

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

ON ST. JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH, PATRON OF OUR PARISH

This Wednesday evening at 7 pm, Bishop Gerardo Colacicco will celebrate a Mass in St. Joseph Church in New Windsor as part of this Year of St. Joseph. Beginning with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception this past year and ending with the same feast this December 8th, Pope Francis has asked us to ponder the faith of the Guardian of the Redeemer, to seek his intercessory help, and see what he saw when he beheld Jesus. Below is part of a homily by Saint Jose Maria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei. [From *Christ Passing By*, Homilies by Jose Maria Escriva, Sceptre Press, Princeton, 1973, page 94-97]

B**OTH ST. MATTHEW AND ST. LUKE** tell us that Joseph came from a noble line — the house of David and Solomon, kings of Israel. The details of his ancestry are not quite clear. We don't know which of the Gospel's two genealogies refers to Joseph, Jesus' father according to Jewish law, and which to Mary, his Mother according to the flesh. Nor do we know if Joseph came from Bethlehem, where he went for the census, or Nazareth, where he lived and worked. On the other hand, we do know that he was not well-to-do: he was just a worker, like so many millions of people throughout the world. He worked at the same demanding and humble job which God chose for himself when he took our flesh and came to live just like the rest of us for thirty years.

Scripture tells us St. Joseph was a craftsman. Some Fathers of the Church add that he was a carpenter. When talking of the life of Jesus, St. Justin says that he made ploughs and yokes. Perhaps that's why St. Isidore of Seville concludes that St. Joseph was a blacksmith. In any event, he was a workman who supplied the needs of his fellow citizens with a manual skill acquired through years of toil and sweat.

The Gospels give us a picture of Joseph as a remarkably sound man who was in no way frightened or shy of life. On the contrary, he faced up to problems, dealt with difficult situations and showed responsibility and initiative in whatever he was asked to do. I don't agree with the traditional picture of St. Joseph as an old man, even though it may have been prompted by a desire to emphasise the perpetual virginity of Mary. I see him as a strong young man, perhaps a few years older than our Lady, but in the prime of his life and work.

You don't have to wait to be old or lifeless to practice the virtue of chastity. Purity comes from love; and the strength and gaiety of youth are no obstacle for noble love. Joseph had a young heart and a young body

when he married Mary, when he learned of the mystery of her divine motherhood, when he lived in her company, respecting the integrity God wished to give the world as one more sign that he had come to share the life of his creatures. Anyone who cannot understand a love like that knows very little of true love and is a complete stranger to the christian meaning of chastity.

Joseph was, we have said, a craftsman from Galilee, just one man among many. What had life to offer to someone from a forgotten village like Nazareth? Nothing but work: work every day, with the same constant effort. And at the end of the day, a poor little house in which to rest and regain energy for the next day. 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."

St. Joseph was an ordinary sort of man on whom God relied to do great things. He did exactly what the Lord wanted him to do, in each and every event that went to make up his life. That is why Scripture praises Joseph as "a just man." And in Hebrew a just man means a good and faithful servant of God, someone who fulfils the divine will, or who is honorable and charitable toward his neighbor. So a just man is someone who loves God and proves his love by keeping God's commandments and directing his whole life toward the service of his brothers, his fellow men.