

St. Joseph: A Son of the Heavenly Father

1. Why St. Joseph?

Decree of Incarnation – predestined to conceal and safeguard Messiah, Mother

Order of Hypostatic Union – Jesus Mary Joseph, highest order in Church

He has made Him Lord of his household and prince over all his possessions – Authority!

2. How can I do this?

Unworthy and Incapable

Son of Jacob, of a kingly line, now poor and insignificant

2a. Primacy of Grace – precedes, sufficient, mind and will subordinated

~“God so prepares and endows those, whom He chooses for some particular office, that they are rendered capable of fulfilling it” *Summa* p. iii q. xxvii a. 4

~“Concerning the succor of God...for as often as we do good, God is at work in us and with us, in order that we may do so.” *Second Council of Orange*, canon 9

~John 15:4-5 Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.

3. Spiritual Sonship of St. Joseph

He is a work of God, fiercely docile to divine formation – not self-made man

Prayerful longing for the Messiah – Awaiting God’s definitive action in history

Divine action preeminent in his life

~ Children have nothing of their own, everything belongs to their father..., and your Father always knows best how to manage your affairs. *Way* 867

~ Child, abandonment demands docility. *Way* 871

~ Spiritual childhood demands submission of the mind, more difficult than submission of the will. In order to subject our mind we need not only God’s grace, but also the continual exercise of our will, which says ‘no’ again and again, just as it says ‘no’ to the flesh. And so we get the paradox that whoever wants to follow this ‘little’ way in order to become a child, needs to add strength and virility to his will. *Way* 856

~ But the name Joseph, in Hebrew, means “God will add.” God adds unsuspected dimensions to the holy lives of those who do his will. He adds the one important dimension which gives meaning to everything, the divine dimension. To the humble and holy life of Joseph he added – if I may put it this way – the lives of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus, our Lord. God does not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. Joseph could make his own the words of Mary, his wife: “He has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid... because he who is mighty, he whose name is holy, has wrought for me his wonders.” *Christ is Passing By* Ch.5, 40

4. Complete Trust in the Father

Surrendered plans, cares, difficulties

Faith and intelligent obedience

~ Psalms 37:5,7 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will act. Be still before the LORD; wait for him.

~ Psalms 55:23 Cast your care upon the LORD, who will give you support. He will never allow the righteous to stumble.

~ Being children you will have no cares: children quickly forget what troubles them and return to their games. With abandonment, therefore, you will not have to worry, since you will rest in the Father. *Way 864*

~ Matthew 2:13-15 When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

~ Matthew 2:19-23 When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

~ When relating these events in his Gospel, St Matthew continually emphasizes Joseph's faithfulness. He kept the commandments of God without wavering, even though the meaning of those commandments was sometimes obscure or their relation to the rest of the divine plan hidden from him.

The Fathers of the Church and other spiritual writers frequently emphasize the firmness of Joseph's faith. Referring to the angel's command to fly from Herod and take refuge in Egypt, St John Chrysostom comments: "On hearing this, Joseph was not shocked nor did he say: This is strange. You yourself made it known not long ago that he would save his people, and now you are incapable even of saving him — we have to flee, to set out on a long journey and spend a long while in a strange place; that contradicts your promise. Joseph does not think in this way, for he is a man who trusts God. Nor does he ask when he will return, even though the angel left it so vague: Stay there, until I tell you to return. Joseph does not object; he obeys and believes and joyfully accepts all the trials."

Joseph's faith does not falter, he obeys quickly and to the letter. To understand this lesson better, we should remember that Joseph's faith is active, that his docility is not a passive submission to the course of events. For the Christian's faith has nothing whatever to do with conformity, inertia or lack of initiative.

Joseph entrusted himself unreservedly to the care of God, but he always reflected on events and so was able to reach that level of understanding of the works of God which is true wisdom. In this way he learned little by little that supernatural plans have a logic which at times upsets human plans.

In the different circumstances of his life, St Joseph never refuses to think, never neglects his responsibilities. On the contrary, he puts his human experience at the service of faith. When he returns from Egypt, "learning that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there." In other words, he had learned to work within the divine plan. And to confirm that he was doing the right thing, Joseph received an instruction to return to Galilee.

That's the way St Joseph's faith was: full, confident, complete. And it expressed itself in an effective dedication to the will of God and an intelligent obedience. With the faith went love. His faith nurtured his love of God, who was fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, Jacob and Moses, and his affection for Mary his wife and her Son.

Christ is Passing By Ch.5, 42