

“Joseph in [the Book of] Genesis is one of Scriptures most attractive, faithful, and virtuous figures. In the face of severe adversities, he demonstrated [unwavering] fidelity to God... When elevated to a place of honor and power in Egypt, he served with skill and energy, taking as his chief concern the well-being of those in his charge.”<sup>i</sup>

The Old Testament story of Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, is a precursor to Jesus, the beloved Son of God. Pharaoh installs Joseph over the whole land of Egypt. Jesus is the just judge. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him” (Mt 25:31-32).

“Pharaoh ... bestowed the name of Zaphenath-paneah on Joseph” (Gn:41:45) meaning “the god speaks and he (the newborn child) lives”(Note). Jesus is the eternal Word. “All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race” (Jn 1:3-4).

“When all the land of Egypt became hungry and the people cried to Pharaoh for food, Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians: “Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you” (Gn 41:55 ). Jesus who was sent by the Father, teaches: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst” (Jn 6:35). In the Transfiguration, the voice of God the Father explains: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Mt 17:5).

“When Joseph’s brothers came and knelt down before him with their faces to the ground, he recognized them as soon as he saw them” (42:6b-7a). When Jesus is teaching, he often recognizes the faith of those who seek help from him. He also recognizes the lack of faith of the Pharisees and scribes and often reads their thoughts.

Joseph locked his brothers in the guard house for three days. “On the third day Joseph said to them: ‘Do this, and you shall live; for I am a God-fearing man’” (42:18). Jesus was buried in the tomb and rose on the third day. He offers us eternal life if we but follow the ways of God.

Joseph’s brothers felt guilty for the sins they had committed against their youngest brother. We might call this imperfect contrition, as they fear the consequences of their sinful betrayal of Joseph. “We saw the anguish of his heart when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen. That is why this anguish has now come upon us” (Gn 42:21). Joseph provides grain for his brothers. He will not let them starve. Jesus shows mercy on sinners. Where there is remorse, he offers forgiveness of sins.

From Joseph, we can learn to be faithful even in the midst of severe adversity. We too are called to unwavering fidelity to God despite all of the temptations of this world to act like his brothers where jealousy sparks our anger. God calls us to use our time, talent, and treasure to serve others. Our chief concern should always be to care for others.

Jesus often comes to us in disguise. We are called to care for the poor with the same love of Joseph and Jesus. “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:34-36).

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<sup>i</sup> Hahn, Scott. Catholic Bible Dictionary, pg. 472.