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The Month of St. Joseph

Eve of the First Day “Go to Joseph.”

THESE words were addressed by Pharaoh to his subjects (Genesis 41:55), who, when harassed by famine and distress, implored his aid. And we introduce them at the beginning of these pious exercises in order to establish a striking resemblance between the two patriarchs who, separated by an interval of seventeen centuries, have borne the glorious name of Joseph.

First Resemblance: *The trials to which they were subjected* — Those of the first Joseph are so well known that there needs be no repetition of them. [See Genesis 37 and 39-45.] Pursued by the hatred of his brothers, and traitorously sold into slavery by them, he relied on God alone as the protector of his weakness and defender of his innocence. The second Joseph, though a descendant of the kings of Judah, lived in obscurity and poverty bordering on want. An outcast in Bethlehem, obliged to flee from Egypt, and abandoned by men, he was supported in his trials by his confidence, love, and fidelity towards God.

Let us learn from the example of these two great patriarchs how to endure the trials that accompany us on our journey through life, and let us be animated by the influence of this thought: God is with me, He loves and protects me. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Second Resemblance: *The nature of their duties, and the manner in which these duties were fulfilled* — The first

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Joseph was a faithful servant in the house of Potiphar, a prudent and upright minister in the court of Pharaoh. Neither the allurements of pleasure, nor the fear of chastisements nor the treacherous fascinations of human grandeur could shake his fidelity. Ever faithful in his duty towards God, he was likewise dutiful to his master, occupying himself with the care of his own soul in preference to all other interests. The second Joseph was also a most faithful minister in a royalty far more exalted and important than the one with which the well-beloved son of Jacob was honored. Charged by the Almighty, the Eternal King of ages, to be the protector of the life, and guardian of the virginal purity of the noble Mary, Mother of God, he was likewise entrusted with the guardianship of the infancy and youth of the Savior, thus bearing the relation of foster-father to the Redeemer of the human race.

My God! What a beautiful, grand, and sublime mystery! St. Joseph fulfilled his ministry agreeably to the wishes of His Sovereign, who himself renders testimony to Joseph's justice when in the Gospel He says, "Joseph was a just man" (Matthew 1:19, Douay-Rheims translation). But if Joseph was a just and—by consequence—a faithful and prudent guardian of the two inestimable treasures that were confided to him, it is because, as the Scriptures express it, "He hath not taken his soul in vain" (Psalm 24:4, Douay-Rheims translation). He knew that an account should be rendered of the manner in which he discharged his duty as protector of the virgin Mother and her divine Son.

Each one of us has a mission to fulfill, a ministry of some kind to exercise, and we should learn fidelity from the example of St. Joseph. Our eternal salvation depends on the faithful discharge of our duties. The saving of our own soul would be in itself a ministry, but, alas, how many other

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souls depend also on us! We should, then, while endeavoring to save our own souls, do all in our power towards the saving of souls confided to our care, so that at death these sweet words may be addressed to us: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy" (Matthew 25:23).

Third Resemblance: *Their connection with Jesus Christ* — The first Joseph, in his trials and afflictions as well as in his triumphs, is regarded as one of the most striking images of Jesus Christ. It was not without a mysterious coincidence that Pharaoh gave him a name signifying *savior of the world*. Though the second Joseph did not himself bear the name "Savior of Mankind," he had the privilege of giving it to Him by whom alone it was merited.

He was appointed protector of the person of Jesus, his guardian and foster-father. Jesus redeemed the world, and Joseph guarded and protected Jesus. We have said that he acquitted himself as a just man and faithful servant in his great and elevated mission; but we must add here that it was through the intimate and direct influence of the Savior that he accomplished the designs of God, and arrived at the perfection of his ministry. He was one of the first and most admirable imitators of the great Model, whom he closely contemplated. The spirit of the Savior became his spirit, whereby he attained that new birth mentioned by Nicodemus, which consists of divesting ourselves of our own will, combating our inclinations, and subjecting our passions to reason and religion that our lives may be in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The first Joseph felt this influence in an indirect manner, as all the just of the Old Testament participated in the grace of the Redemption, though in a way constrained by

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the fact that the institutions of the old law were not in themselves perfect. Dating from St. John the Baptist, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, the spirit of the new law spreads itself with a plenitude and rapidity that manifests the presence of the Incarnate Word.

Have we entered into the spirit of Jesus Christ by our fidelity to His law and conformity with His divine will?

“Go to Joseph,” we say. God, the Sovereign Master, invites you to Joseph in confiding the Author of grace to his care.

“Go to Joseph,” says the Holy Church; and it is not with her as of old with ungrateful Egypt, who, after a few centuries, had forgotten the memory of her benefactor. The Church, on the contrary, attaches itself by a closer tie to the remembrance of St. Joseph as the years from the period of his mortal life recede. Instead of the material food with which the ancient patriarch fed the Egyptians, Joseph has received and guarded for us the life-giving Bread descended from heaven to nourish and sanctify our souls. Like Jesus and Mary, you must repair the sinful outrages and blasphemies against the majesty of God. Where is the virginal purity of Mary—where the glory of St. Joseph—when Jesus is spoken of by unbelievers as an ordinary man, and His birth not regarded as a miracle of the power of God? *Go to Joseph.* The first Joseph demanded the Egyptians to sacrifice and abandon their individual fortunes for the common good; and our Joseph asks you to divest yourself of your imperfections—to replace them with the love of Jesus.

Prayer

HOLY St. Joseph! Behold at your feet our humble souls, ardently desiring to profit by the graces attached to your example and intercession. We pray that during this

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month our souls may be nourished by the study of your virtuous life. Guardian of Jesus, be our protector and our guide. Pray for us, and present our prayers—purified by your own prayers—to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Amen.

Resolutions

1. During the course of the day, recall to your mind the preceding reflections.
2. Enter into the spirit of the holy season of Lent and comply with the requirements of the Church.
3. Do not seek dispensation from the Lenten fast without sufficient cause.
4. Recite the Our Father and Hail Mary once, and “St. Joseph, pray for us” three times.

Aspiration

“Go to St. Joseph.”

Scripture Verse

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Daily Meditation

“Each one of us has a mission to fulfill, a ministry of some kind to exercise, and we should learn fidelity from the example of St. Joseph. Our eternal salvation depends on the faithful discharge of our duties. The saving of our own soul would be in itself a ministry, but, alas, how many other souls depend also on us! We should, then, while endeavoring to save our own souls, do all in our power towards the saving of souls confided to our care, so that at death these sweet words may be addressed to us: “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy” (Matthew 25:23).”

First Day

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin

FIRST Point: The first and most essential attribute of St. Joseph is that of Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is only the foster-father of Jesus Christ, but he is the spouse of the Virgin Mother of God. He was chosen from among thousands—from among tens of thousands—from among all men—to be honored by this glorious privilege. A pious tradition relates that when the choice of a husband was imposed on the Blessed Virgin, her guardian called together all her relations of the race of David and tribe of Judah. Joseph came among the others who aspired to the honor; but his modesty kept him at a distance until the Almighty, by a miracle, decided in his favor.

Each candidate left an almond-tree rod in the Temple in the evening,, and the next day the dry and withered branch of Joseph, like that which of old secured the priesthood to Aaron, was found green and blossomed with fragrant flowers—graceful symbols of the virtues that had fixed the choice of God on Joseph to be the guardian of the most precious treasure, after the humanity of Jesus Christ, that earth ever possessed. That treasure belonged to God and to men, but in a particular manner to St. Joseph; for the sacred tie that bound the affections united the lives of Joseph and Mary. Let us admire this privilege and congratulate our glorious protector on its possession.

Recall to mind the words he so frequently addressed to himself: Spouse of Mary—what an honor! What a grace! What a responsibility!

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Second Point: One practical reflection is the mainspring of the doctrine contained in the first point of this meditation. To Mary, Joseph owed the honor of his close relationship to Jesus. He was regarded as the foster-father of Jesus only by his title of spouse of Mary, and the graces and privileges granted him were essential to his connections with her. This fact, important in its application to all Christians, is particularly so to us. Our relations with Jesus should be through Mary, since every good comes to us from Him through her. By His birth from her, He became our brother, and we became her children by the adoption made at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. Let us, then, go to Jesus through Mary, and to Mary through our glorious protector, St. Joseph. If we pray to him, he will obtain for us, by his intercession with Jesus and Mary, an abundance of heavenly graces emanating from the loving heart of Jesus and the maternal hands of our loving mother, Mary.

Third Point: What an honor! Let us repeat these words in unison with St. Joseph congratulating himself on the glorious title which united him to Mary. What an honor, what a responsibility, but also what a grace! These three words may be applied to all who have received vocations to leave all and follow Christ. Priests and religious should frequently entertain this salutary reflection; what a responsibility rests on those favored by God and honored with this grace of graces!

Christians should ponder these words, and apply them to themselves. The vocation to Christianity by baptism is the greatest and most admirable of all graces. What an honor to be a child of God and of His Church, brother and co-heir of Jesus Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit! But, alas! What a responsibility to be the possessor of precious treasures carried in frail vases; for baptism has not

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freed us from the effects of concupiscence [or the tendency of our human nature to sin as a result of original sin].

The fears awakened by this responsibility may, however, be removed by the thought of the superabundant graces which flow from the mercy and love of God—graces that are intended not only to be applied to our own souls, but that also are designed and should be made profitable to the many souls whose salvation and eternal happiness depend on us.

Prayer

O GLORIOUS St. Joseph, my holy protector, obtain that my soul may derive benefit from this first meditation. You who did so often guide Jesus in His infancy, direct me and protect me during these days which I offer and consecrate to you. Lead me to Mary and to Jesus, and teach me to know and love them more fully and ardently. Amen.

Resolutions

1. During the course of the day, recall to your mind the preceding reflections.
2. Restrain curiosity.
3. Accept, without manifesting ill-humor, the annoyances that result from the exercises of duty and charity.
4. Do not eat between meals. [Restrain concupiscence.]
5. Recite both the Our Father and Hail Mary once, and “St. Joseph, pray for us” three times.

Aspiration

“St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us.”

Scripture Verse

“. . . we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:16-17)

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Daily Meditation

“Our relations with Jesus should be through Mary, since every good comes to us from Him through her. By His birth from her, He became our brother, and we became her children by the adoption made at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. Let us, then, go to Jesus through Mary, and to Mary through our glorious protector, St. Joseph. If we pray to him, he will obtain for us, by his intercession with Jesus and Mary, an abundance of heavenly graces emanating from the loving heart of Jesus and the maternal hands of our loving mother, Mary.”