his own free will to poverty and loss of all.”*

St. Joseph is truly the model of those who live by the toil of their hands. *“If they win the right of emerging from poverty and obtaining a better rank by lawful means, reason and justice uphold them in changing the order established, in the first instance for them by the Providence of God. But recourse to force and struggles by seditious paths to obtain such ends are madnesses which only aggravate the evil which they aim to suppress...”*

Leo XIII concludes: *“We prescribe that during the whole month of October, at the recitation of the Rosary... a prayer to St. Joseph be added... and that this custom should be repeated every year... It is a salutary practice and very praiseworthy... to consecrate the month of March to the honor of the holy Patriarch by daily exercises of piety... We exhort the faithful to sanctify March 19th as far as possible by private pious practices, in honor of their heavenly patron...”*

## **St. Pius X**

### DECREE OF 1909

**St. Pius X** (1903 – 1914) approved the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites publishing the Litanies of St. Joseph. This decree referred to the pope's involvement in the following words:

*“Our Holy Father Pope Pius X has always professed special devotion and profound piety toward the august Patriarch St. Joseph, foster father of our Divine Saviour, most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mother of God, and powerful intercessor for the Catholic Church, whose glorious name our Pontiff received at baptism.”*

## **Benedict XV**

**Benedict XV** (1914 – 1922) composed in 1919 several prefaces for Masses in honour of St. Joseph, and a preface for the Mass of the Dead. Here is an excerpt from the latter: *“O God, almighty Father, it was Joseph, the just man, whom Thou didst choose to be the spouse of the Virgin Mother of God, that Thou didst set at the head of Thy family, that he might, like a father, guard Thine only begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost...”*

On July 25, 1920, Benedict XV published a *Motu proprio* on the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph’s patronage over the universal Church, *Bonum sane*, filled with tenderness and especial confidence in the saint.

In the preamble, Benedict XVI wrote, *“As We consider the difficult situation in which the human race struggles today, it seems to Us particularly important to recommend most strongly this devotion to nations, and to spread it much more widely yet.”*

After recalling the moral distress caused by the war, Benedict XV adds, *“Concerned that Our children who earn their bread by the labour of their hands be preserved from the contagion of socialism, a most deadly enemy of Christian doctrine, We suggest St. Joseph as a model and special patron to be imitated and honoured. Indeed, St. Joseph led a life similar to theirs; and our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, wished to be known as the “Son of the Carpenter.” Joseph adorned the humility and poverty of his condition in life with virtues as numerous as they were notable, fitting virtues to find resplendent in the spouse of the Immaculate Virgin and in the foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

He also emphasized the link with the entire Holy Family: *“As the faithful’s devotion to St. Joseph grows, so, necessarily, will their devotion to the Holy Family of Nazareth of which he was the august head; the first devotion will naturally bring about the second. Joseph leads us directly to Mary, and through Mary to the source of all sanctity, Jesus Christ, whose obedience to Mary and Joseph has sanctified the virtues proper to the family...”*

Lastly, in 1921, Benedict XV added St. Joseph to the Divine Praises said at Benediction.

## **Pius XI**

**Pius XI** (1922 – 1939), on April 21, 1926, beatified André-Hubert Fournet, who founded the Sisters of the Cross, and Jeanne-Antide Thouret, who founded the Daughters of Charity, both

French. In his address he spoke of St. Joseph: *"This was a saint who entered life and devoted himself entirely to accomplishing a single mission given him by God, the incomparable mission of guarding the chastity of Mary, protecting our Lord, hiding, through his admirable cooperation, the mystery, the secret hidden from all others, excepting the Blessed Trinity, of the Redemption of the human race. The remarkable and incomparable sanctity of St. Joseph was rooted in the greatness of his mission, because no other soul, no other saint, was ever given such a mission, and because there is no one between St. Joseph and God but Our Lady with her divine motherhood..."*

*"It is clear that because of this lofty mission, the holy Patriarch already held the glorious title of Patron of the universal Church... The Church was already present near St. Joseph, when he carried out his duties as guardian and foster father in the Holy Family."*

When he read the decree on the heroic virtue of Jeanne-Élisabeth Bichier des Ages, a co-founder of the Sisters of the Cross, on March 19, 1928, Pius XI said, *"Between the two missions of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter appears that of St. Joseph, recollected, silent, almost imperceptible, only to be illuminated centuries later; a silence to be followed, even though long after, with resounding songs of praise. And indeed, where the mystery is deeper, the night is darker, the silence is greater, there is the loftiest mission, the most splendid array of virtues, followed by merits destined, by a happy necessity, to echo them."* How lofty is the mission of cooperating with the Incarnation.

On March 19, 1935, Pius XI, speaking in honour of another French nun, Émilie de Vialar, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, referred to the mystery of the Incarnation in these words: *"The Blessed Trinity reveals the mystery, the secret of the divine Incarnation and the Redemption. Indeed, it is impossible to attain anything higher than the level of the hypostatic union, the personal union of God with man... No glory can surpass that of the revelation of the hypostatic of the divine Word... St. Joseph received this revelation. He can obtain anything from the divine Redeemer and his Mother, with a manner and an authority beyond those of a simple agent."*

In his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of March 19, 1937, Pius XI stated, *"We place the vast campaign of the Church against world Communism under the standard of St. Joseph, her mighty Protector."*

In this same encyclical we also read, *"Joseph belongs to the working-class, and he bore the burden of poverty for himself and the Holy Family, whose tender and vigilant head he was. To him was entrusted the Divine Child when Herod loosed his assassins against Him. In a life of faithful performance of daily duties, he left an example for all those who must gain their bread by the toil of their hands. He won for himself the title of "The Just," serving thus as a living model of that Christian justice which should reign in social life."*

On March 19, 1938, Pius XI declared, *"As St. Joseph was indeed the head and master of the*

home, his intercession cannot but be all-powerful.”

## Pius XII

In a papal document dated April 18, 1940, addressed to newlyweds, **Pius XII** (1939 – 1958) encourages young couples to turn their thoughts to St. Joseph who was the guardian of the Mother of Jesus Christ: *“Favoured by the confidence of God, he who was to act as a veil to the double mystery of the Word made flesh and the virgin birth of Mary seems to have been hidden in the shadows during his earthly life. Nevertheless, the few short passages of the Gospels referring to him suffice to show what a head of the family St. Joseph was, and what a model and especial patron he is therefore for you, newlyweds.”*

He then recalls the principal steps in the life of St. Joseph, model of all fathers of families: *“Providence led the first Joseph by the hand when, betrayed and sold into slavery by his brethren, he became superintendent, master of all the land of Egypt, and breadwinner for his own family. Providence led the second Joseph into the same country, where he arrived without belongings, knowing neither the people, nor their customs, nor the language, and from whence he returned nonetheless alive and well with Mary, always active, and Jesus, who grew in wisdom, age and grace.”*

Providence is likewise attentive to the needs of those who seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice. The Holy Family’s fidelity to religious practices is explicitly mentioned in the Gospel, *“Luke tells us that as was the custom, Jesus accompanied Mary and Joseph to the Temple of Jerusalem for the Passover.”* It is easy to imagine the Holy Family carrying out their daily devotions, led by Joseph, the head of the family.

In 1945, addressing the members of the first National Congress of Christian Associations of Italian Labourers, Pius XII declared with regard to St. Joseph: *“The most effective leaven— We may even say the only effective leaven—this sense of solidarity, this guarantee of social rectitude and peace, resides in the spirit of the Gospel and flows to you from the Heart of the God-Man, the Saviour of the world. No labourer has ever been as perfectly and profoundly filled with this leaven as he who lived with Christ in the intimacy of the family and the workshop, His foster father, St. Joseph.”*

To the members of the Italian Catholic Action, he said in 1947: *“There was never a man so close to the Redeemer through domestic ties, daily relations, spiritual harmony and the divine life of grace as Joseph, of the line of David, and nonetheless a humble labourer... How could you not have chosen him as your heavenly patron?”*

Pius XII instituted in 1955 the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, intended to replace the feast of the patronage of St. Joseph: *“There could be no better guardian to help you fill your lives with the spirit of the Gospel... It is certain that no labourer was so perfectly and so profoundly filled with that spirit as the foster father of Jesus who lived with him in the intimacy of the*

*family and the workshop. In the same way, if you would be close to Christ, We repeat, go to Joseph... We have the pleasure of announcing Our intention of instituting—and We institute in reality—the liturgical feast of St. Joseph the Worker, setting its date as the 1st of May...”*  
A new liturgy was prepared for the institution of this feast.

# Day Two

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Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance, in his book *La Mère du Sauveur* [The Mother of the Saviour], explains the theological reasons for the greatness and the powerful intercession attributed to St. Joseph, basing his argument on tradition and the writings of recent popes.

**La Mère du Sauveur et notre vie intérieure**  
**[The Mother of the Saviour and our interior life]**  
**Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance**

**Chapter VII**  
**The predestination of St. Joseph,**  
**and his eminent sanctity**

« *Qui minor est inter vos, hic major est* »  
– Luke 9:48

It is impossible to write a book about Our Lady without touching on the predestination of St. Joseph, on his eminent perfection, on the special nature of his exceptional mission, on his virtues and on the part he now plays in the sanctification of souls.

## **St. Joseph's preeminence over any other saint is increasingly recognized in the Church.**

The opinion that St. Joseph is the greatest of the saints after Our Lady is one which is becoming daily more commonly held in the Church. We do not hesitate to look on the humble carpenter as higher in grace and eternal glory than the patriarchs and the greatest of the prophets—than St. John the Baptist, the Apostles, the martyrs and the great doctors of the Church. He who is least in the depth of his humility is, because of the interconnection of the virtues, the greatest in the height of his charity: “He that is the lesser among you all, he is the greater” (Luc, IX, 48).

St. Joseph's pre-eminence was taught by Gerson<sup>1</sup> and St. Bernardine of Siena<sup>2</sup>. It became more and more common in the course of the 16th century. It was admitted by St. Teresa, by the Dominican Isidore de Isolani, who appears to have written the first treatise on St. Joseph<sup>3</sup>, by St. Francis de Sales, by Suarez<sup>4</sup>, and later by St. Alphonsus Liguori<sup>5</sup>, Ch. Sauve,

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1 Sermo in Nativitatem Virginis Mariae, IVa consideratio.

2 Sermo I de S. Joseph, c. iii, Opera, Lyon, 1650, t. IV, p. 254.

3 Summa de donis S. Joseph, ann. 1522. There is a new edition by Fr. Berthier, Rome, 1897.

4 In Summam S. Thomae, IIIa, q. 29, disp. 8, sect. I.

5 Sermone di S. Giuseppe, Discorsi Morali, Naples, 1841.

Cardinal Lépicier<sup>6</sup> and Bp. Sinibaldi<sup>7</sup>; it is very ably treated in the article “Joseph” in the *Dict. de Théol. Cath.* by M. A. Michel.

The doctrine of St. Joseph’s pre-eminence received the approval of Leo XIII in his encyclical *Quamquam pluries*, August 15th, 1899, written to proclaim St. Joseph patron of the universal Church:

*“The dignity of the Mother of God is so elevated that there can be no higher created one. But since St. Joseph was united to the Blessed Virgin by the conjugal bond, there is no doubt that he approached nearer than any other to that super-eminent dignity of hers by which the Mother of God surpasses all created natures. Conjugal union is the greatest of all; by its very nature it is accompanied by a reciprocal communication of the goods of the spouses. If then God gave St. Joseph to Mary to be her spouse He certainly did not give him merely as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, a guardian of her honor, but He made him also participate by the conjugal bond in the eminent dignity which was hers.”*

When Leo XIII said that Joseph came *nearest of all* to the super-eminent dignity of Mary, did his words imply that Joseph is higher in glory than all the angels? We cannot give any certain answer to the question. We must be content to restate the doctrine which is becoming more and more commonly taught: of all the saints Joseph is the highest after Jesus and Mary; he is among the angels and the archangels.

The Church mentions him immediately after Mary and before the Apostles in the prayer *A cunctis*. Though he is not mentioned in the Canon of the Mass, he has a proper preface, and the month of March is consecrated to him as protector and defender of the universal Church.

The multitude of Christians in all succeeding generations is committed to him in a real though hidden manner. This idea is expressed in the litanies approved by the Church:

*“St. Joseph, illustrious descendant of David, light of the Patriarchs, Spouse of the Mother of God, guardian of her virginity, foster-father of the Son of God, vigilant defender of Christ, head of the Holy Family; Joseph most just, most chaste, most prudent, most strong, most obedient, most faithful, mirror of patience, lover of poverty, model of workers, glory of domestic life, guardian of virgins, support of families, consolation of the afflicted, hope of the sick, patron of the dying, terror of demons, protector of the Holy Church.”*

He is the greatest after Mary.

## **The Reason for St. Joseph’s Pre-eminence**

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<sup>6</sup> Tractatus de Sancto Joseph, Paris, 1908.

<sup>7</sup> La Grandezza di San Giuseppe, Rome, 1927, pp. 36 sqq.

What is the justification of this doctrine which has been more and more accepted in the course of five centuries?

The principle invoked more or less explicitly by St. Bernard, St. Bernardine of Siena, Isidore de Isolani, Suarez, and more recent authors is the one, simple and sublime, formulated by St. Thomas when treating of the fullness of grace in Jesus and of holiness in Mary: *An exceptional divine mission calls for a corresponding degree of grace.*

This principle explains why the holy soul of Jesus, being united personally to the Word, the Source of all grace, received the absolute fullness of grace.

It explains also why Mary, called to be Mother of God, received from the instant of her conception an initial fullness of grace which was greater than the initial fullness of all the saints together: since she was nearer than any other to the Source of grace she drew grace more abundantly.

It explains also why the Apostles who were nearer to Our Blessed Lord than the saints who followed them had more perfect knowledge of the mysteries of faith. To preach the gospel infallibly to the world they received at Pentecost the gift of a most eminent, most enlightened, and most firm faith as the principle of their apostolate.

The same truth explains St. Joseph's pre-eminence.

To understand it we must add one remark: all works *which are to be referred immediately to God Himself are perfect.*

The work of creation, for example, which proceeded entirely and directly from the hand of God was perfect.

The same must be said of *His great servants, whom He has chosen exceptionally and immediately*—not through a human instrument—to restore the order disturbed by sin.

God does not choose as men do. Men often choose incompetent officials for the highest posts. But those whom God Himself chooses directly and immediately to be His exceptional ministers in the work of redemption receive from Him grace proportionate to their vocation. This was the case with St. Joseph. He must have received a relative fullness of grace proportionate to his mission since he was chosen not by men nor by any creature but by God Himself and by God alone to fulfill a mission unique in the world.

We cannot say at what precise moment St. Joseph's sanctification took place. But we can say that, from the time of his marriage to Our Lady, he was confirmed in grace, because of his special mission<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dict. Théol Cath., art. Joseph, col. 1518

# Day Three

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## La Mère du Sauveur et notre vie intérieure [The Mother of the Saviour and our interior life]

Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange  
Chapter VII

### The predestination of St. Joseph, and his eminent sanctity (continued)

#### To what order does St. Joseph's exceptional mission belong?

St. Joseph's mission is evidently higher than the order of nature—even by angelic nature. But is it simply of the order of grace, as was that of St. John the Baptist who prepared the way of salvation, and that the Apostles had in the Church for the sanctification of souls, and that more particular mission of the founders of religious orders?

If we examine the question carefully we shall see that St. Joseph's mission surpassed the order of grace. It borders, by its term, on the hypostatic order, which is constituted by the mystery of the Incarnation. But it is necessary to avoid both exaggeration and understatement in this matter.

Mary's unique mission, her divine motherhood, has its term in the hypostatic order. So also, in a sense, St. Joseph's hidden mission. This is the teaching of many saints and other writers. St. Bernard says of St. Joseph: *"He is the faithful and prudent servant whom the Lord made the support of His Mother, the foster-father of His flesh, and the sole most faithful co-operator on earth in His great design<sup>9</sup>."*

St. Bernardine of Siena writes: *"When God chooses a person by grace for a very elevated mission, He gives all the graces required for it. This is verified in a specially outstanding manner in the case of St. Joseph, Foster-father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Spouse of Mary...<sup>10</sup>"* Isidore de Isolani places St. Joseph's vocation above that of the Apostles. He remarks that the vocation of the Apostles is to preach the gospel, to enlighten souls, to reconcile them with God, but that the vocation of St. Joseph is more immediately in relation with Christ Himself since he is the Spouse of the Mother of God, the Foster-father and Protector of the Savior<sup>11</sup>.

Suarez teaches to the same effect: *"Certain offices pertain to the order of sanctifying grace,*

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<sup>9</sup> Homil. II super Missus est.

<sup>10</sup> Sermo I de S. Joseph.

<sup>11</sup> Summa de donis sancti Joseph, Pars IIIa, c. xviii. This work was very highly praised by Benedict XIV.

*and among them that of the Apostles holds the highest place; thus they have need of more gratuitous gifts than other souls, especially gratuitous gifts of wisdom. But there are other offices which touch upon or border on the order of the Hypostatic Union ... as can be seen clearly in the case of the divine maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and it is to that order that the ministry of St. Joseph pertains.* <sup>12</sup>

Some years ago Bp. Sinibaldi, titular Bishop of Tiberias and secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, treated the question very ably. He pointed out that the ministry of St. Joseph belonged, in a sense, because of its term, to the hypostatic order: not that St. Joseph co-operated intrinsically as physical instrument of the Holy Spirit in the realization of the mystery of the Incarnation—for under that respect his role is very much inferior to that of Mary—but that he was predestined to be, in the order of moral causes, the protector of the virginity and the honor of Mary at the same time as foster-father and protector of the Word made flesh: *“His mission pertains by its term to the hypostatic order, not through intrinsic physical and immediate cooperation, but through extrinsic moral and mediate (through Mary) co-operation, which is, however, really and truly co-operation.* <sup>13</sup>

### **St. Joseph’s predestination is one with the decree of the Incarnation**

St. Joseph’s pre-eminence becomes all the clearer if we consider that the eternal decree of the Incarnation covered not merely the Incarnation in abstraction from circumstances of time and place but the Incarnation here and now—that is to say, the Incarnation of the Son of God Who by the operation of the Holy Spirit was to be conceived at a certain moment of time by the Virgin Mary, espoused to a man of the family of David whose name was Joseph: *“The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David”* <sup>14</sup>(Luke 1:26-27).

All the indications are therefore that St. Joseph was predestined to be foster-father of the Incarnate Word before being predestined to glory; the ultimate reason being that Christ’s predestination as man to the natural divine sonship precedes the predestination of all the elect, since Christ is the first of the predestined. The predestination of Christ to the natural divine sonship is simply the decree of the Incarnation, which, as we have seen, includes Mary’s predestination to the divine motherhood and Joseph’s to be foster-father and protector of the Incarnate Son of God.

As the predestination of Christ to the natural divine son-ship is superior to His predestination to glory and precedes it, and as the predestination of Mary to the divine motherhood precedes (in signo priori) her predestination to glory, so also the predestination of St. Joseph to be foster-father of the Incarnate Word precedes his predestination to glory and to grace.

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<sup>12</sup> In Summam S. Thomae, IIIa, q. 29, disp. 8, sect. I.

<sup>13</sup> La Grandezza di San Giuseppe, Rome, 1927, pp. 36 sqq.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. IIIa, q. 24, a. 1, 2, 3, 4.

In other words, the reason why he was predestined to the highest degree of glory after Mary, and in consequence to the highest degree of grace and of charity, is that he was called to be the worthy foster-father and protector of the Man-God.

The fact that St. Joseph's first predestination was one with the decree of the Incarnation shows how elevated his unique mission was. This is what people mean when they say that St. Joseph was made and put into the world to be the foster-father of the Incarnate Word and that God willed for him a high degree of glory and grace to fit him for his task.

# Day Four

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**La Mère du Sauveur et notre vie intérieure**  
**[The Mother of the Saviour and our interior life]**  
**Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange**

**Chapter VII**  
**The predestination of St. Joseph, and his eminent sanctity**  
**(conclusion)**

## **The Special Character of St. Joseph's Mission**

This point is explained admirably by Bossuet in his first panegyric of the saint: *“Among the different vocations, I notice two in the Scriptures which seem directly opposed to each other: the first is that of the Apostles, the second that of St. Joseph. Jesus was revealed to the Apostles that they might announce Him throughout the world; He was revealed to St. Joseph who was to remain silent and keep Him hidden. The Apostles are lights to make the world see Jesus. Joseph is a veil to cover Him; and under that mysterious veil are hidden from us the virginity of Mary and the greatness of the Savior of souls... He Who makes the Apostles glorious with the glory of preaching, glorifies Joseph by the humility of silence.”* The hour for the manifestation of the mystery of the Incarnation had not yet struck: it was to be preceded by the thirty years of the hidden life.

Perfection consists in doing God's will, each one according to his vocation; St. Joseph's vocation of silence and obscurity surpassed that of the Apostles because it bordered more nearly on the redemptive Incarnation. After Mary, Joseph was nearest to the Author of grace, and in the silence of Bethlehem, during the exile in Egypt, and in the little home of Nazareth he received more graces than any other saint.

His mission was a dual one.

As regards Mary, he preserved her virginity by contracting with her a true but altogether holy marriage. The angel of the Lord said to him: *“Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived of her is of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt. 1:20; Luke 2:5). Mary is truly his wife. The marriage was a true one, as St. Thomas explains (IIIa, q. 29, a. 2) when showing its appropriateness. There should be no room for doubt, however light, regarding the honor of the Son and the Mother: if ever doubt did arise Joseph, the most informed and the least suspect witness, would be there to defend it. Besides, Mary would find help and protection in St. Joseph. He loved her with a pure and devoted love, in God and for God. Their union was stainless, and most respectful on the side of St. Joseph. Thus he was nearer than any other saint to the Mother of God and the spiritual Mother of men—and he

too was a man. The beauty of the whole universe was nothing compared with that of the union of Mary and Joseph, a union created by the Most High, which ravished the angels and gave joy to the Lord.

As regards the Incarnate Word, Joseph watched over Him, protected Him, and contributed to His human education. He is called His foster-father, but the term does not express fully the mysterious supernatural relation between the two. A man becomes foster-father of a child normally as a result of an accident. But it was no accident in the case of St. Joseph: he had been created and put into the world for that purpose: it was the primary reason of his predestination and the reason for all the graces he received. Bossuet expressed this well: *"If nature does not give a father's heart, where will it be found? In other words, since Joseph was not Jesus' father, how could he have a father's heart in His regard? Here we must recognize the action of God. It is by the power of God that Joseph has a father's heart, and if nature fails God gives one with His own hand; for it is of God that it is written that He directs our inclinations where he wills.... He gives some a heart of flesh when He softens their nature by charity.... Does He not give all the faithful the hearts of children when He sends to them the Spirit of His Son? The Apostles feared the least danger, but God gave them a new heart and their courage became undaunted.... The same hand gave Joseph the heart of a father and Jesus the heart of a son. That is why Jesus obeys and Joseph does not fear to command. How has he the courage to command his Creator? Because the true Father of Jesus Christ, the God Who gives Him birth from all eternity, having chosen Joseph to be the father of His only Son in time, sent down into his bosom some ray or some spark of His own infinite love for His Son; that is what changed his heart, that is what gave him a father's love, and Joseph the just man who feels that father's heart within him feels also that God wishes him to use his paternal authority, so that he dares to command Him Who he knows is his Master."*<sup>15</sup> That is equivalent to saying that Joseph was predestined first to take the place of a father in regard to the Savior Who could have no earthly father<sup>16</sup>, and in consequence to have all the gifts which were given him that he might be a worthy Protector of the Incarnate Word.

Is it necessary to say with what fidelity St. Joseph guarded the triple deposit confided to him: the virginity of Mary, the Person of Jesus Christ, and the secret of the Eternal Father, that of the Incarnation of His Son, a secret to be guarded faithfully till the hour appointed for its revelation?

In a discourse delivered in the Consistorial Hall on the 19th of March, 1928, Pope Pius XI said, after having spoken on the missions of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter: *"Between these two missions there appears that of St. Joseph, one of recollection and silence, one almost unnoticed and destined to be lit up only many centuries afterwards, a silence which would become a resounding hymn of glory, but only after many years. But where the mystery*

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<sup>15</sup> First Panegyric of St. Joseph, edit. Lebarcq, t. II, pp. 135 sqq.

<sup>16</sup> We read that Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph. Joseph in his humility must have been confounded that he, the least of the three, should be the head of the Holy Family.

*is deepest it is there precisely that the mission is highest and that a more brilliant cortège of virtues is required with their corresponding echo of merits. It was a unique and sublime mission, that of guarding the Son of God, the King of the world, that of protecting the virginity of Mary, that of entering into participation in the mystery hidden from the eyes of ages and so to co-operate in the Incarnation and the Redemption.”* That is equivalently to state that Divine Providence conferred on St. Joseph all the graces he received in view of his special mission: in other words, St. Joseph was predestined first of all to be as a father to the Savior, and was then predestined to the glory and the grace which were becoming in one favored with so exceptional a vocation.

## **The Virtues and Gifts of St. Joseph**

St. Joseph’s virtues are those especially of the hidden life, in a degree proportioned to that of his sanctifying grace: virginity, humility, poverty, patience, prudence, fidelity, simplicity, faith enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, confidence in God and perfect charity. He preserved what had been confided to him with a fidelity proportioned to its inestimable value.

Bossuet makes this general observation about the virtues of the hidden life: *“It is a common failing of men to give themselves entirely to what is outside and to neglect what is within; to work for mere appearances and to neglect what is solid and lasting; to think often of the impression they make and little of what they ought to be. That is why the most highly esteemed virtues are those which concern the conduct and direction of affairs. The hidden virtues, on the contrary, which are practiced away from the public view and under the eye of God alone, are not only neglected but hardly even heard of. And yet this is the secret of true virtue. . . a man must be built up interiorly in himself before he deserves to be given rank among others; and if this foundation is lacking, all the other virtues, however brilliant, will be mere display. . . they will not make the man according to God’s heart. Joseph sought God in simplicity; Joseph found God in detachment; Joseph enjoyed God’s company in obscurity.”*<sup>17</sup>

St. Joseph’s humility must have been increased by the thought of the gratuity of his exceptional vocation. He must have said to himself: why has the Most High given me, rather than any other man, His Son to watch over? Only because that was His good pleasure. Joseph was freely preferred from all eternity to all other men to whom the Lord could have given the same gifts and the same fidelity to prepare them for so exceptional a vocation. We see in St. Joseph’s predestination a reflection of the gratuitous predestination of Jesus and Mary.

The knowledge of the value of the grace he received and of its absolute gratuitousness, far from injuring his humility, would strengthen it. He would think in his heart: *“What have you that you have not received?”*

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<sup>17</sup> Second Panegyric on St. Joseph.

Joseph appears the most humble of the saints after Mary—more humble than any of the angels. If he is the most humble he is by that fact the greatest, for the virtues are all connected and a person's charity is as elevated as his humility is profound. *"He that is lesser among you all, he is the greater"* (Lk. 9:48).

Bossuet says well: *"Though by an extraordinary grace of the Eternal Father he possessed the greatest treasure, it was far from Joseph's thought to pride himself on his gifts or to make them known, but he hid himself as far as possible from mortal eyes, enjoying with God alone the mystery revealed to him and the infinite riches of which he was the custodian."*<sup>18</sup> *"Joseph has in his house what could attract the eyes of the whole world, and the world does not know him; he guards a God-Man, and breathes not a word of it; he is the witness of so great a mystery, and he tastes it in secret without divulging it abroad."*<sup>19</sup>

His faith cannot be shaken in spite of the darkness of the unexpected mystery. The word of God communicated to him by the angel throws light on the virginal conception of the Savior: Joseph might have hesitated to believe a thing so wonderful, but he believes it firmly in the simplicity of his heart. By his simplicity and his humility, he reaches up to divine heights.

Obscurity follows once more. Joseph was poor before receiving the secret of the Most High. He becomes still poorer when Jesus is born, for Jesus comes to separate men from everything so as to unite them to God. There is no room for the Savior in the last of the inns of Bethlehem. Joseph must have suffered from having nothing to offer to Mary and her Son.

*His confidence in God* was made manifest in trials. Persecution came soon after Jesus' birth. Herod tried to put Him to death, and the head of the Holy Family was forced to conceal the child, to take refuge in a distant country where he was unknown and where he did not know how he could earn a living. But he set out on the journey relying on Divine Providence.

*His love of God and of souls* did not cease to increase during the hidden life of Nazareth; the Incarnate Word is an unfailing source of graces, ever newer and more choice, for docile souls who oppose no obstacle to His action. We have said already, when speaking of Mary, that the progress of such docile souls is one of uniform acceleration, that is to say, they are carried all the more powerfully to God the nearer they approach Him. This law of spiritual gravitation was realized in Joseph; his charity grew up to the time of his death, and the progress of his latter years was more rapid than that of his earlier years, for finding himself nearer to God he was more powerfully drawn by Him.

Along with the theological virtues the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are connected with charity, grew continuously. Those of understanding and of wisdom made his living faith more penetrating and more attuned to the divine. In a simple but most elevated way his contemplation rose to the infinite goodness of God. In its simplicity his contemplation was

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<sup>18</sup> First Panegyric on St. Joseph.

<sup>19</sup> Second Panegyric on St. Joseph.

the most perfect after Mary's.

His loving contemplation was sweet, but it demanded of him the most perfect spirit of abnegation and sacrifice when he recalled the words of Simeon: *"This child will be... a sign that will be contradicted"* and *"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce."* He needed all his generosity to offer to God the Infant Jesus and His Mother Mary whom he loved incomparably more than himself.

St. Joseph's death was a privileged one; St. Francis de Sales writes that it was a death of love<sup>20</sup>. The same holy doctor teaches with Suarez that St. Joseph was one of the saints who rose after the Resurrection of the Lord (Mt. 27:52 sqq.) and appeared in the city of Jerusalem; he holds also that these resurrections were definitive<sup>21</sup> and that Joseph entered heaven then, body and soul. St. Thomas is much more reserved regarding this point. Though his first opinion was that the resurrections were definitive he taught later, after an examination of St. Augustine's arguments in the opposed sense, that this was not the case<sup>22</sup>.

### **St. Joseph's role in the sanctification of souls**

The humble carpenter is glorified in heaven to the extent to which he was hidden on earth. He to whom the Incarnate Word was subject has now an incomparable power of intercession.

Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Quamquam pluries* finds in St. Joseph's mission in regard to the Holy Family *"the reasons why he is Patron and Protector of the universal Church.... Just as Mary, Mother of the Savior, is spiritual mother of all Christians.... Joseph looks on all Christians as having been confided to himself.... He is the defender of the Holy Church which is truly the house of God and the kingdom of God on earth."*

What strikes us most in St. Joseph's role till the end of time is that there are united in it in an admirable way apparently opposed prerogatives.

His influence is universal over the whole Church, and yet, like Divine Providence, it descends to the least details; *"model of workmen,"* he takes an interest in everyone who turns to him. He is the most universal of the saints, and yet he helps a poor man in his ordinary daily needs.

His action is primarily of the spiritual order, and yet it extends to temporal affairs; he is *"the support of families and of communities, the hope of the sick"*.

He watches over Christians of all conditions, of all countries, over fathers of families, husbands and wives, consecrated virgins; over the rich to inspire them to distribute their

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20 Treatise of the Love of God, Bk. VII, ch. xiii.

21 Cf. in Matth. xxvii and IV Sent., dist. 42, q. 1, a. 3.

22 Cf. IIIa, q. 53, a. 3, ad 2.

possessions charitably, and over the poor so as to help them.

He is attentive to the needs of great sinners and of souls advanced in virtue. He is the patron of a happy death, of lost causes; he is terrible to the demon, and St. Teresa tells us that he is the guide of interior souls in the ways of prayer.

His influence is a wonderful reflection of that of Divine Wisdom which *"reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly"* (Wis. 8:1).

He has been clothed and will remain clothed in Divine splendor. Grace has become fruitful in him and he will share its fruit with all who strive to attain to the life which is *"hid with Christ in God"* (Col. 3:3).

# Day Five

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Bossuet, first panegyric of St. Joseph, 1659

## BOSSUET FIRST PANEGRIC OF SAINT JOSEPH

### Depositum custodi

*This sermon was first preached in the presence of twenty-two bishops at the Assembly of the Clergy of France held March 19, 1657, and then in the presence of the French queen Anne of Austria on March 19, 1659.*

We are all perfectly well aware that to hold something in trust is to fulfill a sacred duty, one that not only calls upon our honor, but even requires a kind of religious observance. Saint Ambrose tells us of the pious custom of the faithful bringing their most valued possessions to the bishops and clergy for safe keeping before the altar. Theirs was a kind of holy intuition that treasures could not be better kept than where God had placed his own sacred mysteries. This custom was handed down from the synagogue of old. In the Sacred History, we read that the venerable Temple of Jerusalem was a place of safekeeping for the Jews; from profane writers we learn that the pagans paid the same honor to their false gods by placing their treasures in their temples and by confiding them to their priests. It is as if nature were teaching us that the obligation to keep a trust is a religious one, and that precious objects cannot be safer than where the Divinity is revered and in hands consecrated to religion.

Yet if ever there were a trust that was worthy of the name sacred and of being guarded in a holy manner, it is the one of which I speak today, the one that the Providence of the Eternal Father committed to the faith of that just man, Joseph. His very house became a kind of temple that God deigned to inhabit. To guard such a treasure, Joseph himself had to be consecrated. And truly he was, for his body was consecrated by purity and his soul by all the gifts of grace.

O Mary, you saw the effects of the grace that filled him; I need your assistance to make them known. May I not hope for your most powerful intercession when I undertake to praise the chaste spouse chosen by the Father to preserve the purity that was so dear and precious to you? We therefore have recourse to you, O Mary, and greet you with the Angel, saying: *Ave, gratia plena.*

In my plan of basing the praise of Saint Joseph not upon doubtful conjectures, but upon a solid doctrine drawn from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, I cannot better observe the solemnity of this day than by presenting this great saint to you as a man singled out to guard

God's treasure and to be his trustee here below. I shall attempt to explain that this worthy title of trustee—a title that unfolds the designs of God for this blessed patriarch—discloses the source of all his graces and the sure foundation of his honor.

It is a simple matter for me to show you how estimable is this quality. For if the name of trustee is a mark of honor and testifies to probity; if, in order to confide a trust, we choose the one whose virtue is most assured, whose fidelity is most proven, and, finally, the one who is the most intimate and most confidential of our friends, then how shall we measure the glory of Saint Joseph? God made him the trustee not only of blessed Mary, whose angelic purity made her so acceptable in his eyes, but still more of his own Son, the sole object of his delight and the unique hope of our salvation. Saint Joseph he made the trustee of the common treasure of God and man: the person of Jesus Christ. What eloquence could equal the grandeur and majesty of this title?

He cannot be rightly praised without the assistance of grace. Grace will help me to plumb so deep a mystery and seek in the Scriptures what is said of Joseph, so as to enable you to see that everything may be traced back to this great role of trustee. In the Gospels, I find three things entrusted to Joseph, and I also find three virtues that shine forth, virtues corresponding to those three treasures. These are the matters that must be explained in an orderly way.

The first of the treasures committed to his trust—the first, that is, in the order of time—was the holy virginity of Mary, which he had to preserve inviolate under the sacred veil of marriage, and which he always religiously protected as a sacred trust. The second and the more imposing was the person of Jesus Christ, whom the heavenly Father placed in his hands so that he might serve as the earthly father of the holy child. The third you will find most admirable, if I am able to explain it to you clearly. In order to understand it, we must realize that a secret is a kind of treasure. To betray the secret of a friend is to violate the sanctity of trust. The law says that if you spread abroad the secret of a testament that I confide in you, I may then take action against you for your lapse as trustee. The reason for this is plain: a secret is a kind of trust. Whence you will easily comprehend that Joseph was the trustee of the Eternal Father because God told him his secret. Which secret? The marvelous secret of the Incarnation of his Son. God's plan was not to reveal Jesus Christ to the world before his hour had come. Saint Joseph was chosen not only to keep the secret, but even to conceal it. Thus we read in the Gospel that, with Mary, he marveled at all that was said of the Savior, but we do not read that he spoke, because the Eternal Father revealed the mystery to him in secret and under the obligation of silence. Saint Bernard explained: "God desired to entrust to his faithfulness the most sacred secret of his heart." How precious you are to God, O peerless Joseph, for to you he confided his three great treasures: the virginity of Mary, the person of his only-begotten Son, and the secret of all his mystery.

You must not think that Joseph was ungrateful for these graces. If God honored him by his threefold trust, for his part he made an offering to God of the three virtues that I noted in the

Gospel. I do not doubt that his life was adorned with all the others; but here are the three principal ones that God presents to us in his Scripture. The first, his purity, is demonstrated by his continence in marriage. Who does not see the purity of Joseph in that holy society of chaste desires and that admirable correspondence with the virginity of Mary in their spiritual wedding? The second was his fidelity. How faithful was his untiring care for Jesus along the many journeys that awaited the holy child from the beginning of his life! The third was his humility. Although the possessor of the greatest of treasures through an extraordinary grace of the Eternal Father, far from preening himself on his gifts or publicizing his advantages, he hid himself from mortal eyes as much as possible, peaceably enjoying with God the mystery that he had revealed to him and the infinite riches that he had entrusted to him. Here we are in the presence of greatness, a greatness that offers crucial lessons. There is greatness in these treasures and in the example of these virtues. Let us enter into the heart of the mystery by admiring God's plan for the matchless Joseph. Having seen him entrusted with great cares, having seen his virtues, let us consider the connection of the former with the latter, and let us make this correspondence the division of our discourse.

What virtue did Joseph require in order to protect the virginity of Mary under the veil of marriage? An angelic purity which might in some way correspond to the purity of his chaste spouse.

What virtue was required to preserve the Savior Jesus among the many persecutions that attacked him from his infancy? An inviolable fidelity, one that would not be shaken amidst peril. And last, what virtue enabled him to keep God's secret? An admirable humility which fears the eyes of men and does not wish to show itself to the world, but instead loves to hide with Jesus Christ. *Depositum custodi*: O Joseph, guard what has been entrusted to you. Protect the virginity of Mary, and, to protect it within marriage, join to it your own purity; protect that precious life on which depends the salvation of mankind, preserve it amidst so many dangers; protect the secret of the Eternal Father, for he wants his Son to be hidden from the world. Be a sacred veil for him and wrap him in the obscurity that covers you, by your love for the hidden life. These are the points that I propose to explain with the help of grace.

## I

In order fully to comprehend the great honor that God accorded to Saint Joseph when He entrusted him with Mary's virginity, we must first understand how precious this virginity is to heaven and how useful it is to the earth. The Holy Scriptures show how necessary this virginity was to bring Jesus Christ to the world. It was the design of Providence that just as God had begotten his Son from all eternity by a virginal generation, so also when he had to be born in time, he came forth from a virgin mother. This is why the prophets had announced that a virgin would conceive a Son; our fathers lived in this hope, and the Gospel has shown to us its blessed fulfillment. If, however, we may be allowed to inquire into the causes of so great a mystery, it seems to me that a weighty one may be found, for

by examining the nature of holy virginity according to the teaching of the Fathers, we may note its secret power, a power that in some sense obliged the Son of God to come into the world by its cooperation.

Let us then ask the ancient doctors in what manner they would define Christian virginity. They reply with one accord that it is an imitation of the life of the angels, that it places men above their bodies by a disdain for bodily pleasures, and that it elevates the flesh so much that, if we may say so, it comes to equal the purity of the spirit. Teach us, O great Augustine; let us hear of your high regard for virgins. Here is a lovely phrase: *Habent aliquid jam non carnis in carne*. They have in the flesh, he says, something that is not of the flesh, and that belongs more to angels than to men. Virginity, then, is a kind of middle state between the spirit and the body; it brings us nearer to spiritual beings. It is now easy to comprehend why this virtue should have preceded the mystery of the Incarnation. For what is the mystery of the Incarnation? It is the intimate union of God with man, of Divinity with flesh. "The Word was made flesh," says the Evangelist; here is the union, here is the mystery. Yet does it not seem that there is too great a disproportion between the corruption of our bodies and the immortal beauty of that pure spirit? Can it be possible to unite natures that are so far apart? It is for that reason that holy virginity was placed between the two, so as to bring them together by its mediation. Light falling upon opaque bodies cannot penetrate them, but seems on the contrary to retreat by reflecting back upon its own rays; yet light enters and unites itself to a transparent body, because in it the light finds the brilliance and the transparency that approach its own nature and contain something of light. In a similar way, we may say that the divinity of the eternal Word, wanting to unite itself to a mortal body, demanded the blessed mediation of holy virginity, which, having in it something spiritual, was in some sense able to prepare the flesh to be united to this pure spirit.

I do not speak of this matter on my own authority: learn this truth from a famous bishop of the East, the great Gregory of Nyssa. *"It is virginity that makes God not refuse to dwell with men, and that gives men their wings on which to fly heavenward. As a sacred bond of friendship between man and God, it brings together by its mediation things that are far removed from one another by their natures."*

Could the truth that I am preaching be confirmed with greater clarity? Do you not see in it the worthiness of both Mary and of Joseph her faithful spouse? You see the worthiness of Mary, for her blessed virginity was chosen from all eternity to give Jesus Christ to the world. And you see the worthiness of Joseph, for Mary's purity—so essential to mankind—was confided to his care; thus he preserved what was most necessary to the world. O Joseph, guard what has been entrusted to you. *Depositum custodi*. As it pleased the Eternal Father to guard Mary's virginity under the veil of marriage, it could no longer be preserved without you, and thus your purity has in some sense become necessary to the world, by the glorious charge that was given to you to protect the purity of Mary.

At this point we must consider the celestial marriage, designed by Providence to protect

virginity and by this means to give Jesus Christ to the world. Who should I take as a guide in this difficult subject if not the incomparable Augustine, who has treated of this mystery in so divine a manner? Listen to this wise bishop and attend closely to his thoughts. He first remarks that in marriage there are three bonds. There is the sacred contract by which those who are united give themselves to one another without reserve. Second, there is the conjugal love by which they mutually vow hearts that can no longer be divided and that can burn with no other passion. Third, there are the children. The love of the parents is strengthened by seeing itself in the common fruit of the marriage.

Saint Augustine finds these three things in the marriage of Saint Joseph, and he shows us that they all contribute to protecting his virginity. In the sacred contract by which they were given to one another is the triumph of purity. For Mary belonged to Joseph, and Joseph to the divine Mary, and their marriage was most true because they gave themselves to one another. How? Purity, here is your triumph. Each ceded the right to guard their purity to the other. Yes, Mary had the right to guard Joseph's virginity, and Joseph had the right to guard Mary's. These are the promises that brought them together; this was the treaty that bound them. Two virgins united themselves in order that each might preserve the other eternally by the chaste correspondence of their modest desires. It is as though we were seeing two stars enter into conjunction only by the alignment of their lights. Therefore the bond of this marriage, says Saint Augustine, is all the more firm: the promises they made to one another were the more unshakable for the very reason that they were the more holy.

Who now can describe the conjugal love of these blessed married ones? For, O holy virginity, your flames are all the stronger to the extent that they are more pure and more detached; and the fire of concupiscence, which is burning in our bodies, can never equal the ardor of the chaste embraces of these spirits bound together by the love of purity. I seek no reasons to prove this truth; I shall find it upon a great miracle I have read about in Saint Gregory of Tours, in the first book of his History. The retelling will please, or at least refresh you. He tells us that a man and woman from the highest nobility of Auvergne, having lived in marriage with perfect continence, passed over to a happier life, and that their bodies were buried in two places some distance apart. But a strange thing happened. It seemed that they could not long endure such a severe separation, and everyone marveled to see their tombs suddenly brought together without anyone having laid a hand to the work. What does this miracle signify? Does it not seem to you that these chaste dead sorrowed to see themselves separated? Does it not seem to you that they are saying to us (permit me to bring them to life and to lend them a voice—God, after all, has permitted them to move), “Why did they bury us apart? We were together for so long, and we were like the dead, because we had extinguished every sentiment of mortal pleasure, and as we were so long accustomed to be together like the dead, death ought not separate us.” God allowed them to be reunited in order to show us in this miracle that the loveliest flames are not those in which concupiscence is mixed, but those produced by two virgins united in spiritual marriage can, it seems, last even unto the very ashes of death. That is why Gregory of Tours, who narrated this history for us, added that the people of this country called these tombs

the tombs of the two lovers, as if the people had wished to say that they were true lovers because they loved by the spirit.

Yet even so spiritual a love was not as perfect as the marriage of Saint Joseph. The love in his union was entirely celestial, because all of his passions and all of his desires were directed to the preservation of virginity. This truth may be easily understood. Tell us, O divine Joseph, what it is that you love in Mary? Doubtless not mortal beauty: it was that hidden and interior beauty, whose principal ornament was holy virginity. It was, therefore, the purity of Mary that was the object of his chaste passion; and the more he loved this purity, the more he wished to guard it, first in his holy spouse, and secondly in himself, by a complete union of hearts. How marvelous it is that everything in this marriage works to uphold the sacred trust. Their promises are wholly pure; their love is wholly virginal. It remains now to consider the greatest marvel: the sacred fruit of the marriage, Jesus the Savior.

You must be astonished to hear me preach with such assurance that Jesus was the fruit of this marriage. Of course, you may say, the incomparable Joseph was the father of Jesus Christ through his care for him; but we also know that he had no part in his blessed birth. How then can you assure us that Jesus was the fruit of this marriage? It may seem impossible, but it is nevertheless true that in a certain sense this blessed infant Jesus came out of the virginal union of these two spouses. For have we not said that it was the virginity of Mary that drew Jesus Christ from heaven? Is not Jesus the blessed flower to which virginity gave the growth? Is he not the blessed fruit that virginity brought forth? Yes, certainly, Saint Fulgence tells us, *"he is the fruit, he is the ornament, he is the price and the reward of holy virginity."* It was on account of her purity that Mary pleased the Eternal Father; it was on account of her purity that the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. May we not then say that it was her purity that made her fruitful? Now if it was her purity that made her fruitful, I do not fear to assure you that Joseph also had a part in this great miracle. For if that angelic purity was the possession of the divine Mary, it was also entrusted to Joseph the just.

I will proceed still further and tell you that Mary's purity was not only the trust, but also the possession of her holy spouse. Her purity belonged to him by marriage; it belonged to him by the chaste care with which he preserved it. O fruitful virginity! If you were Mary's possession, you also were Joseph's. Mary vowed it, Joseph preserved it, and both of them presented it to the eternal Father as a treasure guarded by their common care. As he had such a part of Mary's holy virginity, he also partook of the fruit that it bore: this is why Jesus is his son, not in truth according to the flesh, but his son by the spirit, thanks to the alliance that joined him to his mother. Saint Augustine said it with commendable brevity: *"on account of this faithful bond, they merited the name parents of Christ."* O mystery of purity! O blessed paternity! O incorruptible light, which shines throughout this marriage!

Let us ponder these truths and apply them to ourselves. Everything here was done for love of us; let us then take instruction from what was worked for our salvation. You see how chaste and innocent is the doctrine of Christianity. Shall we never understand who we are?

What shame, that we should besmirch ourselves every day by every kind of impurity, we who have been raised in the presence of such chaste mysteries! When shall we understand the dignity of our bodies, whose like the Son of God has taken on? *“Let the flesh be taken lightly,”* said Tertullian, *“or, rather, let it be corrupted, before it had been sought out by its master; it was not then worthy of the gift of salvation, nor fit for the office of holiness. It was still, in Adam, tyrannized over by its desires, seduced by apparent beauty, and fastened by the eyes to the earth. It was impure and soiled, because it had not yet been washed in baptism.”* But God did not want to come into this world as a man unless first drawn by holy virginity—even married holiness was beneath him—and so he wanted to have a virgin mother and he wanted Joseph by his continence to be made worthy to care for him. Since that day on which his blood sanctified life-giving water in order that our flesh might be cleansed of its filth, the flesh is entirely changed. It is no longer that flesh formed from mud and born from concupiscence; it is flesh that has been refashioned and renewed by the purest water and by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, my brothers, let us respect our bodies, which are the members of Jesus Christ; let us keep ourselves from prostituting to impurity this flesh that baptism has made to be virginal. *“Let us possess our vessels in honor, and not in those shameful passions that our brutality inspires in us, as they do in the Gentiles who have no God. For God does not call us to impurity, but to sanctification”* in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 4:4-7). By our continence let us honor the holy virginity that gave us the Savior, that rendered his Mother fruitful, and that made Joseph a part of that blessed fecundity, and raised him, if I dare say so, even to being the very father of Jesus Christ. After seeing what he contributed, in a certain way, to the birth of Jesus-Christ, let us now see his paternal care, and let us admire the fidelity by which he preserved the divine child whom the heavenly Father had confided to him.

## II

It was not enough for the Eternal Father to have confided Mary's virginity to Joseph; he prepared something still more exalted for him. Into the hands of this patriarch, he placed Jesus Christ himself. Looking into this secret, into the depths of this mystery, we find so great an honor given to Joseph that we will never be able fully to understand it. For Jesus, whom Joseph always watched and who was the beloved subject of his holy anxiety, was born as an orphan upon this earth and had no father in this world. This is why Saint Paul said that he was without a father: *Sine Patre* (Heb 8:3). It is true that he had one in heaven; yet it seemed that this father had abandoned him and knew him no longer. He would complain of this one day upon the Cross, when he called him his God and not his Father, saying: *“Why have you abandoned me?”* (Mt 27:46) Yet what he said while dying, he could have said from his birth, for from that first moment his Father exposed him to persecution and abandoned him to injury. All that he did in favor of this only-begotten Son, to show that he had not forgotten him—at least according to what we see—was to place him in the keeping of an upright man who would watch over his painful childhood. It was Joseph who was chosen for this service. What will this holy man do? Who could describe the joy with which he received

this abandoned one, and how he offered himself from his whole heart to be the father of this orphan? Thenceforth he lived only for Jesus Christ; he had no care but for him. For this God, he took on the heart and the soul of a father; and what he was not by nature, he became by affection.

Yet we are convinced of the truth of so great a mystery, and one so glorious for Joseph, by the evidence of the Scriptures. Consider this beautiful reflection by Saint John Chrysostom. He notes that in the Gospel, Joseph always appears as a father. He bestowed the name Jesus upon the child, as fathers did in those days. He alone was forewarned by the angel of all of the threats to the child, and the return was announced to him alone. Jesus revered and obeyed Joseph, who directed all of his conduct as having the principal care for it. Whence all this? asks Chrysostom. Here is the true reason. It was the design of God to give to the great Saint Joseph *"everything that could belong to a father without injuring virginity."*

I do not know whether I understand the full significance of this thought; but, unless I am mistaken, this is what the great bishop meant. Let us first suppose it to be certain that it was for the sake of holy virginity that the Son of God did not choose a mortal father when becoming man. And because he had to be born of a virgin mother, he could have no father but God. It was virginity, therefore, that prevented Joseph's fatherhood. But this would not preclude Joseph from having the other qualities of a father, says Chrysostom, for holy virginity is opposed only to those qualities that would injure it. In the name of father there are qualities that purity has no difficulty recognizing as her own. Is virginity harmed by care, or tenderness, or affection? See, then, God's secret arrangement, in which Joseph's fatherhood is brought together with virginal purity. *"All that belongs to a father without virginity being affected,"* he says, *"this is what I give you."* Mary, therefore, will not conceive by Joseph, but Joseph will share all the labors, watchings, and anxieties by which Mary will raise the holy Child. And he will feel for Jesus the natural inclination and the tender emotions and feelings of a fatherly heart.

You will perhaps ask where he will find this fatherly heart if nature does not provide it for him? Can these natural inclinations be acquired by choice? Can art imitate what nature writes in the heart? If Joseph be not a father, how will he have a father's love? Here it is that we must acknowledge that a divine power acts in this work. It is by an effect of this power that Saint Joseph has a father's heart, and if nature does not give him one, God makes him one with his own hand. For it is written of God that he turns inclinations where he will. To understand this, we must consider the beautiful theology taught to us by the Psalmist when he says that God forms every human heart one by one: *Qui finxit singillatim corda eorum* (Ps 32:15). Do not believe that David sees the heart as a simple organ of the body that God forms by his power as he does all the other parts of which man is composed. He means something in particular. He considers the heart to be the principle of inclination. And he sees it as soft and moist earth in the hands of God, an earth that yields to and obeys the hands of the potter and receives its shape from them. It is in this way, the Psalmist tells us, that God forms each of the hearts of men one by one.

What does this mean, one by one? He fashions a heart of flesh in some, when he softens it by charity, and a hardened heart in others when, pulling back his light in just punishment of their crimes, he abandons them to their reprobate senses. He gives to each of the faithful not the heart of a slave when he sends them the Spirit of his Son, but that of a child. The apostles first trembled at the least peril; but God made them entirely new hearts, and their courage became invincible. What was Saul's cast of mind while he tended his flock? Doubtless, low and common. Yet in placing him on the throne, God changed his heart by his anointing—*Immutavit Dominus cor Saul* (1 Kings 10:9)—and he recognized immediately that he was a king. For their part, the Israelites considered this new monarch to be a man from the dregs of the people, but the hand of God touched their hearts as well—*quorum tetigerat Deus corda* (1 Kings 10:26)—and at once they recognized his greatness, and in looking upon him they were moved by that respectful fear that one has for one's sovereign. God had placed in them the hearts of subjects.

It is the same hand that forms the hearts of men one by one who placed a father's heart in Joseph and a son's heart in Jesus. This is why Jesus obeyed, and why Joseph did not fear to command him. Whence the boldness to command his Creator? The true father of Jesus Christ, the God who begot him in eternity, chose holy Joseph to serve as the father for his only-begotten Son in time and caused his veins to flow with a certain ray or spark of his infinite love for his Son. He changed his heart; he gave him a father's love. And Joseph, who sensed in himself a paternal heart, formed by the very hand of God, also sensed that God had ordained him to employ paternal authority; and thus he dared to command the one whom he recognized as his master.

And after all of this, need I explain Joseph's fidelity in guarding this sacred trust? Could he have been wanting in fidelity towards the one whom he recognized as his only son? I would not have to speak about this virtue were there not need for such a compelling example of it. For here we learn, by the continual journeys that were required of Saint Joseph once Jesus Christ was placed under his protection, that this trust cannot be preserved without effort, and, that to be faithful to grace, one must be prepared to suffer. Yes, certainly, when Jesus came into a place, he brought his Cross, he carried with him all of his spines, and he shared them with those he loved. Joseph and Mary were poor, but they did not yet lack a home. They had a roof over their heads. As soon as this child came into the world, there was no more home for them, and their shelter was a stable. Who brought this disgrace upon them, if not the one of whom it is written that "coming into his own, his own did not receive him" (Jn 1:11) and "he had no sure refuge where he might lay down his head" (Mt 8:20). Did not their poverty suffice? Why should he bring them persecution? They lived together in their home, in poverty but with sweetness, overcoming their poverty by their patience and hard work. Yet Jesus did not grant them any rest: he came into the world only to trouble them and brought a train of sorrows in tow. Herod could not suffer the child to live; the circumstances of Christ's lowly birth could not conceal him from the tyrant's jealousy. Heaven itself betrayed the secret by pointing out Jesus Christ with a star and by bringing adorers from afar, seemingly only to incite a pitiless persecutor.

What will Saint Joseph do now? Picture for yourselves a poor artisan. His hands are his only inheritance. He has no wealth beyond his workshop, no income beyond what his labor provides. He is forced to go to Egypt and to suffer a troublesome exile, and why? Because he has Jesus Christ with him. Does he complain about this difficult child, who tears him away from his homeland and brings torment upon him? On the contrary, he counts himself happy to suffer in his company; all that troubles him is the peril of the divine infant, more dear to him than his own life. Does he hope that he will soon see the end of his disgrace? No, he does not expect it; suffering everywhere awaits him. Simeon warned him of future sufferings for his dear Son; he has already witnessed their beginning and will spend his life in continual worry about what lies ahead.

As though his fidelity were unproven, here is a trial yet more troubling. Jesus himself became his persecutor. He cleverly escaped from his hands, hid himself from his oversight, and remained lost for three days. What have you done, faithful Joseph? What has become of the sacred trust that the heavenly father confided in you? Who can tell the tale of your suffering cries? If you have not yet understood Joseph's fatherhood, look upon his tears, look upon his sorrows, and recognize that he is a father. Mary had ample cause to say at the reunion with Jesus: "*Pater tuus et ego dolentes quarebamus te*" (Lk 2:48). "*Your father and I were searching for you with great sorrow.*" 'O my Son!,' she says to the Savior, 'I do not fear to call him your father, and by doing so I bring no harm to the purity of your birth. It is on account of his cares and worries that I may call him your father, for he has a truly paternal anxiety: *Ego et pater tuus*. He is joined to me by our common sorrow.'

See by what suffering Jesus tests fidelity, and how he only wants to be with those who suffer. Soft and voluptuous souls: this child does not wish to abide with you. His poverty is ashamed of your wealth, and his flesh—destined for so much torture—cannot endure your extreme softness. He seeks those strong and courageous ones who will carry his Cross, who will not blush to be the companions of his poverty and misery. I leave it to you to meditate upon these holy truths. I feel myself called elsewhere, and must consider the secret of the eternal Father that was confided to Joseph's humility. We must see Jesus Christ hidden, and Joseph hidden with him, and let the beautiful example inspire in us a love of the hidden life.

### III

Where shall I find a light bright enough to shine through the darkness that surrounds the life of Joseph? What have I undertaken, to wish to bring to the light of day what Scripture has covered with a mysterious silence? As it was the design of the Eternal Father that his Son be hidden in the world and that Joseph be hidden with him, let us revere the secrets of his Providence without seeking to understand them; and let the hidden life of Joseph be the object of our veneration, not the subject of our discourse. All the same, it must be spoken of, and it will be useful for the salvation of souls to meditate upon such a beautiful subject. If nothing else, I will at least say that Joseph had the honor to spend every day with Jesus Christ; that, together with Mary, he had the greater part of his son's graces; that nevertheless

Joseph was hidden, that his life, his actions, and his virtues were unknown. Perhaps from so fine an example we will learn that one can be great without outward show, that one can be blessed without attracting attention, and that one can have true glory without the help of fame, but by the testimony of conscience alone: "*Gloria nostra haec est, testimonium conscientiae nostrae*" (2 Cor. 1:12). This thought will inspire us to set at naught the glory of the world.

Yet in order that we may rightly understand the grandeur and dignity of Joseph's hidden life, let us return to the source and first admire the infinite variety of the counsels of Providence in the different vocations. Among all of the vocations in the Scriptures, two seem directly opposed: that of the apostles and Joseph's. Jesus is revealed to the apostles and to Joseph, but in a contrary set of conditions. He is revealed to the apostles in order to be announced to the whole world. He is revealed to Joseph in order to be kept quiet and hidden. The apostles are lights by which the world may see Christ; Joseph is a veil to cover him, and under this mysterious veil is hidden Mary's virginity and the majesty of the Savior of Souls. And so we read in the Scriptures that when men wished to insult him, they said: "*Is this not the son of Joseph?*" (Jn 6:42) In the hands of the apostles, Jesus is a word that must be preached: "*Preach the word of this Life*" (Acts 5:20). In the hands of Joseph, Jesus is a hidden word that is not permitted to be revealed: *Verbum absconditum* (Lk 18:34). Consider what follows. The holy apostles preach the Gospel so loudly that the sound of their preaching echoes even unto heaven. Joseph, on the other hand, witnessing the marvels of Jesus Christ, listens, admires, but speaks not a word.

What does this difference mean? Does God contradict himself in these opposing vocations? No. All this diversity tends to teach the children of God one important truth: that Christian perfection consists in nothing but self-surrender. The one who glorified the apostles by the honor of preaching also glorified Saint Joseph by the humility of silence, and from this fact we should learn that the glory of Christians does not lie in brilliant achievements, but in doing what God wants of them. If we may not all have the honor of preaching Jesus Christ, we may all have the honor of obeying him. That is the glory of Saint Joseph, and it is the solid honor of Christianity. Do not ask, therefore, what Saint Joseph did in his hidden life. It is impossible to say, and I can only respond with the words of the holy Psalmist: "*The just, what has he done? Justus autem quid fecit?*" (Ps 10:4) Ordinarily the life of sinners attracts more attention than that of the just, because the passions and the interests are what move the world. The sinners, says David, have bent their bows; they have loosed them against the just; they have destroyed; they have conquered. They are the only ones spoken of in the world: *Quoniam quae perficisti destruxerunt* (Ps 10:4). But the just, he adds, what has he done? *Justus autem quid fecit?* He means that the just has done nothing. Indeed, he has done nothing in the eyes of men because he has done everything in the eyes of God. It was in this way that Joseph the just man lived. He saw Jesus Christ and was silent. He tasted him and did not speak. He contented himself with God alone, without sharing his glory with men. He accomplished his vocation, for just as the apostles were the ministers of Jesus Christ revealed, so Joseph was the minister and the companion of his hidden life.

We might wonder why it was necessary that Jesus hide himself, why that eternal splendor of the face of the heavenly Father should cover itself with voluntary darkness for thirty years? Proud men! Have you no idea? Men of the world, do you not know? Your ignorance stems from your pride, from your vain desire to be seen, from your infinite ambition, and from that culpable amiability that makes you shamefully devote to the effort to please men what should be employed to please God. This is why Jesus hides himself. He sees the disorder, he sees the ravages that this sin causes in our minds, and he watches it corrupt our entire lives from childhood until death. He sees the virtues that it suffocates by a low and shameful fear of appearing to be wise and devout; he sees the crimes that it commits, either in order to accommodate ourselves to society by a damnable agreeableness, or to satisfy ambition, for the sake of which one sacrifices everything else in the world. But this is not all. He sees that this desire to be seen destroys the highest virtues by making them substitute worldly glory in place of heavenly, by making us do for the love of men what ought to be done for the love of God. Jesus Christ sees all these evils, and he hides himself, in order to teach us to set at naught the noise and show of the world. He does not think that his Cross suffices to conquer the fury of this desire; he chooses, if it were possible, a lower condition, one in which he is in a certain sense even more annihilated.

For in the end I shall not fear to say it: my Savior, I recognize you better upon the Cross and in the shame of your suffering than I do in this lowliness and this unknown life. Even though your body be entirely torn to shreds, your face all bloody, and, far from appearing to be God, you lack the very form of a man, all the same you are not so well hidden from me, and I see, through all of these clouds, a certain ray of your majesty in this constant resolution by which you overcome the greatest of torments. Your sorrow has its dignity; even one of those punished alongside you adores you. But here, I see only what is lowly; and in this state of annihilation, one might declare that you do injury to yourself because it seems that you do nothing. Yet Jesus does not refuse this shame, for it is his will that this injury be added to all the others he has suffered, so that in hiding himself in Nazareth, he might teach us by this great example, that if he should one day show himself to the world it will be from the desire to aid us and to obey his Father. And that all greatness consists in conforming ourselves to God's orders, however it may please him to dispose of us; and, finally, that this obscurity that we so fear, but that is so illustrious and so glorious, may be chosen even by God. This is what Jesus Christ teaches us, hidden with his humble family, with Mary and Joseph, whom he joins to the obscurity of his life because they are very dear to him. Let us then take our part with them and hide ourselves with Christ.

He is still hidden. He suffers every day because his name is blasphemed and his Gospel mocked, because the hour of his greatest glory has not yet come. He is hidden with his Father, and, as the holy Apostle says, we are hidden in God with him. As we are hidden with him, it is not in this place of exile that we should seek his glory. But when Jesus shows himself in his majesty, it will then be the time to appear: "*Cum Christus apparuerit, tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso in gloria*" (Col 3:4). O God! How sweet it will be to stand forth on that day when Jesus will praise us before his holy angels, before the whole universe, and

before his heavenly Father. Let men be eternally silent about us, so that Jesus Christ may speak of us on that day. Let us nevertheless fear that terrible word that he spoke in his Gospel: *"You have received your reward"* (Mt 6:2). You desired human glory. You have had it; you are well paid. There is nothing left for you to expect. O ingenious envy of our enemy, who gives us the eyes of men so as to take away those of God; who, by a malicious gratitude, offers to reward our virtues, believing that God will not then reward them. Wretch, I want none of your glory; neither your brilliance nor your vain display can pay me for my work. I await a crown from a hand that is more dear to me, and a reward from a more powerful arm. When Jesus appears in his majesty, then, only then will I stand forth.

It is there, faithful ones, that you will see what I am not able to describe for you today: you will discover the marvels of the hidden life of Joseph. You will know what he did during those long years, and how glorious it is to hide oneself with Jesus Christ. He is, doubtless, not one of those who received his reward in this world. God will repair the obscurity of his life; and his glory will be all the greater for having been reserved for the world to come.

Let us then love the hidden life in which Jesus cloaked himself with Joseph. What does it matter that men see us? The man to whom the eyes of God do not suffice is foolishly ambitious. We do injury to God when we perform for others. If you have had great tasks and important works laid upon you, if it is necessary that your life be a public one, at least meditate seriously on this truth: that in the end your death will be private and your honors will not follow you. May the noise that men make all around you not prevent you from listening to the words of the Son of God. He does not say: Happy are the praised! But he says in his Gospel: Happy are they who are insulted for the love of me. (Mt 5:11) Tremble, then, in whatever earthly glory you attain, lest you be judged worthy of the condemnations of the Gospel. Yet if the world refuses to reproach us, let us reproach ourselves before God for our ingratitude and ridiculous vanity. Let us reflect on all of the shame of our life. Let us at least be darkened in our own eyes by a humble confession of our sins, and let us participate as we are able in the shame of Jesus, so that we may participate in his glory. Amen.

# Day Six

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Bossuet, second panegyric of St. Joseph

**BOSSUET**  
**SECOND PANEGRIC OF SAINT JOSEPH**

**Quæsit sibi Deus virum juxta cor suum.**  
**The Lord hath sought him a man according to his own heart (1 Kings 13:13)**

The man whose heart accords with God's makes no display of himself, nor does God choose him for his appearance or by listening to the voice of the people. When Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse to find David—the first to have merited such praise—the great man destined by God for the world's most glorious throne was not known even to his family. No thought was paid to him while his older brothers were being brought before the prophet. Yet God, who does not judge as man does, secretly warned Samuel not to regard their great stature or hardy countenance. And so, rejecting those who had been put forward in the world, he bid to approach the one who had been sent to watch the sheep, and pouring out the ointment of royalty upon his head, he left his parents astonished to have had so little known the son chosen by God for such an extraordinary advantage.

A similar design of Divine Providence allows us to apply what was said of David to Joseph, the son of David. The time had come when God sought a man according to his own heart in order to place in his hands all that was most dear to him: the person of his only-begotten Son, the integrity of his holy mother, the salvation of mankind, the most sacred secret of his counsel, the treasure of heaven and earth. He passes by Jerusalem and the other famous towns and rests his gaze upon Nazareth, and from this unknown hamlet chooses an unknown man, a poor craftsman, Joseph, to confide in him a work that would not bring shame to the highest order of angels, so that we might understand that the man according to God's own heart must himself be sought in the heart, and that he is made worthy of this praise by his hidden virtues. As I propose today to treat of these hidden virtues, that is, to show you the heart of Joseph the just man, I have greater need than ever that the one whom we call the God of our hearts (Ps 72:26) should enlighten me by his Holy Spirit. Yet what injury would we do to holy Mary, if, being accustomed at other times to ask for her assistance, we were not now, when treating of her holy spouse, to make the effort to say to her with special devotion: *Ave Maria*.

It is a common failing for men to give themselves entirely to external things and to neglect what lies within; to work for display and appearance and to disdain the effectual and the solid; too often dream about what they are and to hardly think at all about what they should be. That is why the virtues most esteemed are those which enter into the affairs of men,

while, on the contrary, the hidden and interior virtues in which the public has no part—where everything passes between God and man—are not only not cultivated, they are not even understood. Nevertheless, it is in this secret that the whole mystery of true virtue consists. In vain does one seek to form a good public servant if he does not first form a good man. In vain does one consider what place he might fulfill in civil society without first meditating upon the man he is in private. If civil society builds a building, the architect first shapes the stone and then places it in the building. One must make a man of oneself before thinking about what rank he will be given among others. And if one does not labor to build this foundation, all the other virtues, however brilliant they may be, will be only a parade dress put on the outside, without body or substance. They may win us praise and make our manners agreeable; they may even form us according to the desires and the heart of men. But only private virtues have the admirable privilege of forming us according to the desires and the heart of God.

These are the virtues, this is the good man, this is the man in accord with the heart of God that I would show you today in the person of Joseph. I shall leave aside the mysteries and the gifts that would highly exalt him. I shall say no more to you, Christians, than that he is the custodian of heavenly treasures, the father of Jesus Christ, the director of his childhood, the protector of his life, the spouse and guardian of his holy mother. I would silence all that might cry out in order to speak in praise of a saint whose principal greatness is to have belonged to God without outward display. Nor are the virtues of which I shall speak those of society and its affairs; everything is hidden in the secret of his conscience. Simplicity, detachment, and love of the hidden life are, therefore, the three virtues of Joseph that I shall set before you. You seem surprised that praise of so great a saint would be reduced to three such common virtues. Consider, however, that it is in just such virtues that the character of a good man consists. And it is a simple matter to show you that the character of Joseph also consists in them. For, my Sisters, three things are required for the good man to be in accord with the heart of God: he must seek him; he must find him; he must enjoy him. Whoever seeks God must seek in simplicity of heart the one who cannot tolerate an erring path. Whoever would find God must detach himself from all things in order to find the one who wants to be our entire good. Whoever wants to enjoy God must hide himself and retire in order to enjoy at peace and in solitude, the one who does not communicate himself amidst the bustle and business of the world. That is just what our patriarch did: Joseph, the single-hearted man, sought God; Joseph, the detached man, found God; Joseph, the hidden man, enjoyed God. And these are the parts of our discourse.

## I

The path of virtue is not one of those broad paths in which one may wander about just as he pleases. On the contrary, we learn in the sacred Scriptures that it is but a little foot-path, a narrow, hemmed-in way, and that the whole length of it is extremely straight: *Semita justi recta est, rectus callis justi ad ambulandum* (Is 26:7). Whence we ought to learn that we must travel it in simplicity and with great rectitude. However little we stray, or even waver

in this path, we fall into the snares which border it on either side. This is why the Holy Spirit, seeing this danger, so often warns us to walk in the path he has blazed, without ever turning aside to the right or the left: *Non declinabitis neque ad dexteram neque ad sinistram* (Deut. 5:32 and 17:11; Proverbs 4: 27; Is. 30: 21); teaching us with those words that in order to keep to this path, our intention must be so firmly set that we do not permit ourselves to relax, nor to take the least step to one side or the other.

To walk this way is to have what the Scriptures call a heart that is right with God and to walk in simplicity before his face. It is the only way to seek him and the unique path to arrive at him, because, as the Wise Man says: *"God leads the just man by the right path; Justum deduxit Dominus per vias rectas"* (Wisdom X:10). For he desires us to seek him with great ardor; and so, that we take the shortest routes, which are always the straightest ones; and he does not believe that we do seek him unless we walk directly towards him. This is why he does not want those who stop along the way. He does not want those who turn aside. He does not want those who divide themselves. Whoever pretends to divide his heart between earth and heaven gives nothing to heaven and everything to earth, because the earth retains whatever is turned towards it, and heaven does not accept what is offered.

From this discussion you should comprehend that the blessed simplicity so highly praised in Holy Scripture is a certain rectitude of the heart and purity of intention, and the principal act of this virtue is to move towards God in good faith and without thinking much of oneself: a necessary and important act that requires further explanation. Lest you persuade yourselves that I speak unreasonably, Christians, consider that in the path of virtue, if there are those who lead others astray, many also mislead themselves. Those who divide themselves between the two paths, who wish to have one foot in each, who give themselves to God in such a way that they always keep an eye on the world: these do not walk in simplicity, neither before God nor before men, and, consequently, they have no lasting virtue. They are not right before men because they impose themselves upon men by making a display of a piety that can only be counterfeit, having been falsified by admixture. They are not right before God because for us to be pleasing in his sight it does not suffice to produce studied and artificial acts of borrowed virtue by strained but untrue intentions.

A man engaged in the love of the world daily violates the most holy laws of good faith, friendship, and natural justice—the upholding of which we owe even strangers—in order to satisfy his greed. By retaining a certain vague and general inclination toward virtue, however, he imagines himself to be a good man, and he wishes to accomplish virtuous deeds: but what deeds, O Almighty God? He has heard of acts of detachment, acts of contrition, acts of repentance. He reaches into his memory to bring forth the words of which they are composed, or the image of the sentiments that formed them. He applies them as best he can to his will; I can say nothing more than this, for his intention is in opposition. He imagines himself to be virtuous, but he misleads, harms, and plays tricks upon himself.

To make oneself pleasing to God, it does not suffice to produce by tricks and stratagems

forced acts of virtue and artificial intentions. Acts of piety must be born deep within the heart and may not be borrowed from the mind or the memory. Yet those that come from the heart will not suffer to be divided: No one can serve two masters (Matt 6:24). God cannot suffer such a duplicitous intention, one which looks to both sides at once. A vision so divided makes a man unseemly and deformed; and the soul disfigures itself, when it turns its intentions in two different directions. "Let your eye," says the Son of God, "be simple." That is to say, let your regard be one, and, to speak in still simpler terms, let a pure and disengaged intention be applied entirely to the same end, let the heart take on sincerely and in good faith the sentiments that God wishes. Yet what I have said in general will be better understood in our example.

God ordained that Joseph should receive the holy Virgin as his faithful spouse while her expectancy seemed to convict her, should regard as his own son a child close to him only by virtue of living in his house, should revere, finally, as his God the one whom he was obliged to serve as guardian and protector. To accomplish these ends—ends requiring delicate sentiments that nature could not provide—only an extreme simplicity could render the heart docile and tractable. Let us see what Joseph the just man will do. We will note that with respect to his holy spouse, never was suspicion more modest, nor doubt more respectful; yet in the end he was so just that he could not settle his mind without the intervention of heaven. And so an angel declared to him, speaking on behalf of God, that she had conceived by the Holy Spirit. If his intention had been less upright, if he had belonged to God only halfway, he would not have given himself entirely, there would have remained an troubling suspicion at the bottom of his soul, and his affection for the holy Virgin would have always been doubtful and disturbed. Yet his heart, that sought God in simplicity, was unable to divide itself with God: he had no difficulty in realizing that the incorruptible virtue of his holy spouse merited the testimony of heaven. He surpassed the faith of Abraham, even though he is given to us in the Scriptures as the model of a perfect faith. Abraham is praised for having believed that a child would be born of a sterile woman; Joseph believed that one would be born of a virgin, and he recognized in simplicity the great and impenetrable mystery of the fruitful virginity.

Yet here is something still more marvelous. God wants you to receive as your own son this child of Mary's purity. You will not share with the Virgin the honor of having given birth to him, because then virginity would be injured; but you will share with her the care, the vigils, the anxieties by which she will raise her son. You will stand in the place of a father to this holy child, who does not have an earthly father, and even though you will not be one according to nature, you must become one by your affection. How shall so great a work be accomplished? Where shall he find this paternal heart if nature does not give it to him? Can these inclinations be obtained by choice? Shall we not fear in this case those borrowed actions and artificial intentions that we have just been reproving? No, Brethren, fear not. A heart that seeks God in simplicity is a soft and moist earth that receives the form it is given; what God wills passes into its nature. If, then, it is the will of the Heavenly Father that Joseph stand in his place in this world, and that he serve as father to his Son, he will raise up towards

that holy and divine child those natural inclinations, those tender emotions, and all of the warmth of a paternal heart.

In truth, during those three days that the Son of God hid himself in order to remain in the temple with the doctors, Joseph was moved as much as Mary, as well she knew: "*Pater tuus et ego dolentes quarebamus te: Your father and I were afflicted*" (Luke 2:48). See that she joins him to herself in the society of their afflictions. I do not fear to call him your father, and I in no way injure the purity of your birth, for it is a matter of care and anxiety, and by these may I call him your father, for he has truly suffered as a father. See how this holy man simply and in good faith takes up the sentiments God has ordained for him. Loving Jesus Christ as a son, will he be able to revere him as his God? Doubtless yes, but there would have been nothing more challenging, had holy simplicity not rendered his mind docile in order to bow effortlessly before the Divine order.

It is here, Christians, in the purity of his faith that we see the last work of the simplicity of Joseph the just man. The great mystery of our faith is to believe in a God manifested in weakness. In order to understand the perfection of Joseph's faith, we must note that the weakness of Jesus Christ can be seen in two lights: either as being supported by some powerful work, or as left and abandoned to himself. In the final years of Our Savior's life, though the infirmity of his flesh was visible in his sufferings, no less was his divine omnipotence in his miracles. It is true that he was a mere man according to appearances; but this man said things that no man had ever said, and this man did things that no man had ever done. His weakness, therefore, being supported, it is not surprising that men adored Jesus, for the marks of his power gave them reason to consider his weakness to be voluntary. And their faith in him, accordingly, had no great merit. But in the condition that Joseph saw him, it is difficult to understand how he believed so faithfully, because weakness has never appeared more abandoned, not even—I say it fearlessly—in the ignominy of the Cross. For that was the important hour for which he had come: his Father had abandoned him, and Jesus agreed that at that hour he should be abandoned. He abandoned himself voluntarily in order to be handed over to the executioners. If during these days of his abandonment the power of his enemies was very great, they had nothing in which to glory, because having first overturned them with a single word, he caused them to know that he gave himself over to them only by a voluntary weakness: *Non haberes potestatem adversum me ullam, nisi tibi datum esset desuper*; You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). But in the condition of which I speak, and in which Saint Joseph saw him, his weakness was all the greater in that it appeared in a certain sense to be forced upon him.

For at last, my Divine Savior, what was the conduct of your heavenly Father during this last episode? He wanted to save the Magi who had come to adore you, and so he made the escape by another route. He wanted to save you, but to do so seemed to be more difficult. An angel came from heaven to awaken Joseph by, as it were, tumbling him out of bed and to tell him, as if he were threatened by a terrible danger: Flee at once, leave this night

with the mother and the child, and run to Egypt! Flee: what a word! It would have been enough to have said: depart. But flee, during the night: this is a precaution for weakness! What then? The God of Israel is saved only thanks to shadows? And who said it? It was an angel who came suddenly to Joseph, like a frightened messenger, "so that," as one of the Fathers says, "it seems that all of heaven was alarmed, and that terror was abroad there before it came to earth: *Ut videatur caelum timor ante tenuisse quam terram.*" But let us consider what happened next. Joseph was safe in Egypt, and the same angel came back to him and said "Return to Judea, for those who were seeking the boy's life are dead" (Matt 2:20). What is this! If they were alive, a God would not be safe! O weakness sore abandoned! Here is the condition of the divine Jesus, and, in this condition Saint Joseph adored him as if he had witnessed his greatest miracles. He recognized the mystery of this miraculous abandonment; he knew that the virtue of faith was to maintain hope without there being any grounds for hope: *In spem contra spem* (Romans IV:18). He abandoned himself to God in simplicity and carried out all of his commands without second thoughts. In fact, an obedience that questions the causes of a command is too curious: obedience should have eyes only for duty and should cherish its blindness, which makes it walk in safety. Yet this obedience of Saint Joseph came from the simplicity of his belief, and because his mind, not hesitating between faith and reason, followed the lights that came to him from above with rectitude of intention. O living faith, O faith simple and upright: well did the Savior say that he would not find you upon this earth! For, Brethren, in what manner do we believe? Who will help us today to penetrate deep within ourselves and to see whether these acts of faith that we make from time to time are truly in our hearts or whether it is not custom that causes them from without?

If we are unable to read our hearts, let us investigate our works, and let us acknowledge the paucity of our faith. A mark of its weakness is that we do not dare to build anything upon it. We dare not to confide ourselves in it, nor to establish on this foundation all our hopes of happiness. Call me a liar, Gentlemen, if I do not speak the truth. While we vacillate between a Christian life and a worldly one, do we not harbor a secret doubt at the bottom of our hearts: "this immortality promised to us, is it something certain? Is it not too risky to venture one's repose and happiness by quitting what we can see in order to follow what we cannot?" We do not, I say, believe with simplicity; we are not Christians in good faith.

Yet I would believe, you say, if I were to see an angel as Saint Joseph did. O man: stop pretending. Jonah argued with God, even though he had been instructed by a manifest vision. And Job was faithful, even though he had not been strengthened by extraordinary sights. Our hearts will not be touched by extraordinary ways: holy simplicity and purity of intention will produce true charity, which will bind our minds to God by detaching them from creatures.

## II

God founded his Gospel upon mysterious opposites: he gives himself only to those who are

contented with him and are detached from other goods. Abraham had to leave behind his house and all that attached him to the land before God would say to him: I am your God. All that can be seen must be abandoned in order to merit what cannot be seen; and no one can possess the great whole unless he is in the world as one having nothing: *Tanquam nihil habentes* (II Cor. 6:10). If ever there were a man to whom God gave himself willingly, it was doubtless Joseph, who kept him in his house and in his very hands, and to whom he was present at every hour of the day, much more in the heart than even before the eyes. Here is a man who found God in a most singular way; so also did he make himself worthy of so great a treasure by an unreserved detachment, for he was detached from his passions, detached from his interest, and detached from his own repose.

We are accustomed to being moved by two kinds of passions: the sweet and the violent. Which of the two, my Sisters, is it more difficult to master? It is not an easy matter to decide. I learned from the great Saint Thomas that the former are to be feared on account of their duration, the latter for the quickness and forcefulness of their movement; the former flatter us, the latter press us forcibly; the former win us over, the latter pull us behind. Yet though they take different routes, both of them upset our senses and engage our hearts. O the poor human heart! Of how many enemies are you the prey? Of how many storms are you the plaything? Of how many illusions are you the theater?

Yet let us learn, Christians, from the example of Saint Joseph, how to conquer the sweetness that charms us and the violence that carries us away. See how detached he is from his passions: he was able to overcome without difficulty both the most flattering of the sweet and the most ferocious of the violent, love and jealousy. His spouse is his sister. He was touched, if I may be allowed the phrase, only by Mary's virginity; but he loved it in order to preserve it in his chaste spouse and then to impress it upon himself by a complete unity of heart. The faithfulness of this marriage consisted in guarding the perfect integrity that they had promised one another. These are the promises that joined them; this is the treaty that bound them. Two virginities united that they might eternally preserve one another by the chaste agreement of their modest desires—as if two stars entered into conjunction only by the combining of their lights. Such is the bond of this marriage, stronger, says Saint Augustine, in proportion as the promises that bound them were more inviolable for being more holy.

Yet jealousy thought to break the sacred bond of this conjugal friendship. Joseph, still ignorant of the mysteries on which his dear spouse was made worthy, thought only of her expectancy. I leave to the painters and poets to make the horrors of jealousy present to you, the venom of this serpent and the hundred eyes of his monster. It suffices for me to say that it is a kind of mixing together of all the more furious passions. Here is injured love pushed to the point of despair by sorrow, and hatred even unto fury. And it is perhaps for this reason that the Holy Spirit says to us *Dura sicut infernus aemulatio*: jealousy is as hard as hell (Song of Songs 8:6), because it gathers together hell's most cruel possessions, rage and despair.

This furious monster could do nothing against Joseph the just man. Admire his moderation towards his holy and divine spouse. He sensed an indefensible evil, but he did not wish to condemn it on the spot. He took unhurried counsel. Constrained by the authority of the Law to part from her company, he would at least avoid defaming her; he would remain within the strict limits of justice, and, far from requiring punishment, he would even spare her from shame. This is a most tempered resolution; yet he did not hurry to carry it out. He wanted to wait for the night—that sage counselor in our distress, in our anxieties, in our dangerous precipitation. And, in fact, that night disclosed the mystery to him. An angel came to clear away his doubts, and—I dare to say it, Gentlemen—to tell him that God needed the assistance of Joseph the just man. For, insofar as human reason, assisted by grace, had arrived at its highest point, Heaven was required to do the rest. And Joseph, *“who had not failed to practice justice, was worthy to know the truth.”*

Saint John Chrysostom was certainly correct in admiring Joseph’s philosophy. He was a great philosopher, perfectly detached from his passions, for we see him overcoming the most tyrannical of them all. What a master of his deeds is a man who in that condition was able to take counsel, and tempered counsel, and who, having chosen so wise a course, was even able to delay its execution and to sleep a tranquil sleep amidst these thoughts! If his soul had not been calm, do you think that the light from above would have so soon descended? It cannot, therefore, be doubted, Brethren, that he was most detached from his passions, both those that charm by their sweetness and those which carry us off by their violence.

Now some might think that as Joseph was so detached from his passions, it would be superfluous to explain that he was also detached from his interest. But I do not think, Christians, that this inference is so certain. For our attachment to our interest is more a vice than it is a passion, because the passions run their course, consisting as they do in a certain ardor that our actions change, that our soul moderates, and that time carries away, and which at last consume themselves, while attachment to our interest roots itself deeper within us more with the passage of time, because, as St. Thomas tells us, coming as it does from our weakness, it strengthens each day to the same extent as the rest of us weakens and is exhausted. Be that as it may, Christians, there was no one more detached from his interest than Joseph the just man. Consider him: a poor artisan with no inheritance other than his hands, no wealth beyond his workshop, no resource beyond his own work, who each day sees himself at the end of his wherewithal, nevertheless obliged to make lengthy voyages which take him away from his work, and the angel who sent him said not a word to him about his subsistence. He was not ashamed to suffer what we would be ashamed even to admit (abase yourself, O human greatness!). And yet without anxiety he goes, always wandering, a vagabond because he is with Jesus Christ, and only too happy to pay this price to possess him. He thinks himself to be too rich, and every day renews his efforts to empty his heart so that God may extend his possessions and broaden his kingdom within it; abounding, because he has nothing; possessing everything because everything was lacking to him; happy, peaceful, secure because he found neither rest, nor home, nor consistency. Here is the final effect of Saint Joseph’s detachment, and the one that we ought to reflect

upon most seriously. For our most common vice is also the one most opposed to Christianity: our miserable inclination to establish ourselves on this earth instead of always advancing and never stopping anywhere. In the divine Epistle to the Hebrews, Saint Paul teaches us that God has built for us a city, "and this is why he does not blush to call himself our God: *Ideo non confunditur Deus vocari Deus eorum: paravit enim illis civitatem*" (Hebrews 11:16). And, in truth, Christians, as the name of God is the name of a father, he would be rightly ashamed to call himself our God if he were not to provide for our needs. This good father has troubled himself to provide carefully for his children: he has prepared for them "a city with foundations," as Saint Paul says: *Fundamenta habentem civitatem* (Hebrews 11:10), that is to say, one that is solid and unshakable. If he would have been ashamed not to have provided, we should be ashamed not to accept! You would do injury to your fatherland were you to be happy in exile! What an insult to Zion, to be comfortable in Babylon! Go, and keep marching: have no more fixed dwelling. This is how Joseph the just man lived. Did he taste even a moment of joy since the moment he took Jesus Christ under his care? This infant does not leave his own at rest: he always troubles them in their possessions, and he always raises up for them some new difficulty.

He wants to teach us, my Sisters, that it is a counsel of mercy to mix bitterness in with all of our joys. For we are travelers, exposed to the intemperateness of the air and the irregularity of the seasons throughout our voyage. Amidst the fatigues of so long a voyage, the soul worn out by its labors seeks some place to rest. One finds his diversion in work; others have for their consolation a wife, a husband, a family; another places his hopes in his son. Each of them divides himself and seeks some hold upon the earth. The Gospel does not blame these affections, but, as the human heart is precipitous in its movements and finds it difficult to moderate its desires, that which is given to it for relaxation little by little becomes its resting-place and, in the end, its place of attachment. What was to have been only a staff on which to lean during the labor of travel, the soul makes into a bed for sleeping, and it remains there, it stops, and it thinks no more of Zion. *Universum stratum eius versasti in infirmitate eius* (Ps 40:4). God will overturn this bed in which he rests amidst temporal felicity, and, with a salutary wound, makes his heart sense how dangerous this rest is to him. Let us then live in this world as those detached from it. If we are here as those having nothing, we will be here as possessors of everything; if we detach ourselves from creatures, we will win the Creator; and all that will remain for us will be to hide ourselves with Joseph, so that we might enjoy him in retreat and solitude.

### III

Christian justice is a private affair between a man and God: it is a mystery between the two of them that is profaned when it is divulged, and which cannot be hidden with too much religion from those who are not privy to the secret. This is why the Son of God ordains us, when it is our intention to pray (and the same should extend to each of the Christian virtues), he ordains us, I say, to retire by ourselves and to shut the door upon us: "Shut the door upon yourselves and celebrate your mystery alone with God without admitting anyone

but those whom is pleased to invite.” Thus the Christian life should be a hidden life, and the true Christian should ardently desire to remain hidden under God’s wing without having any other spectator.

Yet this is where nature cries out, for it cannot suffer this obscurity, and here is the reason for it, if I am not mistaken: it is that nature recoils from death, and to life hidden and unknown is to be dead to the mind of men. For, as life is found in activity, the one who ceases to act seems also to have ceased to live. Now, my Sisters, men of the world, accustomed to tumult and hurry, do not know what peaceable, interior activity is, and they do not think themselves to act unless they be troubled, nor do they think that they stir unless they make noise, and so it is that they think retreat and obscurity to be an extinction of life. On the contrary, they understand life to be found brilliance amidst the world and tumultuous noise, and so they dare to persuade themselves that they are not entirely dead as long as their name makes some noise upon the earth. This is why reputation seems to them to be a second life: to survive in the memory of men they hold in great account, and it takes little to make them believe that they will secretly come out of their tombs to hear what will be said about them, so strongly persuaded are they that to live is to make some noise and to stir up the affairs of men. Here is the eternity promised by the world, an eternity in titles, immortality by renown. Vain and fragile immortality, but one made much of by the conquerors of old! It is this false imagination that makes obscurity seem a kind of death to those who love the world, and even, if I dare say it, something worse than death, for, in their opinion, to live hidden and unknown is to be buried alive and to be entombed, so to speak, amidst the world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, having come to die and to sacrifice himself, wished to die and to sacrifice himself for us in every way: and so he was not content, my Sisters, to die a natural death, nor the most cruel and violent death, but he wished to add to that a civic and political death. And as this civic death came by two means, both by infamy and by being forgotten, he wished to suffer both of them. A victim of human pride, he wished to sacrifice himself by all sorts of humiliations, and he gave his first thirty years to that death of being forgotten. To die with Jesus Christ, we must die with this death, so that we might say with Saint Paul: *“Mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundi: The world is crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Gal. 6:14).

Pope Saint Gregory the Great gave a lovely interpretation to this passage of the Apostle: The world, he said, is dead to us when we leave it. But, he added, this is not enough; in order to arrive at perfection we must be dead to it and it must leave us, that is to say that we should place ourselves in such a condition that we no longer please the world, that it holds us for dead, and that it no longer takes account of us to belong to its parties and its intrigues, nor even to its conversations and its discourses. This is the high perfection of Christianity, and it is here that one finds life, because here one learns to enjoy God, who does not live in the whirlwind nor in the tumult of the world, but in the peace and solitude of retirement.

In this way Joseph the just man was dead: buried with Jesus Christ and the divine Mary, he was not bothered by this death, which made him live with his Savior. On the contrary, he feared nothing more than that the noise and the life of the world would come to trouble or interrupt his hidden and interior repose. It is an admirable mystery, my Sisters: Joseph had in his house what could have attracted the eyes of the whole world, and the world did not know it. He possessed a God-man, and he said not one word about it; he is the witness of so great a mystery, and he tasted it in secret, without divulging it! The Magi and the shepherds came to adore Jesus Christ; Simeon and Anna publicized his greatness; no other could have given better testimony of the mystery of Jesus Christ than the one who was its custodian, who knew the miracle of his birth, and whom the angel had so well taught about his dignity and the subject of his mission. What father would not speak about so admirable a son? And despite the ardor of so many holy souls who would have sat before him with such zeal to celebrate the praise of Jesus Christ, he was not able to open his mouth to tell them the secret that God had confided to him. *Erant mirantes*, said the Evangelist (Luke 2:33): they seemed astonished, it was as though they knew nothing; they heard all the others speak and they kept so religiously silent that it was still said of him after thirty years in the village "Is this not the son of Joseph? (John 6:42) without any of them having learned of the mystery of his virginal conception? It is because they knew that in order to enjoy God in truth, one must make one's solitude, that one must recall into oneself so many desires that would wander here and there and so many thoughts that stray, that one must retire with God and be content to see him alone.

But, Christians, where shall we find spiritual and interior men in an age when brilliance is everything? When I consider men in their work, their business, their activities, I find confirmation for the truth of Saint John Chrysostom's dictum that if we return into ourselves we will find that all of our actions have only human ends in view. For, not even speaking of those prostituted souls who seek only to please the world, how many shall we find who do not turn aside from the straight and narrow when they find their path blocked by powerful obstacles, or who do not slacken, or cease moving altogether, who do not seek an accord between what justice requires and what popularity asks of them, between duty and the desire to please? How many shall we find to whom the prejudice of opinion, the tyranny of custom, the fear of shocking the world does not cause to seek some middle ground in which to set Jesus Christ in accord with Belial, and the Gospel with the age? If there are, indeed, some whose virtuous desires are not entirely smothered by human respect, how many of these are content to await their crown until the next life and who do not want to earn some of the fruit in advance in the form of human praise? This is the plague of Christian virtue. And as I have the honor to speak in the presence of a great Queen, whose subjects are right to laud her—and daily—I shall be allowed to dwell upon this point.

Virtue is like a plant that can die in two ways: by being ripped out or by being allowed to dry up. A torrent of water uproots it and casts it upon the soil; a dry spell withers it upon its stalk, so that though it seems still to live, it nevertheless carries death in its bosom. It is the same with virtue. You love equity and justice, but some great interest is presented to you, or

some violent passion makes your love of justice rise impetuously in your heart: if you allow yourself to be carried off by the storm, a torrent of water uproots justice. You languish for a time under the trial of your weakness, but in the end you allow love to carry off your heart. The whole world is amazed to see that you have lost the justice that you had so carefully cultivated.

Yet when these violent efforts have been resisted, do not think that you have been saved. You must beware of the other danger, the danger of praise. The opposing vice uproots virtue, but the love of praise causes it to wither. It seems to hold its position well, to stand firm, but it deceives the eyes of men. The root is withered; it draws no more nourishment; it is good only to be cast in the fire. It is the dry grass of the rooftops of which David spoke, "that dries itself out before it is pulled forth; *Quod priusquam evallatur, exaruit*" (Ps 128:6). How greatly it is to be wished, Christians, not to have been born in a high place, but instead to live longer in some deserted valley! How greatly it is to be wished that virtue not be exposed in so lofty a place, but instead to be nourished by Christian humility in some forgotten corner!

If, however, it be necessary for us to live a public life and to hear the praise of men, this is how we ought to think. When what is said of us does not exist within, let us fear a stricter judgment. If the praise be true, let us fear to lose our reward. To avoid this last evil, Madame, consider the wise counsel given by a great pope, Saint Gregory the Great, who is worthy of Your Majesty's full attention. Never hid virtue as if it were something of which to be ashamed: it must shine before men, so that they may give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:16) It should shine foremost in the person of sovereigns, so that depraved mortals might not only be forbidden by the authority of their laws, but still more put to shame by the light of their examples. Yet, that something be hidden from men, I propose an innocent strategem to Your Majesty. Beyond the virtues whose good example you owe, save always a little something within you that the world does not know. Make for yourself a hidden treasure; store it up for the eyes of God, or, as Tertullian said: *Mentire aliquid ex his quae intus sunt, ut soli Deo exhibeas veritatem*.

Madame,

It is from such a practice that your greatest glory will come. Joseph merited the greatest honors because he was never touched by honor. The Church has nothing more illustrious, because it has nothing more hidden. I give thanks to the King for having wished to honor his holy memory with a new solemnity. May the Almighty God let him always revere Joseph's hidden virtue! Yet let him not be content to honor it in heaven, let him also cherish it upon earth; and, following the example of our pious kings, let him break in upon this virtue in her retreat and understand this truth: that the virtue that struggles most mightily to appear on judgment day is not the one that is put to the cruelest trial. If, Madame, Your Majesty inspires these wise thoughts in him, she shall have for her reward eternal felicity.

# Day Seven

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Pius IX, Decree *Quemadmodum Deus*, December 8, 1870

**At the beginning of his pontificate, on December 10, 1847, Pius IX established the feast and the liturgy of the Patronage of St. Joseph and set it on the third Sunday after Easter, through the decree *Inclytus Patriarcha Joseph*. During an address in 1854, he referred to St. Joseph as the best hope for the Church after Our Lady. On December 8, 1870, Pius IX officially declared St. Joseph Patron of the universal Church, and he raised the feast of March 19 to the rank of double of the first class.**

Pius IX, Pope, for perpetual memory  
**Decree 'Urbi et orbi' *Quemadmodum Deus***

As almighty God appointed Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, over all the land of Egypt to save grain for the people, so when the fullness of time had come and He was about to send to earth His only-begotten Son, the Savior of the world, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first had been the type, and He made him the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures. Indeed, he had as his spouse the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of whom was born by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord, who deigned to be reputed in the sight of men as the son of Joseph, and was subject to him. Him whom countless kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed. He most diligently reared Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.

Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble. And now therefore, when in these most troublesome times the Church is beset by enemies on every side, and is weighed down by calamities so heavy that ungodly men assert that the gates of hell have at length prevailed against her, the venerable prelates of the whole Catholic world have presented to the Sovereign Pontiff their own petitions and those of the faithful committed to their charge, praying that he would deign to constitute St. Joseph Patron of the Church.

And this time their prayer and desire was renewed by them even more earnestly at the Sacred Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. Accordingly, it has now pleased our Most Holy Sovereign, Pope Pius IX, in order to entrust himself and all the faithful to the Patriarch St. Joseph's most powerful patronage, has chosen to comply with the prelates' desire and has solemnly declared him Patron of the Catholic Church.

He has also ordered that his feast on March 19th by henceforth celebrated as a double of the first class, without any Octave, however, because of Lent.

He arranged, moreover, that a declaration to this effect be promulgated through the present decree of The Sacred Congregation of Rites on this day sacred to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, the most chaste Joseph's Spouse. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.  
Sacred Congregation of Rites, Rome, December 8, 1870

# Day Eight

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Leo XIII, Encyclical *Quamquam pluries*, August 15, 1889

**On the patronage of Saint Joseph and of the most Blessed Virgin, whom we ought to invoke in these difficult times.**

**To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and other Ordinaries, in Peace and Union with the Holy See,  
LEO XIII, POPE**

Venerable Brethren, Greetings and Apostolic Blessing.

Although We have already many times ordered special prayers to be offered up in the whole world, that the interests of Catholicism might be insistently recommended to God, none will deem it matter for surprise that We consider the present moment an opportune one for again inculcating the same duty.

During periods of stress and trial—chiefly when every lawlessness of act seems permitted to the powers of darkness—it has been the custom in the Church to plead with special fervor and perseverance to God, her author and protector, by recourse to the intercession of the saints—and chiefly of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God—whose patronage has ever been the most efficacious. The fruit of these pious prayers and of the confidence reposed in the Divine goodness, has always, sooner or later, been made apparent.

Now, Venerable Brethren, you know the times in which we live; they are scarcely less deplorable for the Christian religion than the worst days, which in times past were most full of misery to the Church. We see faith, the root of all the Christian virtues, lessening in many souls; we see charity growing cold; the young generation daily growing in depravity of morals and views; the Church of Jesus Christ attacked on every side by open force or by craft; a relentless war waged against the Sovereign Pontiff; and the very foundations of religion undermined with a boldness which waxes daily in intensity. These things are, indeed, so much a matter of notoriety that it is needless for Us to expatiate on the depths to which society has sunk in these days, or on the designs which now agitate the minds of men.

In circumstances so unhappy and troublous, human remedies are insufficient, and it becomes necessary, as a sole resource, to beg for assistance from the Divine power.

This is the reason why We have considered it necessary to turn to the Christian people and urge them to implore, with increased zeal and constancy, the aid of Almighty God. At this proximity of the month of October, which We have already consecrated to the Virgin Mary,

under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary, We earnestly exhort the faithful to perform the exercises of this month with, if possible, even more piety and constancy than heretofore. We know that there is sure help in the maternal goodness of the Virgin, and We are very certain that We shall never vainly place Our trust in her. If, on innumerable occasions, she has displayed her power in aid of the Christian world, why should We doubt that she will now renew the assistance of her power and favor, if humble and constant prayers are offered up on all sides to her? Nay, We rather believe that her intervention will be the more marvelous as she has permitted Us to pray to her, for so long a time, with special appeals.

But We entertain another object, which, according to your wont, Venerable Brethren, you will advance with fervor. That God may be more favorable to Our prayers, and that He may come with bounty and promptitude to the aid of His Church, We judge it of deep utility for the Christian people, continually to invoke with great piety and trust, together with the Virgin-Mother of God, her chaste Spouse, the Blessed Joseph; and We regard it as most certain that this will be most pleasing to the Virgin herself. On the subject of this devotion, of which We speak publicly for the first time to-day, We know without doubt that not only is the people inclined to it, but that it is already established, and is advancing to full growth. We have seen the devotion to St. Joseph, which in past times the Roman Pontiffs have developed and gradually increased, grow into greater proportions in Our time, particularly after Pius IX., of happy memory, Our predecessor, proclaimed, yielding to the request of a large number of bishops, this holy patriarch the patron of the Catholic Church. And as, moreover, it is of high importance that the devotion to St. Joseph should engraft itself upon the daily pious practices of Catholics, We desire that the Christian people should be urged to it above all by Our words and authority.

The special motives for which St. Joseph has been proclaimed Patron of the Church, and from which the Church looks for singular benefit from his patronage and protection, are that Joseph was the spouse of Mary and that he was reputed the Father of Jesus Christ. From these sources have sprung his dignity, his holiness, his glory.

In truth, the dignity of the Mother of God is so lofty that naught created can rank above it. But as Joseph has been united to the Blessed Virgin by the ties of marriage, it may not be doubted that he approached nearer than any to the eminent dignity by which the Mother of God surpasses so nobly all created natures. For marriage is the most intimate of all unions which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those that by it are joined together. Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life's companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity.

And Joseph shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. Hence it came about that the Word of God was humbly subject to Joseph, that He obeyed him, and that He rendered to him all those offices that children are bound to render to their parents.

From this two-fold dignity flowed the obligation which nature lays upon the head of families, so that Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was. And during the whole course of his life he fulfilled those charges and those duties. He set himself to protect with a mighty love and a daily solicitude his spouse and the Divine Infant; regularly by his work he earned what was necessary for the one and the other for nourishment and clothing; he guarded from death the Child threatened by a monarch's jealousy, and found for Him a refuge; in the miseries of the journey and in the bitternesses of exile he was ever the companion, the assistance, and the upholder of the Virgin and of Jesus.

Now the divine house which Joseph ruled with the authority of a father, contained within its limits the scarce-born Church. From the same fact that the most holy Virgin is the mother of Jesus Christ is she the mother of all Christians whom she bore on Mount Calvary amid the supreme throes of the Redemption; Jesus Christ is, in a manner, the firstborn of Christians, who by the adoption and Redemption are his brothers.

And for such reasons the Blessed Patriarch looks upon the multitude of Christians who make up the Church as confided specially to his trust—this limitless family spread over the earth, over which, because he is the spouse of Mary and the Father of Jesus Christ he holds, as it were, a paternal authority. It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.

You well understand, Venerable Brethren, that these considerations are confirmed by the opinion held by a large number of the Fathers, to which the sacred liturgy gives its sanction, that the Joseph of ancient times, son of the patriarch Jacob, was the type of St. Joseph, and the former by his glory prefigured the greatness of the future guardian of the Holy Family.

And in truth, beyond the fact that the same name—a point the significance of which has never been denied—was given to each, you well know the points of likeness that exist between them; namely, that the first Joseph won the favor and especial goodwill of his master, and that through Joseph's administration his household came to prosperity and wealth; that (still more important) he presided over the kingdom with great power, and, in a time when the harvests failed, he provided for all the needs of the Egyptians with so much wisdom that the King decreed to him the title "Savior of the world".

Thus it is that We may prefigure the new in the old patriarch. And as the first caused the prosperity of his master's domestic interests and at the same time rendered great services to the whole kingdom, so the second, destined to be the guardian of the Christian religion, should be regarded as the protector and defender of the Church, which is truly the house of the Lord and the kingdom of God on earth.

These are the reasons why men of every rank and country should fly to the trust and guard of the blessed Joseph.

Fathers of families find in Joseph the best personification of paternal solicitude and vigilance; spouses a perfect example of love, of peace, and of conjugal fidelity; virgins at the same time find in him the model and protector of virginal integrity. The noble of birth will learn of Joseph how to guard their dignity even in misfortune; the rich will understand, by his lessons, what are the goods most to be desired and won at the price of their labor.

As to workmen, artisans, and persons of lesser degree, their recourse to Joseph is a special right, and his example is for their particular imitation. For Joseph, of royal blood, united by marriage to the greatest and holiest of women, reputed the father of the Son of God, passed his life in labor, and won by the toil of the artisan the needful support of his family.

It is, then, true that the condition of the lowly has nothing shameful in it, and the work of the laborer is not only not dishonoring, but can, if virtue be joined to it, be singularly ennobled. Joseph, content with his slight possessions, bore the trials consequent on a fortune so slender, with greatness of soul, in imitation of his Son, who having put on the form of a slave, being the Lord of life, subjected himself of his own free-will to the spoliation and loss of everything.

Through these considerations, the poor and those who live by the labor of their hands should be of good heart and learn to be just. If they win the right of emerging from poverty and obtaining a better rank by lawful means, reason and justice uphold them in changing the order established, in the first instance, for them by the Providence of God. But recourse to force and struggles by seditious paths to obtain such ends are madnesses which only aggravate the evil which they aim to suppress. Let the poor, then, if they would be wise, trust not to the promises of seditious men, but rather to the example and patronage of the Blessed Joseph, and to the maternal charity of the Church, which each day takes an increasing compassion on their lot.

This is the reason why—trusting much to your zeal and episcopal authority, Venerable Brethren, and not doubting that the good and pious faithful will run beyond the mere letter of the law—We prescribe that during the whole month of October, at the recitation of the Rosary, for which We have already legislated, a prayer to St. Joseph be added, the formula of which will be sent with this letter, and that this custom should be repeated every year. To those who recite this prayer, We grant for each time an indulgence of seven years and seven Lents.

It is a salutary practice and very praiseworthy, already established in some countries, to consecrate the month of March to the honor of the holy Patriarch by daily exercises of piety. Where this custom cannot be easily established, it is as least desirable, that before the feast-day, in the principal church of each parish, a triduum of prayer be celebrated.

In those lands where the 19th of March -- the Feast of St. Joseph -- is not a Festival of Obligation, We exhort the faithful to sanctify it as far as possible by private pious practices, in honor of their heavenly patron, as though it were a day of Obligation.

And in token of heavenly favors, and in witness of Our good-will, We grant most lovingly in the Lord, to you, Venerable Brethren, to your clergy and to your people, the Apostolic blessing.

Given from the Vatican, August 15th, 1889, the 12th year of Our Pontificate.

Leo XIII, Pope.

# Day Nine

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Benedict XV, Bonum sane, July 25, 1920

**Motu Proprio Bonum sane of Pope Benedict XV  
on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of  
St. Joseph as patron of the Catholic Church.**

It was indeed a happy and fruitful day for Christianity when Pius IX, Our predecessor of immortal memory, proclaimed St. Joseph, most chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God and foster father of the Word Incarnate, Patron of the Catholic Church. Because this coming December will mark the fiftieth anniversary of this blessed act, We believe there to be great benefit in commemorating the anniversary solemnly throughout the entire world.

When We look back over these past fifty years, We see before Our eyes an uninterrupted procession of pious institutions up to Our days bearing witness to the constant growth of devotion to the most holy Patriarch among the Christian faithful. But if We consider the difficult situation in which the human race struggles today, it seems necessary to recommend this devotion much more warmly to all nations and to spread it much more widely.

Indeed, in Our recent encyclical on "Peace and Christian Reconciliation," We pointed out what was still lacking in the wake of the nefarious duel of the war, that the tranquility of order might flourish anew in all nations; and We examined in particular mutual relations in the civil sphere, both of nations and of individuals.

Today, We must examine another and more serious cause of trouble that has penetrated the very veins and heart of human society. Indeed, the scourge of war fell on nations at the same time that they were profoundly infected with "naturalism," the frightening plague of Our era, that cripples the desire for heavenly things, quenches the flame of the love of God, removes man from the medicinal and elevating influence of Christ's grace, and, when he is finally deprived of the light of the Faith and possessed only of the infirm and corrupt powers of nature, delivers him over to the excesses of the passions.

Far too many men had limited their desires to ephemeral things; and when mortal envy and merciless warfare had arisen between the wealthy and the proletariat, a prolonged general war came to develop and exacerbate this class hatred, essentially because it imposed an intolerable increase in the cost of living for the masses while it granted colossal fortunes to a privileged few.

To heighten these misfortunes, the sanctity of marital fidelity and the respect of paternal authority fell into decline among many during the war, either because the separation of

the spouses led one to neglect his duties to the other, or because in the absence of due care, young women, above all, were led through imprudence to take excessive liberties. Thence the present dolorous spectacle in which morals are more corrupted and depraved than before, and the "social question," as it is called, becomes more and more serious, so that the worst catastrophes are to be feared. Thus the idea wished for and planned for by all the most dangerous architects of chaos matures: the coming of a universal republic based on the principles of absolute equality and the abolition of private property, from which any distinction between nationalities would be banished, and where neither the father's authority over his children, nor the government's authority over its citizens, nor God's authority over human society would be recognized. In practice, these theories lead to a reign of terror on an unprecedented scale, already now the painful experience of a significant part of Europe. We see that some wish to extend this regime to other nations; We see the audacity of a few fanatics stirring up the mob and causing serious riots in some places.

The most concerned by the course of events, We have taken every opportunity to remind the children of the Church of their duty, as witnessed by our recent letters to the bishop of Bergamo and the bishops of Veneto. The same motive impels Us to remind of their duty all those of Our children, whatever their numbers and their locations, who live by the toil of their hands, and to preserve them from the contagion of socialism, the most deadly enemy of Christian doctrine. Therefore We strongly recommend, to them especially, St. Joseph as a model and a special patron to imitate and honor.

St. Joseph, indeed, spent his time on earth in the same life as theirs; and for this reason the Christ-God, although He was the only Son of the Eternal Father, chose to be known as "the Son of the Carpenter." We know with what lofty virtues Joseph adorned the humility of his home and his state in life: the virtues suited to the one destined to be the spouse of Mary Immaculate and the reputed father of Our Lord Jesus.

Therefore, let all in the school of St. Joseph learn to consider the ephemeral things of the present time only in the light of the permanent things of eternity; they will find in the hope of celestial things consolation for the sufferings of human life; they will work to merit the celestial reward through submission to the will of God, in a detached, just and pious life. We take pleasure in repeating to laborers in particular the words of Our predecessor Leo XIII of happy memory on the same issue; they are so well expressed that it seems impossible to say anything more appropriate: "Through these considerations, the poor and those who live by the labor of their hands should be of good heart and learn to be just. If they win the right of emerging from poverty and obtaining a better rank by lawful means, reason and justice uphold them in changing the order established, in the first instance, for them by the Providence of God. But recourse to force and struggles by seditious paths to obtain such ends are madnesses which only aggravate the evil which they aim to suppress. Let the poor, then, if they would be wise, trust not to the promises of seditious men, but rather to the example and patronage of the Blessed Joseph, and to the maternal charity of the Church, which each day takes an increasing compassion on their lot."

As the faithful's devotion to St. Joseph grows, so, necessarily, will their devotion to the Holy Family of Nazareth of which he was the august head; the first devotion will naturally bring about the second. Joseph leads us directly to Mary, and through Mary to the source of all sanctity, Jesus Christ, whose obedience to Mary and Joseph has sanctified the virtues proper to the family.

We desire to see all Christian families renewed through conformance to such a beautiful example of virtue. Therefore, since the community of the human race is founded on the family unit, the day when domestic society acquires greater stability through a religious preservation of purity, concord and fidelity, a new strength and a purified blood will course through the veins of human society and the virtue of Christ will penetrate its farthest confines; and on this day not only will private morality flourish but also social life and political order.

As for Us, fully confident in the patronage of the one to whose sagacious vigilance God chose to confide His only Son, the Word Incarnate and the Virgin Mother of God, We ask that all the bishops in the Catholic world exhort the faithful, amid the present difficulties for Christianity, to implore the assistance of St. Joseph with still greater fervor. The Apostolic See has already approved several devotions to the holy Patriarch, and We ask that these devotions, strongly recommended by the Ordinary, be followed as closely as possible in each diocese, especially on all the Wednesdays of the year and on all the days of the month dedicated to him.

But St. Joseph is above all and most deservedly honored as the faithful assistant of the dying, he who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary; and so Our Venerable Brethren must also offer all their support and encouragement to pious associations that pray to St. Joseph for the dying, such as the Associations *for a Holy Death, of the Death of St. Joseph, and for the Dying*.

Moreover, to commemorate the anniversary of the pontifical decree that We recalled above, We ordain and decree that throughout the year, beginning on the coming 8th of December, should be celebrated, throughout the Catholic universe, a solemn ceremony in honor of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Patron of the Catholic Church, in a manner and at a time fixed by each bishop. We grant to all those who participate in these solemnities a plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions.

Given at Rome, near St. Peter's, on the feast of St. James the Apostle, July twenty-fifth of the year 1920, the sixth of Our Pontificate.

Benedict XV, Pope.





OUR LADY OF VICTORIES CHURCH,  
*consecrated on March 1, 1997*  
*by H.E. Bishop Fellay,*  
is a mission church of the  
Society of St. Pius X

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The SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X  
is an official congregation  
of Roman Catholic priests  
and celebrates *exclusively* the

TRADITIONAL LATIN TRIDENTINE MASS, the Mass  
canonized for all time by order of the Council of  
Trent through the Papal Bull *Quo Primum*  
by Pope St. Pius V in 1570.



## Our Lady of Victories Church

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