

Laetare Sunday (St. Joseph Novena, Day 4)
Detroit, March 14th 2021

« In a World of Gluttons, Joseph Fortissime. »

Dear Canon,
Very Dear Faithful,

We are in the midst of our solemn preparatory novena to St. Joseph. This year's theme of the novena is S. Joseph contre mundum: St. Joseph against the World. In these homilies we line up the various vices of the world against the numerous virtues of St. Joseph detailed in his litany. Thus far we have treated St. Joseph most just against a world full of envy; St. Joseph most chaste against a world full of lust; and yesterday St. Joseph lover of poverty against a world full of greed. Today's homily will preach St. Joseph most strong against a world full of gluttons.

Intriguing topic for Laetare Sunday. Today is the Sunday of joy in the middle of Lent. That is why you see flowers on the Altar and the organ can be played again. It is the opportunity for us to anticipate the joy of the resurrection to encourage us in our penances.

The two subjects: St. Joseph most strong as a remedy in a world of gluttons & Laetare Sunday in Lent seem to be unrelated. Are they simply joined by a scheduling coincidence? Or is there a philosophical, theological link that offers a providential teaching. We shall see that there is!

Ah gluttony... a sin oft committed and rarely confessed, laments St. Francis de Sales. What is gluttony? What are its consequences? Gluttony is the inordinate, unreasonable desire for food or drink. Contrary to popular belief gluttony is not just overeating, but gluttony can be committed by thinking about it too much, eating too hastily, and eating too daintily. In other words: too much, too fast, too rude, too picky. You see, this is indeed a sin committed more often

than admitted. Overeating is common enough, but how much more common is eating in a rushed manner or in a picky manner or in a complaining manner, or in obsessing over certain cravings to the point that the thought of the food detracts from our current tasks and duties.

More nefarious still are the consequences of gluttony. St. Thomas Aquinas enumerates the following: unseemly mirth, loquaciousness, buffoonery, scurrility, uncleanness, and dulling of the mind. By unseemly mirth we mean an excess of merriment with little thought of the potential damage to one's health or the safety of others. Loquaciousness means an unbridled tongue, or hurtful words and misplaced jests. Buffoonery seems rather self-explanatory, and scurrility refers to the bickering or even fighting inclinations of those who have had too much to eat or drink. Uncleanness is almost an immediate consequence of gluttony as we see how sins of impurity pair tragically well with an inordinate love of food or drink... both fuel the desires of the flesh. This over-emphasis on the whims of the flesh also dulls the mind and renders our will weak and lethargic. Truly gluttony is the gateway to so many more familiar sins.

This brings us though to the key connection between preaching against gluttony today and preaching for joy. If gluttony gives too much importance to the flesh; if it gives too much weight (my apologies for the pun) if it gives too much weight to the body; if it grants too much importance to the passions... that means that gluttony gravely hampers our free will. Gluttony renders us slaves to our caprices. With gluttony, our passions dictate the terms rather than our free will that makes us in the image and likeness of God.

And do you know where joy resides? Joy resides in the will! If we cut ourselves off from our free will we are by the same act cutting ourselves off from joy! That is why a life a sin is a life of slavery, and a life of slavery is a sad life. On

the contrary, a life of virtue is a life of freedom and a life of freedom is a life of joy.

Are not gluttons sad? Sad because never satisfied. Sad because always desiring. Sad because driven by the need for more. Sad because the consequences of their sins have disastrous effects on their appearance, on their energy level, on their work ethic. Whereas a person that has their appetite for food and drink in good order is free to enjoy its taste without indigestion; is free to take pleasure in drink without drunkenness; is free to prepare a meal and host in charity and generosity enjoying good company and good conversation.

But how to we get to that point? We clearly need interior strength. Our will needs to be stronger than our unruly passions. With the help of God's grace we can reestablish the order of our will over the passions. Through the intercession of Ioseph Fortissime, St. Joseph most strong, our will can reclaim its rightful place as guide of our passions and lead us to true and legitimate joy.

Look at St. Joseph, my friends. Do you recall those deadly daughters of gluttony: unseemly mirth, loquaciousness, buffoonery, scurrility, uncleanness, and dulling of the mind. Is not St. Joseph the direct contrary of every single one of them. He is calm. He is silent. He is just and gentle. He is most chaste. He is steadfast. He is prompt to obey and to protect. He is strong in all circumstances. And he is filled with an inestimable joy.

Can anyone fathom the joy of St. Joseph? Guardian of the Incarnate Word. Spouse of the Virgin Mary. Honoring his Immaculate Wife. Adoring his Divine Son. Rejoicing in their company. Let us turn to St. Joseph Most Strong, master of his passions and joyful companion of the Blessed Mother and Jesus Christ. Follow him. Pray to him. Entrust the rule of your passions to his powerful care. Then you shall partake in his ineffable joy. The joy of authentic strength. The joy of true

freedom. The joy of a grace-filled and virtue-filled life. The joy of companionship with the Holy Family. Sancte Ioseph Fortissime, ora pro nobis! St. Joseph most strong, pray for us! Amen.