

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

April 1, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

7 Joys of St. Joseph

In my life, I have seen St. Joseph go through a little bit of a renaissance in recent years. When I was in grade school, most images of St. Joseph made St. Joseph appear as an old man. Somewhere in high school, and I think because of modern Scripture studies, the Church realized that St. Joseph was probably closer in age to the Blessed Virgin Mary than people had originally thought. Now, many of the images and descriptions of St. Joseph depict St. Joseph to be a young teenager. Last spring, I stumbled upon the devotion called the Seven Sorrows and Seven Joys of St. Joseph and last April, I devoted my Spiritual Ponderings to the Seven Sorrows of St. Joseph and so now this April, I would like to turn to the Seven Joys of St. Joseph.

1. The Message of the Angel (Matthew 1:20)

Saint Joseph must have had a pretty low point in his life when the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a dream. Mary, the woman that he had loved had just confessed to him that she was pregnant and Joseph had to know that the child was not his. It probably hurt him all the more when the supposed excuse that Mary gave him for her pregnancy both seemed preposterous and also involved his religion which I think it is safe to assume was very important to him. I know that when someone harms me I have one level of anger and I know that I can go to a higher level of anger if the person who harmed me tries to excuse their behavior with a very bad excuse and especially an excuse that seems to mock something that is very dear to me.

Upon hearing the fact that Mary had indeed been telling the truth, Joseph must have been elated and filled with joy. Some commentators point out that the angel Gabriel came to Joseph in a dream making us assume that it was night outside. Commentators wonder if Matthew is not also giving us an insight into the soul of St. Joseph. Some commentators suggest that Joseph was suffering a long period of desolation in his prayer life and the vision of the angel was the beginning of a time of desolation. This would also make St. Joseph symbolic of the Israelite people, who have felt God's absence for so long. God was once again beginning to act in their lives in a very visible and real way.

I believe that St. Joseph was rejoicing in the fact that he was going to get to be a father. To be a parent (even a step-parent) should be seen as opportunity to grow in holiness by accepting the responsibility of helping a child grow. I always liked the fact that a local morning DJ referred to his children as "Bonus child" instead of stepchild.

How much better would a world be today, if true fathers would stand up and take responsibility for their own biological children? I think the following song lyrics from Brad Paisley song:

*When a single mom goes out on a date with somebody new * It always winds up feeling more like a job interview * My mama used to wonder if she'd ever meet someone * Who wouldn't find out about me and then turn around and run*

*I met the man I call my dad when I was five years old * He took my mom out to a movie and for once I got to go * A few months later I remember lying there in bed * I overheard him pop the question and I prayed that she'd say yes*

*And then all of a sudden ah it seemed so strange to me * How we went from something's missing to a family * Lookin' back all I can say about all the things he did for me * Is I hope I'm at least half the dad that he didn't have to be*

*I met the girl who's now my wife about three years ago * We had the perfect marriage but we wanted somethin' more
Now here I stand surrounded by our family and friends Crowded 'round the nursery window as they bring the baby in*

*And then all of a sudden ah it seemed so strange to me * How we had gone from something's missing to a family * Lookin' through the glass I think about the man that's standing next to me And I hope I'm at least half the dad that he didn't have to be * Lookin' back all I can say about all the things he did for me * Is I hope I'm at least half the dad that he didn't have to be * I hope I'm at least half the dad that he didn't have to be * 'Cause he didn't have to be * You know he didn't have to be*

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

April 8, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

7 Joys of St. Joseph

St. Bernard of Clairvaux was asked by his monks whether or not it was important for them to have a devotion to St. Joseph. The following quote is from his response: "St. Joseph was chosen among all men, to be the protector and guardian of the Virgin Mother of God; the defender and foster-father of the Infant-God, and the only co-operator upon earth, the one confidant of the secret of God in the work of the redemption of mankind."

During this month of April, I invite you to ponder the Seven Joys of St. Saint Joseph with me.

2. Jesus' Birth itself (Luke 2:7)

The fact that Jesus was born in a stable was listed as one of St. Josephs sorrows because he would have desired to have been able to provide a better place for his wife and adopted son. The birth of Jesus though is listed as one of Saint Joseph's joys. Struggles are hard but the sense of accomplishment that comes from overcoming adversity feels good. Last summer, I was working a Life Teen Summer camp and the camp director asked me to celebrate Mass on top of a mountain for the campers. Knowing how out of shape I was, I asked for a thirty minute head start up the hill. It was a long and steep path and I found myself thinking about turning back a couple of times. I kept going because I did not want to disappoint God, my friend, and the campers. When I reached the top of the mountain where we were going to say Mass, I felt a sense of accomplishments. Yes, it was harder than it should have been because I was so out of shape but I also felt a deep sense of joy and accomplishments for making it up the hill. I am sure that Joseph felt something similar even though his life as the foster father of Jesus had started off more difficult than he thought seeing God lying in the manger must have been a moment of pure joy.

Stepping back for a moment, Joseph must have been amazed as a creature that his creator loved him this much that he would become one like him (in all things but sin). Simply ponder the fact that the word who made the universe was now laying in a manger. Wow.

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

As a religious person, Joseph must have been excited to realize that He was now a part of God's plan. He was now stepping up and following in the footsteps of Abraham, Moses, and David. The moment that he and his fellow Jews had been hoping for, dreaming for, was now upon them. Many of us feel a sense of joy when we are entrusted with a mission or given a task to perform because it makes us feel that we are a part of the group. It is important to remind ourselves that just as Joseph was called to be the foster father of Jesus we are called through our baptism to be priests (offer our lives to God), prophets (tell others about God), and kings (follow Jesus' example of servant leadership).

The great strong man Samson did not see this day, the great prophets Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, etc. had not been blessed to see this day but St. Joseph was. In a similar way we should feel blessed to be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist at Mass.

The very fact that God was now in the midst of saving his people. The name Jesus literally means "God saves his people," should bring joy everyone. Adam and Eve doubted God's love for them in the garden and now God was showing every human being how much he loved them by becoming one like them.

If I had to think of an image to help me ponder this moment. It would be like being rescued from a sinking ship. The moment the stable ship came close enough for me get on would be a moment of great joy. God was showing us how much he loved us.

A PARENT'S PRAYER TO SAINT JOSEPH

O glorious St. Joseph, to you God committed the care of His only begotten Son amid the many dangers of this world. We come to you and ask you to take under your special protection the children God has given us. Through holy baptism they became children of God and members of His holy Church. We consecrate them to you today, that through this consecration they may become your foster children. Guard them, guide their steps in life, form their hearts after the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

St. Joseph, who felt the tribulation and worry of a parent when the child Jesus was lost, protect our dear children for time and eternity. May you be their father and counsellor. Let them, like Jesus, grow in age as well as in wisdom and grace before God and men. Preserve them from the corruption of his world, and give us the grace one day to be united with them in Heaven forever. Amen.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

April 15, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

7 Joys of St. Joseph

St. Bernardine of Siena advised others to develop a devotion to St. Joseph: "If the whole Church is in the debt of the Virgin, since, through her, it was able to receive the Christ, surely after her, it also owed to Joseph special thanks and veneration... It is beyond doubt that Christ did not deny to Joseph in heaven that intimacy, respect, and high honor which He showed to him as to a father during His own human life, but rather completed and perfected it."

During this month of April, I invite you to ponder the Seven Joys of St. Saint Joseph with me.

4. Simeon's prophecy that many would rise (Luke 2:34)

Remembering that St. Joseph grew up in the country of Israel while it was under the occupation of the Roman Empire. The Roman form of government was not based on equal rights but rather upon power, influence, and personal connections. Tax collecting in the Roman Empire is a simple example of how corrupt the system could get. A tax collector could charge a person any amount of tax he wanted as long as he collected the minimum that that the Roman government wanted. There were also no elections and the only chance for political reform was open revolt. Simeon's prophecy of a just society would have caused St. Joseph's heart to fill with joy.

5. The Overthrow of Idols (Isaias 19:1)

When I began reading the list of Seven Joys of St. Joseph, I was caught off guard by this one. Jesus came to reveal to us who the Father is so that we may develop an intimate relationship with God. One of the great joys in my life is when someone stops thinking of God as a cruel tyrant and experiences God as the loving Father Jesus revealed Him to be in the story of the Prodigal Son. I am more excited when someone realizes that God has forgiven them than I am when the show me that they have memorized the Eight Beatitudes. I am sure St. Joseph would have been excited to know that people were going to come to know the real loving God that had saved his people from slavery.

LITANY OF ST JOSEPH # 1(Approved by Pope St. Pius X in 1909.)

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** Christ, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

R. Christ, graciously hear us.

Lord, have mercy on us. **R.** Lord, have mercy on us.

R.=Have Mercy on Us.

God the Father of heaven, **R.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **R.**

God the Holy Spirit, **R.**

Holy Trinity, one God, **R.**

R. = Pray For Us

Holy Mary, **R.**

St. Joseph, **R.**

Renowned offspring of David, **R.**

Light of Patriarchs, **R.**

Spouse of the Mother of God, **R.**

Chaste guardian of the Virgin, **R.**

Foster father of the Son of God, **R.**

Diligent protector of Christ, **R.**

Head of the Holy Family, **R.**

Joseph most just, **R.**

Joseph most chaste, **R.**

Joseph most prudent, **R.**

Joseph most strong, **R.**

Joseph, most obedient, **R.**

Joseph most faithful, **R.**

Mirror of patience, **R.**

Lover of poverty, **R.**

Model of artisans, **R.**

Glory of home life, **R.**

Guardian of virgins, **R.**

Pillar of families, **R.**

Solace of the wretched, **R.**

Hope of the sick, **R.**

Patron of the dying, **R.**

Terror of the demons, **R.**

Protector of Holy Church, **R.**

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **R.**

Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **R.**

graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **R.**

have mercy on us.

V. He made him the lord of his household.

R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray; O God, in Your ineffable providence You were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Your most holy Mother, grant, we beg You, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector; You who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

April 22, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Before diving into the last two joys of St. Joseph, here are a few more saints quotes encouraging us to develop a devotion to St. Joseph.

St. Joseph was chosen among all men, to be the protector and guardian of the Virgin Mother of God; the defender and foster-father of the Infant-God, and the only co-operator upon earth, the one confidant of the secret of God in the work of the redemption of mankind. - St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Though thou hast recourse to many saints as thine intercessors, go specially to St. Joseph, for he has great power with God. St. Teresa of Avila

Saint Joseph was a just man, a tireless worker, the upright guardian of those entrusted to his care. May he always guard, protect and enlighten families. - Pope John Paul II

Go, then to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you;
Go to Joseph, and obey him as Jesus and Mary obeyed him;
Go to Joseph, and speak to him as they spoke to him;
Go to Joseph, and consult him as they consulted him;
Go to Joseph, and honor him as they honored him;
Go to Joseph, and be grateful to him as they were grateful to him;
Go to Joseph, and love him, as they love him still.
- St. Alphonsus Liguori

6. Life with Mary and Jesus (Luke 2:39)

There are many jokes about St. Joseph. Most of them dealing with the fact that Jesus was God and therefore perfect and Mary was conceived without sin and thus perfect. The conclusion is that if anything went wrong in the Holy Family it would have been St. Joseph's fault. I truly believe though that St. Joseph found family life to be truly a joy. I think that this was because every member of the Holy Family did what they could to make the other person feel love.

The number one sin that I hear in the confessional is parents confessing a lack of patience with their children and/or with their spouse. It is important therefore to remind ourselves to intentionally remember why our family is a gift from God. I always thank God for each member of my family before I encounter them.

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

The cost of sin is the loss of our relationship with God. St. Joseph lost Jesus (God) in the temple. For three days he missed Him. I have never lost a child but I can only imagine the pain a parent receives at losing a child from seeing my mother panic when my brother wandered off when we were little at Union Station. Finding God (or a child) is one of the most joyful experiences we can have.

PRAYER TO SAINT JOSEPH, IN TIME OF DISTRESS

We come to you, O blessed Joseph, in our distress. Having sought the aid of your most blessed spouse, we now confidently implore your assistance also. We humbly beg that, mindful of the affection which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and of the fatherly love with which you cherished the Child Jesus, you will lovingly watch over the heritage which Jesus Christ purchased with His blood, and by your powerful intercession help us in our urgent need. Prudent guardian of the Holy Family, protect the chosen people of Jesus Christ; drive far from us, most loving father, all error and corrupting sin. From your place in heaven, most powerful protector, graciously come to our aid in this conflict with the powers of darkness, and as of old you delivered the Child Jesus from danger of death, so now defend the holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity. Extend to each one of us your continual protection, that, led on by your example, and borne up by your strength, we may be able to live and die in holiness and obtain everlasting happiness in heaven. Amen.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

April 29, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Here are just a couple of thoughts on prayer.

Pope Francis Five Finger Prayers

Pope Francis talked about the simplicity of prayer and in his talk he told people about how his mother taught him to pray using the fingers on his hand. On this last day of April having covered the seven joys of St. Joseph, I thought I would conclude with this simple lesson in prayer.

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

1. When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you—your loved ones (Phil. 1:3–5). Father, give me the wisdom to know how to pray for others.
2. The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach—Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thess. 5:25).

3. The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you—national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
4. The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13–16).
5. Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God’s greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Phil. 4:6, 19).

Whatever method you use, just talk with your Father. He wants to hear what’s on your heart.

A Very Special Bank Account

Imagine you had a bank account that deposited \$86,400 each morning. The account carries over no balance from day to day, allows you to keep no cash balance, and every evening cancels whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every dollar each day!

We all have such a bank. Its name is Time. Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever time you have failed to use wisely. It carries over no balance from day to day. It allows no overdraft so you can’t borrow against yourself or use more time than you have. Each day, the account starts fresh. Each night, it destroys an unused time. If you fail to use the day’s deposits, it’s your loss and you can’t appeal to get it back.

There is never any borrowing time. You can’t take a loan out on your time or against someone else’s. The time you have is the time you have and that is that. Time management is yours to decide how you spend the time, just as with money you decide how you spend the money. It is never the case of us not having enough time to do things, but the case of whether we want to do them and where they fall in our priorities.

