

March 19, 2021  
Detroit, MI

In Festo Sancti Joseph  
St. Joseph, Heavenly Solution to Every Earthly Problem

In the Name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Dear Canon, very dear faithful. We prepared for today's Feast Day with a Novena on the theme of the virtues of our holy patron against every vice of today's world. Envy, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, Anger, Pride, Sloth, and the destruction of the family: these are the things that the world esteems today in one way or another. Against each of these, Saint Joseph is a heavenly model of virtue.

Envy is a sorrow or sadness for another's good precisely because it is seen as something withheld from us. Lust is the sin of exceeding what is reasonable and moral in the domain of sexual acts. Greed is the excessive preoccupation with financial matters without a trust that God will provide if we do our part and fulfil our responsibilities. Gluttony is the inordinate and unreasonable desire for food and drink. Anger is a sin against charity and justice, against God and neighbour. If it is not checked early enough, it can go from a venial sin to a mortal sin that endures for a whole life. Pride is a love of our own excellence, an unwillingness to live according to truth. Sloth is a malady of the will that causes us to neglect our duties. Impiety is the turning against legitimate authority starting with our parents, and finishing with God. It leads to the destruction of families. Against all these vices of our present world, we have the example of Saint Joseph.

In today's Mass for Saint Joseph, we began by singing in the introit: the Just Man is like a palm tree. Saint Francis de Sales speaks of the palm tree as a king of trees for its beauty, and the goodness of its fruit, by which it has a great many particular properties. In a similar way, the virtue of justice, with which every saint is endowed, is very different in each of them. The justice of a Saint Paul, is different from that of a Saint John because they are known for different acts: Saint Paul for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, Saint John for his acts of charity towards the poor. Saint Francis de Sales compares the just Saint Joseph to a palm tree, for his virginity, humility, constancy and valor.

Many artists depict Saint Joseph as an old man, to preserve the fact that Our Lady was ever a virgin. The Venerable Servant of God, Bishop Fulton Sheen tells us that artists seem to have made Saint Joseph a virgin by senility rather than virtue. This he argues, is showing that a

man will never steal because he has no hands. More than that, to show Saint Joseph as old is to show him as someone without any vital energy, when in fact, it would be more reasonable to believe that God would wish for him to sacrifice something. To make Saint Joseph appear pure only because he is old, is like praising a stream in the woods that has dried up. Our Lord would certainly prefer for a foster father someone who would willingly sacrifice something rather than someone who was forced to do it as if he had no choice. Moreover, can we honestly believe that as an old man, Saint Joseph walked the several hundred miles to Egypt when the angel told him to do so to save his young family from the murderous king Herod? And again, when He was dying, Our Lord did not hesitate to give His Mother to a young man, the Apostle Saint John. Why then would He give His Mother to an old man when He was born?

No. Saint Joseph was a young man. Saint Francis de Sales praised the foster father of Our Lord for his virginity because his was the virginity of a virile young man, who knew that it was God's Will for Him to accept the great mission of being husband to His Mother, and father to His Son. Saint Joseph is a man pure and chaste of Heart who was probably, young, strong, athletic, handsome, and disciplined. Our Lady is known as the virginizer of young men and women says Bishop Sheen. Wouldn't she have begun by inspiring and virginizing the first youth she ever met – Joseph, the Just? We praise Our Lady for Her virginity because by the question she asked the Archangel Gabriel we know that she had taken a vow of virginity when she was quite young. Her vow of virginity would not mean much if she was in old age. She chose to love God, and only God in her youth. It is therefore quite likely that Saint Joseph did the same. He was in the prime of his life, bubbling over with energy, strength, and controlled passion. In both Our Lady and Saint Joseph, being so pure of heart, there was youth, beauty, and promise. Both of them had willed to surrender their youthful passions and energy for Jesus, before they learned of the beauty and handsome strength of each other. Their meeting and marriage was between kindred souls.

As Saint Bernard of Clairvaux explains, so perfectly did they match each other in the correspondence of their wills and youthful desires to please God, that while Our Lady could not believe that she was being asked by an angel to bear His Son, Saint Joseph thought of putting her away quietly because he did not think himself worthy of such a wonderful woman. Many have

been the theologians who have pointed out that Saint Joseph being a just man would have committed no crime in denouncing Our Lady when he saw that she was with child. If he had done so, she would have been stoned to death as the law permitted. However, he who was just, pure and chaste of heart, united to the will of God could see that there was nothing to doubt of her virtue. Therefore, what was happening to her was in some mysterious way the Holy Will of God, and he felt himself unworthy. Only when an angel confirmed this for him and pointed out that it was the same Will of the same God that he take her as his wife, did he accept his mission. His humility is seen through the whole of his life in the fulfilment of his responsibilities as husband, and father, provider to his family, and teacher to his Son in his humanity. Sacred Scripture does not record a single word that Saint Joseph says. Scripture does not say much about him except to tell us that he was a just man. Therefore, we know that as a humble man, he kept hidden and went about his duty of state in accordance to the Will of God. We know that the Holy family was poor. We know that he was worried when Our Lord was left behind in the Temple. However, behind this silence, and poverty, Saint Joseph kept his great virtues, privileges, and dignities hidden. By his demeanor and humble acceptance of God's plan, Saint Joseph demonstrates great valor and strength. In fact, Saint Francis de Sales tells us that he was more valiant than King David, and Wiser than Solomon, to have been the Guardian of Our Lord and Our Lady. Who could have known? When Our Lord went to speak in the synagogue for the first time, the people were surprised and said, "Is this not the Son of Joseph the carpenter?" So humble was Saint Joseph, that no one suspected the great graces, gifts, and perfections that God had granted the man chosen to be His father on earth.

Moreover, in order to protect Our Lord and Our Lady, and also to practice and grow in virtue and perfection, Saint Joseph showed a constancy, valor, strength and perseverance above par. We say that someone is constant when they stand firm and are prepared to endure difficulties and challenges without being dismayed, or losing courage. We say they are persevering when they can do this over a long time. Over a long time, one can grow weary, and want to give up. However, by submission to the Will of God, one can obtain victory against these things that discourage us. Strength makes us resist the powerful attacks of our enemies, valor is a virtue that

not only keeps us ready to fight or resist when needed, but also to attack the enemy even when he is quiet. Saint Joseph was endowed with all these virtues.

He showed his constancy most especially when seeing Our Lady with Child and not knowing how that could be, he did not complain, he was not unkind, nor less gracious towards his spouse, he did not mistreat her, but remained as gentle and as respectful to her as he had ever been, wanting to put her away quietly. He was valiant and strong by being humble and submitting always to the Will of God. Saint Joseph showed such valor and strength to persevere in the virtue of humility that he conquered at the same time the devil and the world, which is full of ambition, vanity and pride.

With regard to perseverance against that interior enemy, the weariness or distress that comes over us from the continuation of abject, humiliating and painful things, of misfortunes, or from the various accidents that happen to us, we must first recognize what St. Joseph was up against. Oh! How greatly was Saint Joseph tried by God, and even by people on his life's journey. The Angel commands him to set out quickly, and to take Our Lady and the child Jesus into Egypt, and Saint Joseph sets out at once without saying a word. He does not inquire, "Where shall I go? What road shall I take? How shall we find food? Who will receive us?" He sets out immediately. In fact, he probably carried his carpenter's tools on his back, so he could still provide for his family. The Angel had not even told him how long he was to remain there! He could not establish himself in any permanent home, not knowing when the Angel might command him to return. Saint Paul admires the obedience of Abraham in leaving his land at the command of God to go where God wished for him. How admirable is this perfect obedience of Saint Joseph! A true and worthy Patriarch like Abraham. He remained there in a foreign country, sure that God, who had commanded him to go, would again command him when he had to return, and he was always ready to obey.

No one can doubt that Saint Joseph was perfectly submissive to the Divine Will. He left for Egypt and returned at the commands of the Angel. He submits for his whole life to live in poverty. It was more than the voluntary poverty of the religious. Not only was it voluntary, but it was also abject, rejected, and despised. We know this because Saint Joseph was a carpenter who could not prevent his family from being in want of many things. When he went to the

Temple, he had to make the offering of two turtle doves, which was an offering of the poor. It certainly would have caused him much distress to remain in this state of poverty and abjection, not to be able to provide more for his family. Yet he remained constant in his submission to God's Holy Will, which like all his other virtues, continued to grow in perfection day by day in the presence of Our Lord and with the help of Our Lady. He persevered all the way to the end of his life.

For a life of humble service to Our Lord, Saint Joseph must surely have great credit in heaven with Him. First of all, since we have no relic of the body of Saint Joseph, we are sure that he must have been assumed into Heaven body and soul. Secondly, if Our Lord was obedient to Saint Joseph all His earthly life, how can he not listen to his father now in Heaven? Therefore, let us ask Saint Joseph to intercede for us, for nothing will be refused him either by Our Lady or by Our Lord. He will obtain for us, if we have confidence in him, a holy growth in all sorts of virtues, most especially in those that he possessed in a higher degree than any others – most holy purity of body and mind, the most amiable virtue of humility, constancy, valor, and perseverance. Virtues which will render us victorious over our enemies in this life, and make us merit the grace to go and enjoy in eternal life the reward prepared for those who shall imitate the example of Saint Joseph in *his* earthly life. A reward, which will be nothing less than eternal happiness, in which we shall enjoy the clear vision of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

This is what Saint Teresa of Avila, the great reformer of the Carmelites had to say about his powerful help and friendship: “It seems that to other saints Our Lord has given power to help us in only one kind of necessity; but this glorious saint, I know by my own experience, assists in all kinds of necessities. ... I only request, for the love of God, that whoever will not believe me will test the truth of what I say, for he will see by experience how great a blessing it is to recommend oneself to this glorious Patriarch and to be devout to him... Whoever wants a master to instruct him how to pray, let him choose this glorious saint for his guide, and he will not lose his way.”

*Saint Joseph. Head of the Holy Family, Protector of Holy Church, pray for us.*

In the Name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.