

# Saint Joseph

## *Meditations for the Month of March*

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*The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities* by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682); 1675-82;  
National Gallery, London; <https://www.wga.hu>

March 1<sup>st</sup>

## The Foreshadowing of St. Joseph

As the Church of Christ is prefigured in the rites and ceremonies of the Old Law, so the chief personages who center around Our Lord in the redemption of the world are foreshadowed in the Old Testament. We trace the outlines of Our Lady's graces in Esther, Jahel, Judith. So, too, St. Joseph's place in the New Dispensation is anticipated in the place of the Patriarch Joseph at the Court of Pharaoh. Thus God in His love for His chosen ones paves the way for them centuries before. He has prepared their work and the throne they are to earn in Heaven by their labors and sufferings for Him.

In the life of the Patriarch Joseph there was, throughout, a correspondence with the life of the foster-father of Jesus Christ. The troubles and persecutions of his early life--his long time of servitude and obscurity--his wondrous purity--his time of patient expectation--his glorious exaltation--his omnipotence with the King--his power to save all who came to him--all these were repeated, or rather were fulfilled, in St. Joseph. Reflect on each of these, and consider how St. Joseph is a model to us.

We read of the Patriarch that the King of Egypt made him lord of his house. So God made St. Joseph lord of that earthly tabernacle of flesh in which He dwelt on earth. Joseph ruled Our Lord in His Sacred Humanity. He made him lord, too, of another house in which He sojourned, of the sacred house that Wisdom built for Himself in the form of His Holy Mother. If St. Joseph was thus lord of Jesus and Mary, what may we not expect from him?

March 2nd

## St. Joseph's Parentage and Birth

Though St. Joseph lived in poverty and contempt, he came of a noble ancestry. The blood of kings and saints ran in his veins; and what is more, he inherited from them the virtues of each, but in a far higher degree than that which their original possessor had enjoyed. How much that is good in me is an inheritance from my parents and forefathers; yet how ill I have employed the virtues I received from them! Instead of being better than they, like St. Joseph, I may be the degenerate child of parents far better than myself.

St. Joseph, as the greatest of all the saints next to Our Lady, had all the privileges of other saints. Hence we may piously believe that, like St. John, he was cleansed from sin in his mother's womb. He was to be Mary's spouse, he was to occupy the first and foremost place in the family of Jesus, he was hereafter to be the Patron of the whole Church: it was therefore fitting that he should be endowed with this initial privilege of being from his birth a child of God, an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thank God for this privilege bestowed on him

St. Joseph was the connecting link between the Old and the New Dispensation, the first dawn that announces the coming day. In his youth he belonged to the Old Law, in his later life to the New. As the dawn brightens into the glorious day, so St. Joseph's life, beautiful from the first, continually advanced in splendor. Is this the history of my life? Have I made steady progress in the love of God?

March 3rd

## St. Joseph's Childhood and Youth

The names of the servants of God often indicate some leading feature in their work or in their character. When God Himself gives the name this is always the case. Joseph signifies adding or increasing, and was a forecast of his continuous increase, not only in grace and in favor with God, but also in glory and repute with men as long as the world shall last. Rejoice in the growing devotion to St. Joseph, and ask yourself whether your devotion to him grows.

St. Joseph is said to have had a boyhood and youth of suffering, and to have been persecuted and ill-treated by his brethren. We should expect it to be so, since this was the lot of the Patriarch of Genesis; and moreover, one who has such an eminent position in the Church on earth and such exceeding glory in Heaven, must have been conformed to our Blessed Lord in having a career of suffering. St. Joseph's character as known to us in Holy Scripture is eminently one purified by having had much to undergo. Such patience, gentleness, thoughtful charity, cannot be learned except at a heavy price.

Joseph's trade was that of a carpenter. The thought of the great Patron of the Universal Church, the husband of Mary, having been a handicraftsman, ought to give us a great respect for manual labor. The idea that there is in it anything unsuitable to our dignity is a vulgar, un-Christian, heathen notion. All the saints had a love for manual labor. How much better such a life than that of self-satisfied ease and luxury. Thank God if you have to labor.

March 4th

## St. Joseph's Betrothal

**W**hen our Blessed Lady arrived at a marriageable age, the Chief Priest summoned all the unmarried men of the house of David, that from them a husband might be chosen for her. There is a tradition that to each of them a rod was delivered, and that the High Priest, speaking under Divine inspiration, declared that God would choose a spouse for Mary in the same way that Aaron was chosen to be High Priest in the Old Law. "Whomsoever of these I shall choose, his rod shall blossom" (Num. xvii. 5). On the morrow the rod of Joseph had budded and blossomed. He was thus declared by God to be the worthy spouse of His Holy Mother.

**B**ut Joseph had promised to God to remain ever a virgin.\* How could he then consent to marriage? He knew by Divine revelation that Mary had made a similar vow, and Mary knew the same of him. O happy, O ideal union! Where the sublime gift of virginity was united to the mutual love and dependence of husband on wife and wife on husband.

**B**ut thus it is that God provides for His elect. He plans for them in a way that utterly sets at naught the prudence of the world. He never disappoints those who leave themselves in His hands, but exercises a Divine ingenuity in fulfilling all the desires of their hearts in most unexpected ways, in return for their submission and obedience to His holy will. Thus it is that those who do God's will always do their own will, for their will is His, and His will is theirs.

\*St. Thomas in Quasi. Sent. ii.1.

March 5th

## St. Joseph's Espousal

Never were husband and wife so eminently suited to each other as Joseph and Mary. Never was there a union that so exactly symbolized the union between Christ and the Church. Happy, indeed, are those who meet with a congenial spouse! Happier still are those who are content to live in a state of virginity, and in the religious life to choose Christ Himself for their Divine Spouse. They it is who most nearly approach to the life of Joseph with Mary.

St. Joseph and Our Lady lived in perpetual chastity, and their union was a closer one than that of any other husband and wife in the whole world. Their ideas, opinions, hopes, wishes, likes and dislikes, were all the same; Joseph was Mary's strong support, Mary loved to depend on Joseph. None was ever so obedient, gentle, loving, and sympathizing a wife as Mary. None was ever such a thoughtful, kind, prudent, faithful husband as Joseph.

Of what age was St. Joseph at the time of his marriage? Not an old man, for this would have been unseemly--nor very young, for he would not have been a suitable protector for Mary--but about the prime of life. It is true that from the fifth century onwards, he is represented as a bearded old man, but this is partly to represent the dignity of his character, partly as a portrait of his later years. Joseph was always far advanced in wisdom, counsel, prudence, and the love of God. Would that I were more like him!

March 6th

## The Annunciation

*O*ur Lady's peaceful life at Nazareth with her chaste and holy spouse had continued for some weeks or months, when the wondrous message came to her that she was to be the Mother of God. The Son of God became incarnate in her holy womb! How it must have transformed her whole life to know that her God dwelt within her! She was no longer Joseph's spouse before all else; he had to give place to One holier than he, to One who was not mere man, but God! Now she was before all and above all the sacred house in which the Eternal Wisdom of God dwelt, under a veil of flesh!

*D*id Joseph perceive any change in her? Yes; he was conscious of a dignity, of a grace, of a divinity encircling Mary, which with all her holiness had not been there before. Mary's sanctity was transformed. She herself, who before had been like a beautiful crystal, was now like a crystal through which some brilliant light continually darted its rays of splendor. So ought we to be when we receive Holy Communion. What a change it should make in us! How in our conversation the recent presence of our God within us should show its Divine effects in us!

*W*hy did not Mary tell Joseph? She could not. She who always acted under Divine inspiration was inspired to conceal the Divine secret. How could she, with her humility, reveal this unexampled privilege? She knew all that her silence would bring on her, but until God urged her to speak she would be silent. Are we similarly guided by God in all things, and are we anxious to conceal what exalts us in the eyes of others?

March 7th

## The Visitation

The visit of Mary to her cousin St. Elizabeth took place a short time after the Annunciation. It had been suggested to her by the Angel's message, telling her that Elizabeth was to bear a son. St. Joseph knew nothing of this, yet he raised no objection to the journey. He had already conceived such a reverence for his spotless spouse, that it was enough for him that she entertain a wish. He knew that she never asked on impulse, or without a due cause, and so when Mary asked his leave to visit her cousin, he at once consented. So we should consult, as far as possible, the wishes of others, seeking to conform our will to others in the spirit of charity.

St. Joseph would not allow his young wife to take the journey alone. He went with her as her escort. What a happiness for him to wait upon her! How tenderly he watches over her! How thoughtfully he sees to all her wants! Men often idealize those they love, but there was no need to idealize Mary. She was an ideal in herself. And when he approached her, Joseph somehow felt that he was drawing near to God, and that God dwelt in her in some other way than by His graces and gifts.

Arrived at their journey's end, St. Joseph in his humility saw to their material needs, and did not hear the words of Elizabeth saluting Mary as Mother of God, and announcing the joy of her unborn babe at His presence. St. Joseph was ignorant and remained in ignorance of the mystery of the Incarnation. He had to wait; that was to be the law of his life, as it is of the lives of all who are very dear to God.

March 8th

## St. Joseph's First Sorrow - Mary's Conception

St. Joseph's life had been from the beginning one of many trials and much suffering, but all were mere trifles compared with the dark cloud of sorrow that fell upon him after Mary returned from the house of Elizabeth. He could not help seeing that she was about to become a mother. What could this mean? How could it be explained consistently with her spotless purity? St. Joseph ventured not to pass any judgment. Here he is our model, slow in believing that which had the appearance of evil, anxious to find a favorable explanation.

What explanation could he find? That she had sinned was a thought not only abhorrent to him, but utterly impossible in view of Mary's transparent purity and exalted virtue. Away with so horrible a thought! Could the human paternity have been without any fault on her part? Equally impossible; God would have protected His handmaid. Was her condition a miracle wrought by God? Such a miracle was without example since the world began. Joseph was utterly perplexed. All was dark and black; all he could do was to wait and pray. O wise resolve!

But it was necessary to take action. In no case could he keep her with him. She must be sent back to her friends. How could he live without her? How could he expose her to disgrace? To put her to open shame was out of the question; he must send her away privately. This was his duty and he would do it. It would break his heart to lose her, but he must do his duty without thought of self. Here, too, St. Joseph is a model to us.

March 9th

## St. Joseph's First Joy - The Angel's Visit

Joseph had in his sad perplexity for some time prayed and thought, and thought and prayed again. Externally his conduct gave no sign of the anguish of his soul. But all the same Mary must have been conscious of the thoughts that were passing in her dear spouse's mind, and though God had given her no leave to speak, she prayed continually that He would make known to Joseph what had taken place in her. God could not refuse to listen to His handmaid's prayer.

One night as St. Joseph slept an Angel appeared. "Fear not," he said, "to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in Mary's womb is of the Holy Ghost." That Child is Divine, nay, is Himself God. Thou art appointed to be His guardian and protector. Thou shalt call His name Jesus; thou shalt be the foster-father of thy God, as thou art the true husband of His Mother. Thus it is that God intervenes to dispel the fears of His servants who watch and pray, who patiently abide God's time, and only seek His will.

What intense joy and lightness of heart fill the soul of Joseph at the Angel's words! His bewildered perplexity was changed to peace and gladness. He was to be the consort of the Mother of God; nay, more, he was to have the rights of a father over the Son of God; he was to have the unspeakable privilege of dwelling with God Incarnate! O happy Joseph! Thy obedience and patience received indeed a rich reward.

March 10th

## St. Joseph's Second Sorrow – The Journey to Bethlehem

When St. Joseph started from his cottage at Nazareth, to repair to Bethlehem according to the Emperor's command, he had every reason to expect that he would be well received. His early youth had been spent there, and he must have been known to many of the inhabitants. But when he arrived there, a sad surprise awaited him. No room in the caravanserai or guest-house. No room in any of the cottages where he applied for admission. Everywhere a refusal. No room for him; no room for his spotless spouse. It is always painful to meet with a cold reception among those who we expect will welcome us.

It was not for his own sake that Joseph grieved. He was accustomed to be treated ill. He had learnt to welcome it for God's sake. But to witness the distress caused to his holy spouse, ah, this was hard! It is far more painful to witness suffering in those we love than to feel it ourselves. Could Joseph do nothing to find shelter for Mary in her delicate and critical condition? Every resource had failed him; he could only pray and wait.

At last a thought occurred to him. He remembered a cave where some animals were kept; small, low, dirty, unfit for human habitation. Here at least she would be safe from the pinching cold, here they could remain in peace. How could he propose it to her? Was this the sort of treatment to be accorded to the Mother of God? Yes, it must be so, and Joseph submitted to the holy will of God.

March 11th

## St. Joseph's Second Joy – The Nativity

Though St. Joseph knew that the time of Our Lady's delivery was drawing near, yet the Birth of Jesus came upon him as a joyful surprise. He anticipated the lot of his Foster-Son, who "came to His own, and His own received Him not." The reward of Joseph's purity, chastity, patience, submission, gentleness, and sorrow, was the visible presence of the Son of God, the privilege of being the first of all the sons of men to behold Him. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God," was literally fulfilled for the first time in the person of St. Joseph.

It was but fitting that the coming of Christ Jesus into the world should be surrounded by celestial wonders. A choir of angels sang angelic melodies, and a brightness dazzling beyond the brightness of the sun illumined the cave and centered around the new-born Infant and His Virgin Mother. St. Joseph saw the Holy Child, and the sight was Heaven begun. What was all the preceding sorrow compared with the unspeakable joy of that happy moment!

Joseph was recalled to earthly things by hearing voices outside the cave, and seeing a group of shepherds coming to adore new-born King. It was not a dream, then, but a happy reality. God was really come to dwell among men, and was born in that humble cave. What mattered it, if it was bare, and poor, and rough! How much happier to be there sitting on the hard ground, poor and despised of men, than to be lolling on perfumed couches in the palace of Herod! Where Jesus is there is happiness. What are outward things if we enjoy His peace!

March 12th

## The Shedding of Jesus' Blood at His Circumcision

*O*n the eighth day after the birth of a Jewish boy the ceremony of circumcision took place, according to God's covenant with Abraham. Was this cleansing rite to be performed in the case of the Son of God? Yes, He had come to suffer and to shed His Blood for us, and on the very octave of His Birth Mary and Joseph had to recognize that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

*I*t was St. Joseph who had to be the minister of the sacred rite. He had to be the reluctant and sorrowful cause of those tears of the Infant Jesus. What was St. Joseph thinking of? We may at least conjecture that he was lamenting over the evil of sin; that he was recognizing in the pain that he was inflicting one of the most terrible consequences of sin; that he was praying to his Son and his God to forgive those sinners for whom He was shedding His Precious Blood.

*H*ard by, Mary was bathed in tears of anguish. Now for the first time Jesus was enduring the cruel smart which all His life long was to be His lot at the hands of His own creatures. If only she could bear the pain for Him! How the sight of His tears pierced her heart! All this St. Joseph witnessed, and his sorrow at the bitter sufferings of Jesus was intensified by his sorrow at Mary's bitter grief. If Joseph thus sorrowed, how much more should I, who have so constantly by my sins added to the pangs suffered by the Son of God.

March 13th

## St. Joseph's Third Joy – Hearing the Name of Jesus

*B*efore Our Lord was born, an Angel had given instructions to St. Joseph that His Name was to be called JESUS. It was St. Joseph, not Our Lady, who was first to pronounce the name of the Son of God. The jurisdiction he thus exercised was a declaration of his authority. When God brought the animals to Adam to be named, He thus declared him their master. So when He gave to Joseph the office of naming the Infant in his arms. He declared him the constituted ruler of his God. O wondrous privilege! What must have been the sanctity of one to whom such an office was assigned!

*T*he name that St. Joseph gave to his infant Son was Jesus, the Savior--not Emmanuel, or Christ. Christ is the official name of the Son of God in virtue of His Human Nature; He was anointed as Man with the Holy Spirit. Emmanuel, or God with us, proclaims His Divinity; but Jesus, or Savior, declares at the same time His Human Nature and Divine Personality. As our Savior He must be both God and Man--man to pay the price of our redemption, God that the price may be one that can satisfy the Eternal Father.

*W*hat must have been the sweetness which filled St. Joseph's heart as he first breathed that Sacred Name! If to others it was as honey in their mouth, to St. Joseph it was as nectar and ambrosia, containing in itself all possible sweetness. None save the Holy Mother felt such joy as St. Joseph in pronouncing the Holy Name. Yet how little I love and revere it. How seldom I repeat it, and with what coldness and indifference. My Jesus, mercy! May I love Thee ever more and more!

March 14th

## St. Joseph's Fourth Sorrow – The Prophecy of Simeon

When the aged Simeon took into his arms the Infant Jesus, and gave thanks to God that he had at length seen the salvation of Israel, we are told that he blessed the little group before him. But it was a strange benediction. The Glory of Israel, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, was to be set for the fall of many of His people. St. Joseph could scarce believe his ears at the unexpected words. Was this to be the result of the Incarnation of the Son of God? We little know the sorrows that God may have in store for us.

This was not all. Another clause in that strange blessing declared that the spotless Lamb of God should be a sign that should be contradicted. What could there be in Him that should arouse ill-will, opposition, or contradiction? Had He not come to be the Savior of mankind? Were not His lips to be full of grace from the first day that He began to speak? St. Joseph accepted with resignation the heartbreaking news.

It was not only Jesus who was to suffer. Mary's heart was to be pierced through with a sword. Her life was to be one continual sorrow. She was to suffer with the sufferings of Jesus. The tender, compassionate heart of Joseph was filled with fresh sorrow at the prospect of the anguish that was to overtake his holy spouse. To join with the sorrow of others assuages their grief. It is this which will win for us a share in the joy that St. Joseph has in Heaven.

March 15th

## St. Joseph's Fourth Joy – The Merit of Suffering

As our Blessed Lord was consoled during His Sacred Agony by a vision of the fruits of His Passion, in the happiness of the countless multitude of the redeemed, so St. Joseph was comforted in his sorrow for the coming sufferings of Jesus and Mary by knowing that the reconciliation to God of souls without number would be their recompense. The knowledge of the work that Jesus was to accomplish in enabling millions to arise from their sins, filled Joseph's heart with sweetness and delight. It is one of the marks of love to God that we rejoice in the spiritual good of others beyond all else. Can I say that it is my greatest joy to hear of the advancing spiritual welfare of those with whom I am concerned?

St. Joseph was himself to have no direct part in the Divine work of expiation. Jesus was to accomplish it, and Mary was to have her share so far as mortal could. Did Joseph rejoice the less because others were to do the work? Not a whit; he desired simply that God's glory and man's good should be advanced. How different am I, who am often jealous of others where I fail, and take little interest in any good work save those with which I am personally concerned.

St. Joseph's joy at the fruit of the sufferings of Jesus and Mary quite overpowered his sorrow at the fact of their having to suffer. He estimated things at their true value, and though he grieved at the thought that God and His Mother were to suffer, yet he counted it a privilege for Christ as Man to suffer, that as Man He might receive that plentiful and overflowing reward that God gives to those who suffer for Him.

March 16th

## St. Joseph's Fifth Sorrow – The Flight into Egypt

One night, as Joseph slept, a vision came before his eyes. He saw an Angel, who bade him rise and take the Child Jesus and His Mother and fly into Egypt. Without a moment's delay he arose quickly, called Our Lady, put together what was necessary for the journey, and started ere the early dawn appeared in the sky. His heart was torn with sorrow, but, like a true son of obedience, he hesitated not for a single moment, but accepted all as coming from the hand of God

Long and perilous was the journey, many were the sufferings of the Holy Family; perils in the desert, perils from the robbers who beset the road, perils from the wild beasts, perils from exposure to the sun by day and to the cold by night. Sorrowful indeed was St. Joseph's heart, as he trudged on day by day leading the ass on which Our Lady rode. Sorrowful not for his own sake, but because of the anxiety he felt for the safety of the precious treasure committed to him. Sorrowful at the thought of all they were suffering, and would suffer during their exile.

At last they arrived at the destination God had fixed for them, and here St. Joseph earned a scanty livelihood day by day by his trade as carpenter. How uncongenial were all around them! They were among those who knew not the true God, oppressors, idolaters and pagans. No murmur ever escaped St. Joseph's lips; he was willing to wait in Egypt as long as God pleased. Do I submit with obedience to all that God commands through my superiors or through the arrangement of His Providence, without murmuring or complaining?

March 17th

## St. Joseph's Fifth Joy – Seeing the Idols of Egypt Fall to the Ground

When the Holy Family had crossed the desert and arrived at the place of their abode in Egypt, tradition records a miracle. The idols in the temples are said to have fallen prostrate on the very night of their arrival. The news filled Joseph's heart with joy. The one thought of Joseph's life was to further the influence of Jesus. His one joy was to see Jesus overcome His enemies and gather to Him men of good-will.

This joy of St. Joseph in the power of the Son of God was a recompense for the sorrow he felt at his apparent helplessness when he was commanded to carry Him down to Egypt. Then it seemed as if He were utterly feeble against His enemies, but now the omnipotence of His Divinity manifests itself by unmistakable signs. So it is with those who trust in God under difficult circumstances. It seems as if He were unable or unwilling to save them, but He will reward their patient confidence by some glorious surprise they had not even ventured to hope for.

Christ's task is always to destroy idols. In my heart there are many idols: sloth, sensuality, selfishness, impatience, anger, neglect of religious duties, unkindness to others, self-love, disobedience, and worst of all, pride. If Jesus is to dwell with me these idols must be overthrown, and above all, pride. It is a difficult task, so long have they held sway there. O good St. Joseph, bring with thee Jesus and His love, and cast down for me these hateful intruders that Jesus hates.

March 18th

## St. Joseph's Sixth Sorrow – Finding the Archelaus reigned in Judaea

When the appointed time was come, St. Joseph received the joyful news that the Holy Family at length was to return from their place of banishment. An Angel appeared to him by night and informed him that Herod was dead, and that he might safely return into the land of Israel. But when he arrived there he found that the tyrant had been succeeded by his son Archelaus and that Judaea, over which he held sway, was therefore no safe abode for Jesus and Mary. What a bitter disappointment it must have been!

It seemed as if St. Joseph had been deceived by Almighty God. He was encouraged to return, and now he found that the place of the dead King was occupied by a son who was not much better than his father. Yet no thought of discontent was harbored in St. Joseph's heart; not the faintest murmur of complaint escaped his lips. His was the true obedience--confiding, unreasoning, uncomplaining obedience to the will of God. Can I say the same of myself?

Observe St. Joseph's prudence. He might have said that the command to return was a sort of guarantee from Almighty God of his safety. In spite of this, he took the most extreme natural precautions, going far away from the place of danger. He knew that God requires us to use all natural means to gain our ends, and if we neglect them, we cannot reasonably trust to the supernatural intervention of God on our behalf.

March 19th

## St. Joseph's Sixth Joy – The Life with Jesus and Mary at Nazareth

When St. Joseph found that dangers still threatened the safety of Jesus in the south of Palestine, he at once proceeded to Galilee. He was fertile in resource, and when one plan failed, another was soon with God's assistance destined to take its place. Here too he teaches me a lesson. If I meet with reverses I get discouraged and am inclined to give up, instead of cheerfully looking out for some fresh means of serving God and accomplishing the work He has entrusted to me.

St. Joseph, under God's direction, journeys on to the town of Nazareth, where he had formerly lived, and there he re-enters the poor little cottage, humble and lowly enough, where he and his sacred spouse had formerly dwelt. There, a secret voice tells him, is to be his future home. How joyfully he takes possession of it! Now his wanderings were over and he was to spend the rest of his days in peace in the tranquil home that God had prepared for him.

Yet how poor it was! The town of Nazareth was so despised that men did not think it possible that anything great or good could come from thence. Was this to be the home of the Son of God? Yes, and St. Joseph rejoiced in the low esteem of Nazareth, because it seemed to him an arrangement quite according to God's designs that Jesus should dwell there, and that the name of Nazarene should cling to Him as a name of contempt. Why have I not more of his spirit? I am too fond of show and display, and all that the world thinks much of.

March 20th

## St. Joseph's Seventh Sorrow – The Loss of Jesus for Three Days

*I*t was obligatory on all Jews who were within a moderate distance of Jerusalem, to pay a visit to the Temple once every year. In accordance with this law, Joseph went up each year from Nazareth, and Mary went also. As soon as He was old enough, Jesus accompanied His parents. When He was twelve years old He travelled thither, but on the return journey they missed Him. Vainly they sought Him everywhere, and with heavy hearts they asked each member of their company if they had seen Him? No, He was not there. O what a bitter grief for St. Joseph! How terrible were those three days without Jesus!

Could it be through any negligence on his part? Joseph's motive for separating himself from Jesus had been a most unselfish one: that Mary might have the joy of His company. Men and women travelled in separate caravans, and children would travel with either. But perhaps he might have been more vigilant. Anyhow, he had lost Jesus, and what could be worse than that? How different from us, who too often remain content with earthly things, with scarce a thought of Jesus!

*J*oseph's grief was increased by witnessing the sorrow of Mary. Together they returned to Jerusalem, asking, like the Spouse in the Canticles, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth?" All in vain; for three days and three nights no trace of Jesus. Those days appeared like centuries. Joseph, then, can sympathize with my desolation. He knows the terrible void, the joyless days, the weary nights, when Jesus is absent from the soul.

March 21st

## St. Joseph's Seventh Joy – The Finding of Jesus in the Temple among the Doctors

*F*or three days Joseph had sought Jesus, and at length, wearied with the fruitless search, he and Our Lady betook themselves to the Temple, that there before the mercy-seat, they might beg God to have mercy on them. Here was true wisdom. Why do we not imitate them in desolation? In our temples we have, not the symbolical presence of God, but God Himself, God Incarnate, waiting to listen to us. Why do I not more often have recourse to Him?

*I*n one of the halls of the Temple, they espied a group of old men, gathered around a Boy, and absorbed in their conversation with Him. In an instant Joseph recognized Him whom they sought. Now all his anxiety was at an end; the darkness of night was turned into the dazzling brightness of the glorious day. So in an instant Jesus can work for us the same merciful change, and by His presence can turn all our darkness into light.

*W*hat was Jesus doing? He was listening to what the Rabbis had to say about the Messiah, putting questions to them which set them a-thinking whether the time had not come for His appearance, answering their questions with such supernatural wisdom that the old men sat there astonished, and, as it were, in a trance. Jesus was anticipating His Public Ministry, beginning at that early age the work which He had come to accomplish. So from the first He began His work within my soul, suggesting holy thoughts, pouring in heavenly wisdom. Alas, how little have I learned His Divine lessons!

March 22nd

## St. Joseph as Head of the Holy Family

The dignity of any office of authority is in proportion to the excellence of those over whom such authority is exercised. What then must have been the dignity and perfection of St. Joseph! To rule over the angels would be a small privilege compared with ruling God Himself and His Holy Mother. What prudence, what discretion, what purity of intention, what perfect unselfishness, what intense love of God and of men must have been found in St. Joseph! How humble he must have been, how thoughtful, how kind, how considerate, how wise, how faithful to God's holy inspirations. Next to Our Lady, it is impossible to suppose that any saint could approach the dignity of St. Joseph.

Watch St. Joseph as a superior. Notice how he gives his orders, firmly and decidedly, without hesitation, but yet kindly, and gently, and considerately. St. Joseph had to command others besides Jesus and Mary. To all he showed the same thoughtful, delicate, tender, watchful affection and respect. Am I like St. Joseph in dealing with those over whom I am placed?

Our Lord obeyed St. Joseph with the most perfect, unquestioning obedience. He, as Man, was St. Joseph's natural superior; He, in His Sacred Humanity, had authority over all creation. He therefore, the Lord of all, raised St. Joseph to be lord over Him. This exalts still more the position of St. Joseph, who derived his authority over Jesus, from Our Lord's own choice of him. Thus Jesus teaches us the happiness of obedience. To be subject is no degradation, but rather a privilege, since Jesus chose it.

March 23rd

## St. Joseph, Father of Jesus

*We* need not fear to apply this name to the holy foster-father of the Son of God, since it was given to him by Our Lady herself, when she said to Him in the Temple, "Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

*He* had the position of father of Jesus, and was recognized as such by the common consent. He had all the rights and the authority of a father, so far as any could have over the Son of God. His Divine Foster-Son from His Birth depended on him, as the child naturally depends upon his father. He fulfilled the office of father. God delegated to him the duties, the rights, the privileges of a father, and therefore the father of Jesus he is truly called.

*We* may also piously believe that his Divine Son was made like to him in outward form. In the natural order of things, Jesus would not be made after the likeness of His Holy Mother alone. The Holy Spirit, in fashioning the features of the Son of God, would have taken St. Joseph as in some sort the model to be followed in form and face. What must have been St. Joseph's beauty, sweetness of expression, symmetry of form, perfect purity of body and soul! What a contrast to my unsightliness and impurity!

*When* God calls a man by any name, He thereby ascribes to him whatever that name implies. How often Jesus called St. Joseph by the endearing name of father! By so doing, He showed that he was truly His father. His words were no mere fiction. O happy St. Joseph! It is no wonder that thou hast such power in Heaven!

March 24th

## St. Joseph's Inner Life

*The inner life of the soul depends on the closeness of the union with God. None of the saints, save only the Holy Mother of God, was ever so closely united to the will of God, as St. Joseph. None so prompt in obedience. None so perfect in patient resignation. From him I will try to learn these means of drawing nearer to God. I must be more pliable to the will of God, more punctual and exact in obeying; more ready to submit to all that God ordains. Thus only can I hope for greater holiness, and a life more closely united to Him.*

*St. Joseph had a privilege on earth which for all other saints is reserved for the eternal Paradise, of being in the continual company of his God, of gazing on the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word, of hearing from Him words of love and gratitude, of drinking in delicious draughts of heavenly delight from the words and looks of the Incarnate God. His life must have been one long ecstasy. If those who touched the hem of Jesus' garment received an inflow of heavenly virtue, what must he have received who nursed Him in infancy, and bore Him the closest company in youth and manhood!*

*How often St. Joseph called Jesus his dear Son, and Jesus in return called him His dear father. What happiness to him to have a right thus to address the Second Person of the Divine Trinity. What grace must have flowed into his heart when Jesus called him father. Pray that you may deserve to have Jesus smile sweetly on you, as He so often did upon His great foster-father.*

March 25th

## St. Joseph's Strong Faith

*F*aith consists in the ready acceptance of God's messages to us on His authority. It is tested by the difficulty of believing, and by the painful consequences to ourselves. We will try St. Joseph's faith by these methods.

*T*he first message which is recorded as having been given to St. Joseph, was that Mary was about to become a mother through the operation of the Holy Ghost. The news announced was a miracle of stupendous magnitude, a mystery inscrutable. Yet St. Joseph never doubted, never hesitated. He accepted it on God's authority, as if it were the simplest thing in the world.

*T*he second message enjoined him to take the Divine Child and His Mother, and fly in the darkness of the night to Egypt. There was no apparent reason, no danger known to St. Joseph. The journey was a perilous, painful, and most inconvenient one, and seemingly unnecessary. Yet St. Joseph hesitated not for an instant, doubted not, delayed not, but started before day dawned. What living, practical faith! How different from my doubling slowness.

It was this habit of faith which earned for him the continual society of Jesus Christ. St. Joseph never ceased to have present to him the Godhead of his Son; but at times he would forget the outward form before him, and would adore his God. So we should seek to realize that the Sacred Host does but veil the same God Incarnate, and should make many acts of faith before the Blessed Sacrament and say, "My Lord and my God."

March 26th

## St. Joseph's Prudence

*P*rudence is a virtue that we all value and desire to possess. Let us look at this virtue in St. Joseph.

St. Joseph never acted on impulse. He always reflected before acting. What husband would not have put aside his wife without any delay when he discovered that she was about to give birth to a child that was not his? Not so St. Joseph. He waited and pondered and prayed, and gradually formed the prudent resolve of sending her back in secret to her friends. Even after deciding on this plan as the best, he again waited and commended it to God, turned it over and over in his own mind, prayed still more before proceeding to act. It was this prudence of his, this charitable delay, that earned for him the solution of his doubts by an Angel's voice.

St. Joseph had entrusted to him the training of Jesus. The formation of the character of the Divine Child was committed to him. What prudence, what perfect prudence must he have possessed whom God considered as the fit guardian for the Eternal Word. If I were more prudent, God would entrust to me greater works to be done for Him.

*O*ur Lady must have had wonderful confidence in the prudence of her spouse, when she arose unhesitatingly at dead of night to fly with him to Egypt, just because he told her he had had a dream warning him to do so. But she knew not only how naturally careful and wise he was, but that he had an infused and supernatural prudence that could not be deceived. If I were more prudent, others would trust me more, and listen with greater confidence to my advice or commands.

March 27th

## St. Joseph's Purity of Heart

*"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God!"* One might almost think that Our Lord in uttering these words was thinking of His foster-father. It was because of his purity of heart that he had the privilege of seeing God face to face under the veil of flesh for nearly thirty years. Let us see what this meant.

*I*t meant that St. Joseph must have been free from all sin, so far as was possible to one who had not Our Lady's singular privilege. The authority over the sinless Lamb of God would scarcely have been entrusted to one who was sinful. The constant association, the exchange of endearing love implied that His father was the purest of all men. To me, too, Christ commits Himself in Holy Communion to be my guest and the food of my soul. What ought I to be?

*P*urity of heart involves also a knowledge of God. Who, save His Mother, knew Jesus as Joseph did? Who watched so intensely each movement, each look, each word? Who sought to imitate them and drink in His spirit as Joseph did? Who was modeled so perfectly after the likeness of Christ? How distant is my likeness to Christ! Nay, how unlike am I, alas! to Him!

St. Joseph had the extraordinary privilege of ministering with his own hands to Jesus, a privilege which the angels must have envied him. His ministry to Jesus was a source of continual grace. His acts of love to Jesus were acts of love to God. All was done for Jesus, knowing that he was doing it for God. O happy Joseph! Teach me to minister to others for Jesus' sake.

March 28th

## St. Joseph's Venerable Age

St. Joseph during his long life had been fulfilling the meaning of the name he bore with unbroken constancy. He had been "adding" to the brightness of his virtues and the treasure of his merits with an ever-increasing speed. In the company of Jesus and Mary he had made more rapid progress than any of the other saints. O Joseph, what fervor must have been thine! what charity, what perfect purity! Was there an arch-angel in Heaven equal to thee in love of God? How different thy lightning advance in grace to my sluggish slowness.

What was the secret of St. Joseph's high perfection? It was the calm, quiet peacefulness and tranquility that enabled his pure soul to reflect in so wonderful a manner the likeness of God, and quickened his ears to catch the faintest whisper of Divine grace. We cannot imagine him ever hurried, or over-eager, or anxious, or disorderly. If we could remove those defects we should soon become more like St. Joseph.

As St. Joseph grew old, and his natural powers began to fail, the beauty of his soul became more and more apparent. Some think that like Moses he suffered none of the infirmities of age. At all events, he who as foster-father of Jesus occupied in some sort the place of the Eternal Father upon earth, must have been an old man of incomparable beauty, the type and ideal of a saint and patriarch. Never were grey hairs crowned with such glory and honor as those of him whose happy old age had been spent with Jesus and Mary.

March 29th

## St. Joseph's Happy Death

Never to any of the children of men did death come so bereft of its terrors as to St. Joseph. One who had lived so continually in the presence of his God had no cause to fear it. One so sinless as he could bid defiance to Satan. One whose thoughts, aspirations, hopes, affections, had always been in Heaven, regarded death as a stepping-stone to his true home and to the presence of his God. One on whose breast Jesus had nestled lovingly, had already had a foretaste of Paradise, and was absorbed by the longing desire to be there. Have I the same reasons to welcome death?

Yet if anyone ever had reason to dread separation from earth, it was St. Joseph. None ever left behind him wife or child who were a thousandth part as dear as Mary and Jesus were to Joseph. Did it cost him nothing to say farewell? No, for from Jesus he could never be separated, and if the veil of flesh prevented him for a short time from intercourse with his Virgin Spouse, yet they would soon meet in endless union before the throne of God. The pain of separation disappeared at the thought of eternal bliss. If the company of Jesus and Mary was so sweet on earth, what would it be in Heaven?

What a beautiful death was St. Joseph's! Nursed in the arms of Jesus and Mary his last hours were one long ecstasy. No anxious, no distressing thought was possible in that sweet company. For him death was only falling asleep to wake in Paradise. St. Joseph is therefore the patron of a good death. Pray earnestly to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that you may die in peace in their blessed company.

March 30th

## St. Joseph's Glory in Heaven

It is an opinion held by many learned theologians that St. Joseph, like Our Lady, enjoys the honor of having had his body raised from the grave at the time of Our Lord's Resurrection, and that he is present in Heaven now, body as well as soul. There are no relics of St. Joseph, no tomb where his body is honored. His assumption is moreover what we might expect in reward for such spotless purity as his. The spouse of Mary deserved this honor, and one who had tended Jesus with such loving care had a sort of claim to it. We may therefore piously believe that St. Joseph enjoys this wonderful privilege.

**W**e have already spoken of St. Joseph as the most glorious of all the saints. What else does this mean but that he has the highest place in Heaven after Our Lady? The Church calls him the glory of the inhabitants of Heaven (*caelitem decus*). How would this be possible unless he surpassed them all? Congratulate St. Joseph on his great glory, and thank God that you have a friend so near His throne.

St. Joseph was, after Mary, more like to his Divine Son in form and feature than anyone else ever was. This likeness extended to his beautiful and stainless soul. In Heaven he still retains this intimate likeness to Jesus, which grew and increased by reason of his close union with the Son of God and familiar intercourse with Him. Likeness to Christ! That is the increase of glory in Heaven. Pray that you may become, through St. Joseph's help, more like to Jesus.

March 31th

## St. Joseph, Protector of the Faithful

When God bade St. Joseph arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt, He was committing unto him, under the guise of Jesus and Mary, the care of the Universal Church. As to Mary were entrusted all Christians in the words:

“Woman, behold thy son,” so to St. Joseph in the Angel's message. He was to be our guardian and protector. He was to keep us safe in the dangerous journey of life; he was to console us and care for us in darkness and sorrow while we wait in this land of exile for the summons to our true home. Joseph, too, is to bring us safely into the promised land at last. O holy St. Joseph, be my friend and my protector and my keeper, amid all difficulties and dangers and temptations.

St. Joseph has care of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, as he had care of the mortal Body of Jesus. He has to watch over it and guard its temporal interests. He has to defend it against the bitter enemies who seek its destruction. How often he has driven them back! How often, when all seemed lost, he has restored to the Church of God peace and prosperity! No weapon aimed against it can harm it, for God has given to St. Joseph the privilege of keeping it ever safe.

St. Joseph is also the protector of all his clients. In their temporal affairs how trusty a friend, saving them in circumstances apparently hopeless. In spiritual necessities how prompt to aid, how unflinching in resource. O trust in St. Joseph, wait patiently for him, and he will obtain for thee the desire of thy heart!

