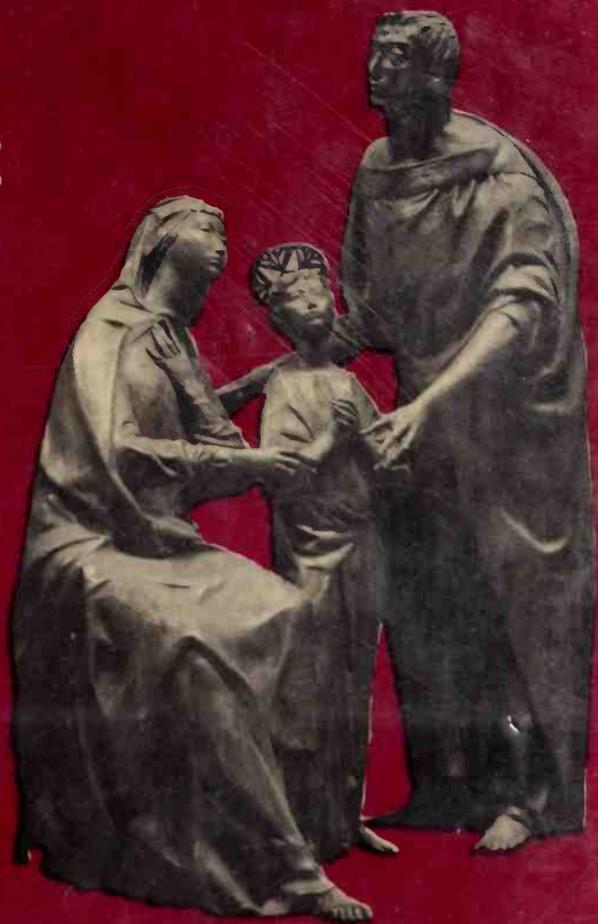


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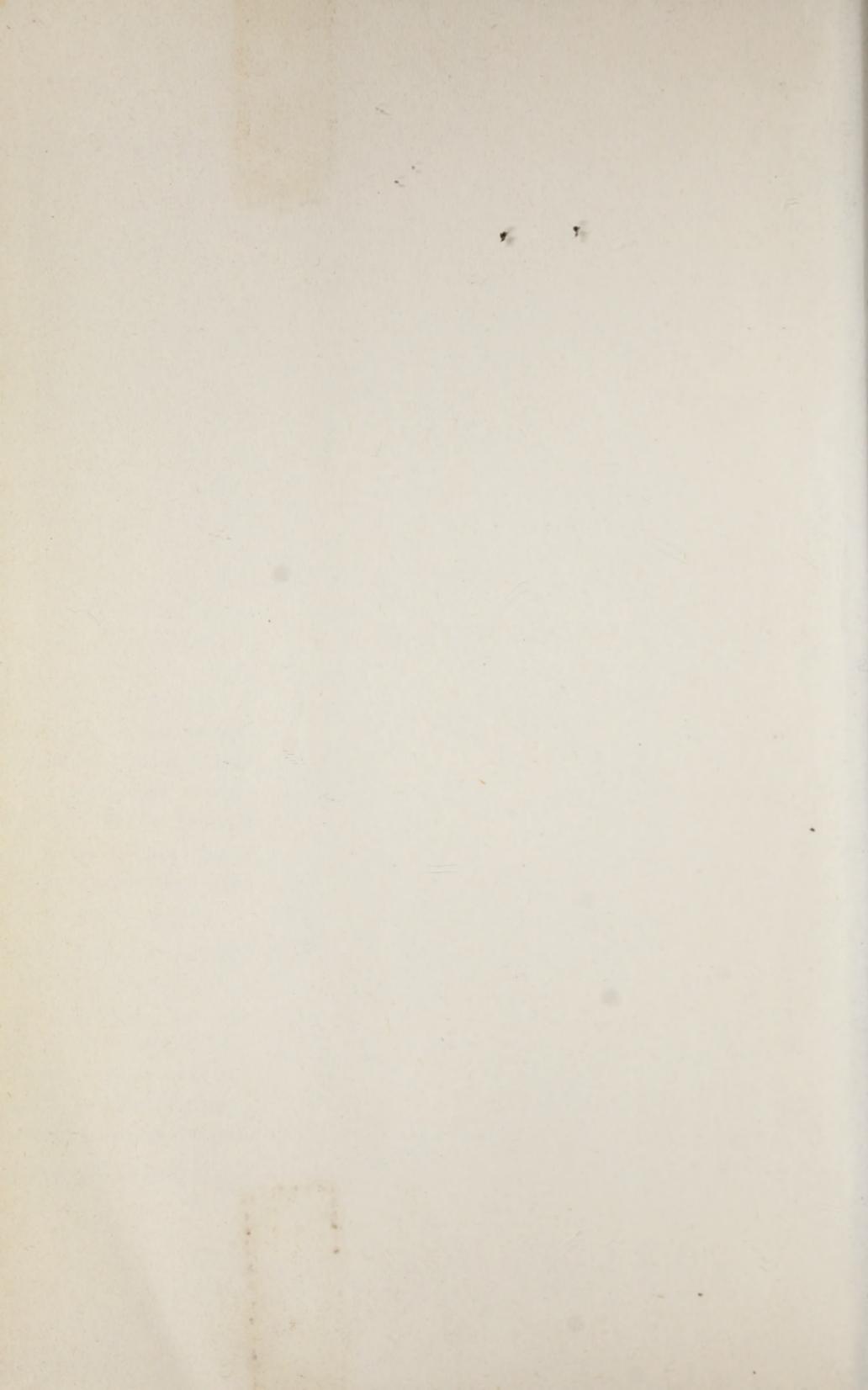


The Complete Life, Theology and
Devotional History of St. Joseph

FRANCIS L. FILAS, S.J.



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JOSEPH:

THE MAN CLOSEST TO JESUS

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ST. JOSEPH AND DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

JOSEPH:

THE MAN

CLOSEST TO JESUS

By FRANCIS L. FILAS, S.J.

The Complete Life, Theology and
Devotional History of St. Joseph



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WHAT THE REVIEWERS HAVE SAID
ABOUT FATHER FILAS' BOOKS ON ST. JOSEPH

"There could be nothing more timely than this book of the already famous Josephologist concerning the fatherhood of St. Joseph studied in all its sources . . . with an insight and an analysis that are truly out of the ordinary."

Estudios Josefinos (Valladolid)

"Father Filas' historical treatment of the devotion to St. Joseph is a remarkably lively presentation of a subject which lends itself to dullness. The restrained tone of the whole book is one of its most attractive features. This reviewer has no hesitation in recommending the book both for the faithful in general and for theological students. While not a devotional work, it should be of great assistance in placing devotion to St. Joseph on the solid ground of history and dogma. This is no small service."

John L. McKenzie, S.J., in *Theological Studies*

"Father Filas seems to have something of the felicity of the Abbé Fouard in his ability to mingle authentic scientific data and reverential devotional material."

Edward Dowling, S.J., in *The Queen's Work*

"One cannot leave the book without feeling that he has been brought abreast of all the most worthwhile that has been written on the subject up to the present."

Catholic Biblical Quarterly

"A work such as this—"vulgarisation" at its best, as the French would say—hitherto was not available in English. It is a splendidly practical tribute to the Man Nearest Christ, whose place in heaven is second only to his immaculate bride."

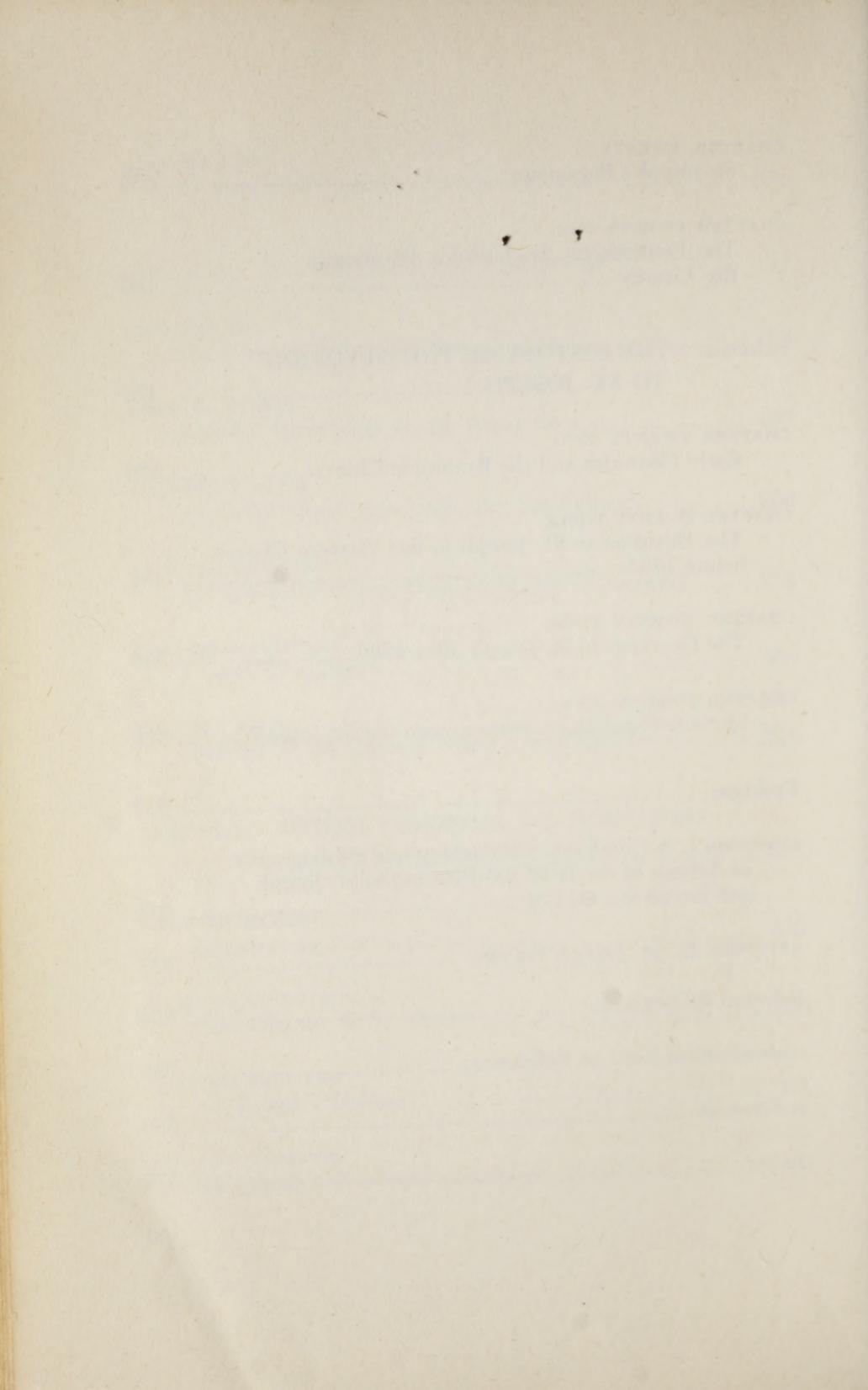
J. M. Lelen in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Highly significant developments have occurred since the appearance of *The Man Nearest to Christ, Joseph and Jesus, Joseph Most Just*, and *St. Joseph and Daily Christian Living*. The Fathers of Holy Cross, custodians of Brother André's St. Joseph's Oratory at Montreal, sponsored the North American Society of Josephology, its allied Research and Documentation Center, and the semi-annual French-English *Cahiers de Joséphologie*. Parallel to this was the establishment of the Ibero-American Society of Josephology by the Spanish Discalced Carmelites at Valladolid, together with the semi-annual *Estudios Josefinos*. Notable works have also appeared: the Latin monograph of Urban Holzmeister, S.J., *Biblical Questions Concerning St. Joseph*; the French study of St. Joseph's fatherhood by Roland Gauthier, C.S.C.; and the Spanish theology of St. Joseph by the late Boniface Llamera, O.P. The Congress of Josephite Studies, held in 1955 in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of St. Joseph's Oratory, contributed still more material.

Accordingly, there was a need to bring up to date the complete life, theology, and devotional history of St. Joseph, and to include this within one volume without expanding the treatment into so much detail that it would be a work of interest only to the research scholar. As a "little summa" of St. Joseph, the present work hopes to serve as a relatively comprehensive compendium. As from the beginning, I must acknowledge my great dependence on Joseph Seitz' German history of the devotion to St. Joseph, deservedly praised as the best book in existence on the subject.

The one person on earth to whom this book should most logically be dedicated is His Holiness Pope John XXIII, through whose action on this very date, there was announced the greatest honor ever accorded St. Joseph in the Church's history—the insertion of Joseph's name in the Canon of the Mass.

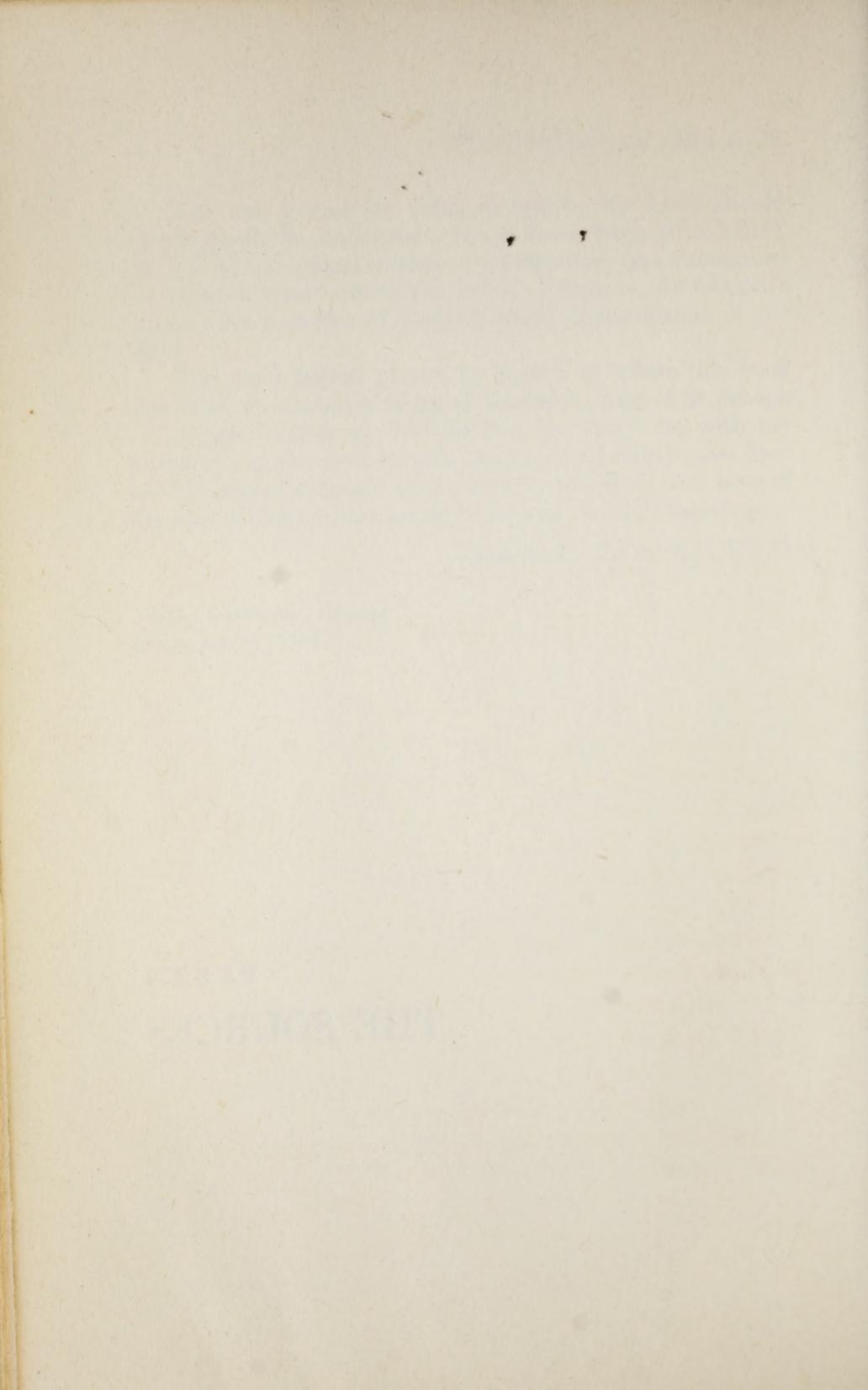
The most logical person in heaven to whom this book should be dedicated is Mary of Nazareth, wife of St. Joseph and virgin Mother of God. In this way may she with her husband (as the most lovable couple of all time) have their earthly career redound ever more to the glory and love of the Son of God miraculously bestowed on their marriage.

FRANCIS L. FILAS, S.J., S.T.D.

Loyola University, Chicago

November 13, 1962

PART I
THE SOURCES



CHAPTER ONE

THE GOSPELS

So often the statement has been made that the gospels tell us practically nothing about St. Joseph. True, they devote to him only a relatively few sentences, but the contents of these lines have tremendous implications.

Our primary sources are the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. The gospel doctrine can be listed under the following headings:

- (a) Joseph's genealogy¹;
- (b) his betrothal to Mary, and his justice²;
- (c) the angel's revelation to him of Mary's miraculous conception³;
- (d) the solemnization of his marriage to our Lady⁴;

- (e) the trip to Bethlehem ⁵;
- (f) Joseph's presence at the adoration of the shepherds ⁶;
- (g) Joseph's naming of the Child Jesus ⁷;
- (h) Joseph's part at the presentation of Jesus ⁸;
- (i) the flight into Egypt and the return ⁹;
- (j) life at Nazareth ¹⁰;
- (k) the loss and finding of the Child in the temple ¹¹;
- (l) passing references to the saint ¹²

This gospel doctrine can be summarized in four statements:

(a) Joseph the carpenter is the husband of Mary, who is the virgin mother of Jesus;

(b) Joseph is publicly thought to be the natural father of Jesus;

(c) Joseph exercises the office and holds the rights of father of Jesus;

(d) Joseph is explicitly singled out as a just man—a biblical expression that indicates he was adorned with virtue.

Since these texts will be used repeatedly within the following pages, we will not discuss them in detail at this point. However, as a general interpretation we explicitly assume their basic historicity while granting that the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke may well contain amplifications or hyperbole which do not substantially affect their reliability in reporting what happened.

In all Christian centuries these chapters have been given practically unanimous devotional and

liturgical use as historical. On dozens of occasions papal documents have referred to the events of the narratives of Christ's childhood in a context that can be construed as nothing if not historical. Thus, we believe that the basic historicity of these chapters has been so consistently accepted by the Church that it would seem to be part of an implicit "analogy of faith."¹³ In other words we believe, therefore, that the Church has guaranteed the contents of these sections (Mt. 1-2; Lk. 1-2) as substantially historical, because of its universal acceptance of them in practice as such.

CHAPTER TWO

THE APOCRYPHA

The apocrypha powerfully influenced the concept of St. Joseph in certain centuries and localities, but they have equally been one of the most troublesome hindrances to a clear understanding of St. Joseph's true position. Authors of the past have bestowed on them an uncritical reliance which has been reflected in the tenacity of the legends' hold on the imagination of the faithful. From these legends have stemmed the tales of Joseph's life as widower and father of many children; the story of his great age; and the bizarre miracles that mushroomed about the Holy Family in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Egypt. Here, too, the saint is de-

scribed as a supernumerary companion of our Lady, hardly Mary's genuine husband.

Originally, the word "apocrypha" did not mean something spurious, but rather concealed or hidden and therefore esoteric, as revealed to the chosen few. We must not condemn too harshly the fabricators or transmitters of these fantasies. What we now call plagiarism would be in the early centuries almost a literary virtue. For anyone to have successfully palmed off a high-sounding treatise in imitation of the style of the gospels or of some venerated saint, and so to have afforded material for the edification of the faithful, would be a procedure acceptable to popular opinion, although not countenanced with favor by serious scholars.

This is, indeed, a very different picture from that of the gospels. In the apocrypha embellishments of earlier folk tales are obvious on every hand. Fictitious accounts of the most fantastic miracles are showered on us bountifully; and a sometimes shameless bluntness obtrudes itself in the recital of prodigies that border on the irreverent and the indelicate. Snatches of the true gospels are plagiarized in order to lend an air of orthodoxy to the narratives, and in some episodes even the grammatical forms of the gospels are slavishly imitated to achieve the same purpose. Sometimes the anachronisms are so inconsistent with correct history and geography as to be laughable.

In general, the apocrypha respecting St. Joseph possess praiseworthy orthodox tendencies. They

have little in common with the mass of counterfeit documents produced by the Gnostics of early centuries in order to justify and propagate their heretical errors. The apocrypha that dealt with St. Joseph obviously flowed from a somewhat different source.

The origin of these documents is not too difficult to explain. Although details of the early career of Jesus were lacking, and although the gospels were deliberately silent on the subject of the Hidden Life, yet some devout lovers of Jesus were not to be deterred from endeavoring to learn all. Extremely curious to pierce the veil of obscurity, these people eagerly welcomed any tales on the subject as they passed from mouth to mouth. Naturally, such stories grew by steady repetition. At first, in fact, some basis of true tradition might have underlain parts of this pious gossip. However, with the passing of time and particularly with the embellishments which oral tradition received as each new account was set down in writing, little was finally left that might be deemed even remotely authentic.

None the less, the apocrypha are not without value. They reveal precious information about the background of early Christian beliefs, for they suppose the knowledge of certain Christian doctrines to be already present in their readers. In fact, they often make exaggerated efforts to be conformed to such doctrines. An excellent example of this occurs in the eagerness of the apocrypha to be considered on a par with the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Here they evidence another testimony to

the universal traditional Christian belief in the authenticity of the four canonical gospels. They also represent the earliest beginnings of our Christian lore, romantic writing, and even legend. Although we possess them in forms from later dates, their contents are older. Finally, they help make Christian art and its subjects more intelligible.¹⁴

There are six apocryphal sources from which virtually all the legends of St. Joseph ultimately emanated.¹⁵

(1) The oldest of these, the *Protoevangel of James*, would seem to date from some time after 130 A.D.¹⁶ As its varying seventeen titles in as many manuscripts abundantly testify, it purported to be written by the apostle St. James the Less, first bishop of Jerusalem—but no scholar today would dream of believing this. It covers a period that begins with the prayers of Joachim and Anne, begging God to give them children, and ends with the murder of the innocent infants of Bethlehem. The work did not always claim to be a gospel, but in its first Greek texts was modestly called, “The Narrative of James on the Birth of the Holy Mother of God.”

(2) Another work, the *Gospel of Thomas*, of almost equal antiquity, is a short collection of stories of Christ's childhood, from His fifth year through the Hidden Life. It should not be confused with another *Gospel of Thomas* known as apocryphal as early as 230 and claiming to contain the “secret words which the living Jesus spoke, which Didymus Judas Thomas has written down.”

(3) The third apocryphon dates from a period in the fifth century when an unknown compiler combined the two previous works (the *Proto-evangel of James* and the *Gospel of Thomas*) and issued them under a new title, which has come to be called the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. The author added to the borrowed two-thirds of the narrative a generous portion of information that was probably gleaned from no other source than the compiler's own fertile imagination. Pseudo-Matthew thus purported to be no less than the work of the first evangelist himself, supposedly written first in Hebrew and then translated into Latin by St. Jerome. It exercised its greatest influence during the early Middle Ages.

(4) As a fourth version, we have a brief reworking of the former material by still another editor, who wrote the short *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, the most charming of the apocrypha. There can be no doubt here of the piety and good taste of the compiler. His restrained language, his reverent treatment of Mary and Joseph, and particularly his care to show Mary's purity and Joseph's nobility endear the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* to us in much the same manner as it was warmly embraced by the faithful of the Middle Ages.

(5) Representing the extreme, perhaps, of degeneration to which pious fancy can attain is the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior*, also entitled, *The Narrative of the Infancy of the Lord by*

Thomas the Israelite, the Philosopher. A rather late production of uncertain date, it may have originated in the seventh century. This so-called gospel is composed of variations on St. Matthew and St. Luke, the *Protoevangel of James*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and a mass of tales of magic and fear and vengeance that are far more reminiscent of the *Arabian Nights* rather than the sacred narrative. Another development of this text, the *Armenian Gospel of the Infancy*, amplified the story of the Magi for a Persian audience.

(6) Finally, there is the *Coptic History of Joseph the Carpenter*, which stands in a class by itself because it deals primarily with St. Joseph. Following in general the older apocrypha and the genuine gospels, it enlarges on the subject of St. Joseph's death independently and at tiresome length. It appeared in Egypt between the fourth and sixth century.

The following table of the relative lengths of these six apocryphal sources groups them according to the probable order of their composition:

<i>Protoevangel of James</i>	5,700 words (in English translation)	130 A.D.
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	3,900	200?
<i>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</i>	14,700	400
<i>History of Joseph the Carpenter</i>	6,200	350-500
<i>Arabic Gospel of the Infancy</i>	10,500	600
<i>Gospel of the Nativity of Mary</i>	3,200	after 600?

Synopsis of the Apocrypha

(1) The *Protoevangel of James* opens with the story of Joachim and Anne, who beg God to make their marriage fruitful. By the revelation of an angel the old couple learn that their prayers have been heard, and in due time Mary is born. She lives in the temple from her third to her twelfth year, "receiving food from the hand of an angel." When the priests decide that she has passed the period of childhood and can no longer abide in the temple, an angel appears to Zacharias, the high priest, and orders him to assemble all widowers and to collect their staffs. A sign from heaven is thereafter to manifest God's choice of Mary's "husband." This sign is given when a dove flies out of Joseph's rod and alights on his head. Despite the miraculous manifestation, Joseph refuses to take Mary under his protection, alleging his advanced age. Finally, however, at the high priest's threat of divine vengeance, he submits. While now Joseph goes out upon a prolonged absence "to build his buildings," Mary spins purple and scarlet veils for the temple. During this period the Annunciation takes place, the account of which is freely copied from St. Luke. It is pictured as occurring at the brookside where Mary is drawing water.

When Joseph returns six months later, he discovers that his espoused wife is pregnant. (The legend is very vague on precisely what relationship exists between Joseph and Mary.) Joseph immediately breaks out in reproaches, angrily reprimanding her.

manding Mary for having deceived him as Eve deceived Adam. Upon her tearful protestation of innocence he is struck with great fear that her child is perhaps fathered by an angel. Thereupon he is released from his perplexing doubt when an angel appears and explains the miraculous cause of Mary's condition. A scribe named Annas sees Mary as pregnant, and reports both Joseph and her to the high priest as guilty of "having broken their pledge." They are ordered in consequence to drink of the "waters of ordeal of the Lord" (as in Numbers 5:12) to test their innocence. Both remain unharmed, and the priest does not condemn them "since the Lord hath not made your sins evident"!

On the way to Bethlehem Mary has a vision of two peoples, one weeping and one rejoicing. She explains that they represent the Jews who rejected the Messiah and the gentiles who accepted Him. Immediately thereafter she asks Joseph to make provision for her "for that which is in me presses to come forth." (Here the narrative suddenly shifts from the third to the first person, after having quoted Mary's words as above; Joseph himself now seems to be made out as the narrator.) Joseph finds a cave and there leaves his supposed two sons with Mary, while he himself goes to seek a midwife in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The one he finds, named Salome, arriving after Mary has miraculously brought forth her child, refuses to believe the story of the virgin birth of the Savior and so stretches forth her hand toward the Virgin to learn for herself.

The hand suddenly drops off, "as if burned with fire." At the suggestion of an angel she touches the divine infant and receives her hand back again. After the visit of the Magi and the murder of the Holy Innocents (a rather close paraphrase of the true gospel story), Zacharias, the father of John of Baptist, is martyred in the temple for refusing to reveal the whereabouts of his son to Herod's officers. With the narration of an angelic appearance and a miraculous voice from heaven, Pseudo-James ends of a sudden by having the aged Simeon succeed to Zacharias' position in the temple.

(2) The *Gospel of Thomas* begins with the actions of Jesus who "when five years old was playing in the ford of a mountain stream" and was ordering the waters to do as He willed. Jesus scandalizes Joseph and the Jews by making twelve birds out of soft clay in defiance of the law of the Sabbath, but being reproached, He turns the clay into twelve sparrows. Meanwhile, the son of Annas the scribe lets the water out of the pools and is cursed by Jesus, and so himself "quite dries up." Other scenes follow in which the divine child is supposed to exercise His power and display His authority in ways that may be terrifying but are far from edifying. He is pictured tyrannically striking dead a village boy who quite accidentally chances to hit Him. How such concepts could be fostered of the meek, mild, and gentle Christ is difficult to understand. Still other tales are merely bizarre, as when Joseph cuts a board too short for a couch he is mak-

ing, and Jesus obligingly stretches it to the right length. Acts of (Jesus'!) deadly insubordination to appointed instructors vary with spectacles of striking playmates dead, raising them and others to life as a show of power, and generous giving to the poor.

It seems almost too disrespectful to the sacred memory of the Holy Family even to cite accounts such as these, but the synopses are well worthwhile if they do no more than convincingly present internal evidence of the spurious character of the apocrypha. After viewing the balderdash offered us here, we learn to appreciate far better the crystal-clear purity of the simple, straightforward gospel accounts.

(3) The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, from its first to its eighteenth chapter is nothing more than an amplification of the *Protoevangel of James*. For our present purpose, it can be presented as an exaggeration that repeats the same miracles in practically the same order with usually greater embellishment. With its eighteenth chapter, "The Flight," its own material begins. Terrible dragons appear, lions, and panthers, which are all put to flight by the divine child after they are made to adore Him. In the desert en route to Egypt a palm tree bends down to make shade and to proffer its fruit. A journey of thirty days is shortened to that of a single day. On their entrance into Egypt, Mary and the Child by their mere presence break all the idols but are welcomed and adored by Affrodisio, king of Egypt. From this point on (Chapter 27) to the end

of the book, the narrative becomes an exaggerated paraphrase of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Throughout, the treatment of St. Joseph can hardly be called reverent. It certainly does not pay him honor. Both Mary and Joseph are reduced almost to characters in a conjurer's act, in which the Child Jesus plays the part of the magician.

It is interesting at this point to compare a few typical features of the apocrypha of James and Pseudo-Matthew. In James, the older production, Joseph is merely an old man and has children; in Pseudo-Matthew, he is a grandfather whose grandchildren are already older than the virgin of fourteen. In James, a dove flies out of his staff and alights on his head; in Pseudo-Matthew, the dove flies out of the staff and wings its way into heaven. In James, Mary receives the angel of the Annunciation once, at the brook; in Pseudo-Matthew, the angel appears twice, in Mary's home and at a fountain. After the birth of Jesus, according to James, one midwife, Salome, receives the curse of a hand burned off with fire as a result of her irreverent curiosity; but according to Pseudo-Matthew, another midwife also appears, Zelomi by name, and the original Salome now receives only a withered hand.

As for the supposed life of Mary in the temple, both apocrypha are completely out of touch with historical fact. Boys alone could be consecrated to the use of the sanctuary, according to Jewish custom. Moreover, Mary was a child when Herod

was building the new temple at Jerusalem between 20 and 10 B.C. Hence, she could not have lived in it until she was ten, instead of the three-year-age entrance of the legends. What is highly striking is that Pseudo-Matthew pictures Mary as a sort of nun, until the gospel text demands that Mary leave her temple cloister. This is a serious anachronism, but we can discern the influence of contemporary customs on Pseudo-Matthew at the time of its composition, some time around 500 or earlier. It was then that religious communities of Christian women were becoming established, and therefore Pseudo-Matthew saw his goal of presenting Mary as the first nun, especially as one who has already vowed virginity.

The enumeration of divergencies like these could be continued at great length, but these samples suffice to show the process of a thrill-seeking pious imagination as it worked on a story that was already highly legendary. Pseudo-Matthew, like Pseudo-Thomas, is far more blunt and indelicate than Pseudo-James. The reason given why Mary must leave the temple and be given in marriage is the approaching ritual defilement of menstrual flow (Lev. 15:25-30) which would render a woman unsuitable to worship God in the temple. Pseudo-Matthew avoids the marriage with Joseph by proposing Mary's firm vow of perpetual virginity (again like the nuns of Christian times) plus Joseph's acceptance of Mary only as the guardian of her virginity, not as her husband. In this respect of

denying the genuine marriage, of, course, Pseudo-Matthew contradicts the canonical gospel narrative.

4. The *Coptic History of Joseph the Carpenter* was written as propaganda whose purpose was to stimulate the movement for a feast of St. Joseph among the Egyptians. The first half of this tale (supposedly in the words of Christ Himself) narrates some of the events of the divine childhood as borrowed and amplified from the earlier sources. The latter half is a tedious description of the death of St. Joseph, drawn out into such useless detail that its manner of portrayal is profoundly unworthy of the saint. Joseph, in fact, is made to speak and to act like a querulous, despairing sinner, who constantly bemoans his misfortunes. One would hardly look to a source like this for the ideal of St. Joseph as patron of a happy death. This *Coptic History* further pictures the saint as an aged widower with six children at the time he receives our Lady.

5. The *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior* (and its Armenian counterpart) do not merit much more space here. Their crudities and superstitious stories of magic are reason enough to deny every shadow of credibility to them. From the *Arabic Gospel* stem the several legends of leprous children cured by being bathed in the waters of the Christ-child's bath. From it also comes the tale of the two robbers, one kind, the other cruel, Titus and Dumachus, who according to the divine child's prophecy will be crucified with Him thirty years later. What are we to think of the claim that "as

often as Joseph had to make anything a cubit or a span longer or shorter, wider or narrower, the Lord Jesus stretched His hand toward it; and as soon as He did so, it became such as Joseph wished. Nor was it necessary for him to make anything with his own hand, for Joseph was not very skillful in carpentry"?¹⁷ Another tale concerns the sorcerers who changed a young man into a mule. Thereupon, St. Mary put the Lord Jesus on the back of the mule, asking her Son to heal the mule. Lo and behold, the handsome young man returned to his human form. As a reward, his sisters arranged a splendid marriage between him and the servant girl who had first told them of Mary and her Son.

(6) As has been mentioned, the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* has a much more elevated and dignified tone than its companion literature. Extending from the birth of Mary to the solution of Joseph's doubt by the angel, it abstracts the cardinal features of the *Protoevangel* without, however, adding new and undesirable elements. Yet despite its reverent treatment its historical value must be deemed as little as that of the other apocrypha. We should note carefully that it refers to Joseph's great age but it says nothing of his supposed previous marriage and other children. This was strongly influential in helping shape the medieval picture of St. Joseph.

If we collect all the supplementary material written in the apocrypha about St. Joseph, we find that it can largely be grouped under four headings: extra miracles and apparitions, St. Joseph's great

age, his previous marriage and his children, and the miraculous selection of the saint at his espousal. As for the truth of the apocryphal miracles, the spurious character of practically all of these prodigies is quite evident from the context in which they appear. However, more searching study of the other claims made by the apocrypha is necessary. Each of the other three subjects will be taken up separately at its proper place.

PART II

THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH

THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH

CHAPTER THREE

ST. JOSEPH'S ANCESTRY AND RELATIONSHIP

The first chapter of Matthew and the third chapter of Luke present the legal genealogy of Jesus, but the two accounts are by no means identical. Matthew begins with Abraham and continues down to Matthan, who “begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus who is called Christ” (Mt. 1:15, 16). For Luke, “Jesus Himself, when He began His work, was about thirty years of age, being—as was supposed—the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat” and ultimately through David and Abraham, the son of Adam, “who was the son of God” (Lk. 3:23, 24, 38).

Just why the succession of ancestors is given so prominent a place in the gospels might seem at first sight a puzzling question, but the answer is not difficult to find. Both Matthew, by narrating the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning of his gospel account, and Luke, by placing it at the opening of the Public Life of Jesus, emphasize the Messianic descent of Jesus as the prophesied Son of David.

The real problem, however, concerns the differences in the two genealogies as well as the related question concerning the historical value. Both place Joseph and David as the terms of a succession of names, yet each mentions a different line of intermediate ancestors. Evidently some satisfactory solution must exist to solve the problem, according to which Jacob and Heli are mentioned as the father of St. Joseph—the one by Matthew, the other by Luke. The difficulty has bedevilled exegesis in all Christian centuries, and no certain answer can yet be proposed. This is not the place to make a definitive decision concerning all the pros and cons of the many theories that have been proposed. We mention them here as an indication of the interest in St. Joseph which the question arouses. They also serve to help us know more about St. Joseph's life and times.

A first solution proposes that the law of the "levirate marriage" held true, and the application of the law is described in the two genealogies. (The name "levirate marriage" is derived from the Latin word *levir*, "brother-in-law.") This law had been in-

stituted for the Jews in the following text of the Old Testament: "When brothers live together and one of them dies without a son, the widow of the deceased shall not marry anyone outside the family; but her husband's brother shall go to her and perform the duty of a brother-in-law by marrying her. The firstborn son she bears shall continue the line of the deceased brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel" (Deut. 25:5-7). The first son of the second marriage, therefore, would receive the legal name of the deceased husband of the first marriage.

In applying this solution to the case of St. Joseph's double genealogy, the problem is that the law of the levirate marriage does not seem to apply. It would certainly hold in the case of the two fathers (one legal and one natural) who were blood brothers, if their legal-natural son would have the same grandfather; but in the genealogy of St. Joseph, two different "grandfathers" are listed for St. Joseph: Matthan and Matthat, each with different ancestors all the way back to David.

To meet this difficulty, Julius Africanus (170?-250?) proposed that the law of the levirate could hold if Jacob and Heli had been uterine brothers. In other words, if they had a common mother but different fathers, their respective natural and legal fatherhood of St. Joseph would be traced back through two different blood lines. Their common mother first bore Jacob to her first husband, who was of the line of Solomon; then she bore Heli to

her second husband, who was of the line of Nathan. Heli died after his marriage, childless. His brother Jacob married Heli's widow, who was the mother of St. Joseph. Since St. Joseph was the firstborn of this union, he was legally a son of Heli even though naturally a son of Jacob. This interpretation seems to obtain further confirmation from the very words of the evangelists, for Matthew uses a verb in the sentence, "Jacob begot Joseph," while Luke uses a much more general phrase, literally, "Joseph of Heli" (Mt. 1:16; Lk. 3:23).¹

This solution has found wide though by no means universal acceptance. Holzmeister objects to it on the grounds that "the law of the levirate is valid only with respect to brothers in the full sense or at least *brothers of the same father*. The basic condition set down in the beginning of the law of Deut. 25:5 alone holds true for them: 'When brothers live together. . . .' Such cohabitation is completely excluded in the case of uterine brothers."²

Another attempt to solve the problem has claimed that the genealogy cited by Luke is actually that of the Blessed Virgin. The difficulty now is the fact that Luke proposes the genealogy as that of Joseph, not that of Mary.³ None the less, Suarez (*1617) takes precisely this approach, and denies that the genealogy refers to St. Joseph. His "Marian" interpretation recasts the wording of Luke thus: "Jesus was about thirty years old (being thought to be the son of Joseph) [but actually] the son of Heli [who would in this supposition be the father of

Mary].” For Suarez, since Christ is the subject of the discussion, it is hardly credible that the entire ensuing genealogy would be that of St. Joseph, who is in fact referred to only in passing. Thus, Jesus, and not Joseph, would be called the son of Heli. Mary would not be listed since she was a woman; but Heli as Mary’s supposed father would be rightly listed (skipping a generation) as the first male ancestor of Jesus because Jesus had no natural father on earth. Heli would be Christ’s grandfather according to the natural maternal line.⁴ Suarez further holds that the name “Heli” is another form of “Eliachin,” which in its turn is “Joachim.” Against patristic opinion contrary to his interpretation, he can merely say that he is not attacking something taught as of certain faith, but as a tentative solution.⁵ His suggestion, however, has never received wide acceptance, if for no other reason than the fact that scholars reject the interchangeability of Heli-Eliachin with Joachim, as not agreeing with the true Hebrew forms of the names.

Augustine (*430) seems to have inclined toward the assumption of some sort of adoption whereby St. Joseph was accepted into a different blood line than that in which he was born. Augustine had first suggested that according to Roman law Joseph was adopted by his legal father after his natural father died, or that Joseph’s maternal grandfather was called his father in the wide sense of the word.⁶ In his later life, however, he seems to have adopted the solution of Julius Africanus.⁷

Holzmeister strongly supports the view that the assumption of a "virtual" adoption might solve the problem. Sometimes a son-in-law obtained the rights of a son, he states, and in this way a father-in-law became the father of a man outside his family, all because of the marriage of his daughter. This would particularly hold true if no other son existed in the family, so that the daughter would be the heiress. According to this theory, St. Joseph would not have had two fathers until after his marriage with our Lady, when he would have been "adopted" by Mary's father.⁸

As if all these theories were not enough in revealing the difficulty of obtaining a satisfactory solution, we should also mention another interpretation, namely, that Matthew wished to present Jesus' kingly descent through Solomon, and that Luke planned to show Jesus' priestly descent through Nathan, in order that our Lord might be proclaimed as king and high priest by birth. Still another possibility might be the hypothesis that the genealogies in both cases were to supply a legal ancestry alone, inasmuch as in neither case is Jesus a direct blood descendant of St. Joseph. This view would look on them as merely literary forms—literary artifices linking Adam, Abraham, David, and Solomon with Jesus.

The final word on the subject, as we already mentioned, still remains to be said; but the correct attitude in any case will always be substantially that expressed by Ginns. "No reasonable understanding

of the genealogies is possible without taking into consideration two facts: first, that ancient Semitic ideas of kinship differed greatly from our own; secondly, that both Matthew and Luke are concerned to show that Jesus was a son of David in the eyes of Jewish law.”⁹

If the Fathers of the Church manifested doubt concerning a satisfactory explanation, they certainly showed no such hesitation in discerning the importance of the genealogy as far as Joseph and Jesus were concerned. Ambrose (*397) held that Joseph and Mary were close relatives, with the result that the genealogy of Mary is contained in that of Joseph. In a precious tribute he writes, “We might have reason to wonder why the ancestry of Joseph rather than that of Mary should be set forth (since Mary generated Christ by the Holy Spirit and Joseph was alien to the generation of the Lord), except for the fact that the custom of the scriptures enlightens us, for they always look for the ancestry of the husband. People inquire about the husband, who upholds the dignity of his sex in the senate and in other courts of the state. How disgraceful would it be if, with the husband’s ancestry set aside, the wife’s lineage should be sought after, so that He who was to be preached to the whole world should seem to have no father! . . . Do not be surprised that Joseph’s ancestry is listed, for He who is born according to the flesh must follow the customs of the flesh, and He who comes into the world must be surrounded by the customs of the world, especially

since Mary's ancestry is contained in the ancestry of Joseph. Since Joseph was a just man certainly he took his wife from his tribe and from his homeland; nor could the just man do that which was contrary to the prescription of the law." ¹⁰

Augustine tartly justifies the genealogy through St. Joseph. "Here is another of their (the heretics') calumnies," he writes. "Through Joseph,' they say, 'the generations of Christ are counted, and not through Mary. This should not have been through Joseph,' they say. Why not through Joseph? Was not Joseph Mary's husband? 'No,' they say. Who says so? For the scripture states that he was her husband, on the authority of an angel. To him also was the command given to bestow the name on the Child, although the Child was not born of his seed. . . . The Evangelists most carefully and prudently count through him, Matthew descending from Abraham to Christ, and Luke ascending from Christ to God. One counts upward, the other downward, both count through Joseph. Why? Because he was His father. Why was he His father? Because he was His father so much more definitely as he was virginal." ¹¹

Connected with the multiple discussions of St. Joseph's genealogy is a tale introduced by Epiphanius (*404,) Saint and Father of the Church. The influence of Epiphanius has regrettably been a deterrent to the growth of genuine knowledge and love of St. Joseph. No other Father of the Church has given such trusting reliance to the apocrypha.

Epiphanius consistently pictures Joseph as an aged widower, and in an attempt to defend our Lady's virginity minimizes St. Joseph's role as much as possible.

In the present connection, Epiphanius refers to the "Jacob" mentioned in Mt. 1:16 as father of St. Joseph thus: "This (St.) Joseph, who was the brother of Clopas, was the son of Jacob, who was surnamed Panther."¹² What is tantalizing is the question how Epiphanius himself heard about "Jacob Panther." According to Origen (*254), "Panther" was the name given by the agnostic Celsus to the Roman soldier who (according to the opprobrious calumnies against Christianity) fathered Jesus out of adultery with Mary.¹³ The most probable explanation of the origin of even this calumny grows out of a confusion with the Greek word *parthenos*. Evidently, pagans and even Jews heard the Greek-speaking Christians refer to Jesus as the son of *parthenou*, "son of the Virgin," and instead of understanding the common noun "virgin" as referring to Jesus' virginal mother, they took it to be a proper noun naming Jesus' supposed natural father—hence, the distorted variants, "Pantheri," "Panthori," and "Pandera."¹⁴

Whether this pagan distortion reached Epiphanius in more distorted form as referring to Joseph's father Jacob, we have no way of knowing; the name, however, continued to appear after Epiphanius' time when John Damascene (*749) proposed a "secondary genealogy" of Mary that supplemented the ancestral line mentioned by Luke.

Damascene's purpose' (a "completely unfortunate attempt"¹⁵) was to show that Joseph and Mary were related—through a "Panther" who was the great-grandfather of Mary via Joachim and the great-granduncle of St. Joseph via Heli! According to Damascene's long tabulation, "Levi begot Melchi and Panther from the line of Nathan, son of David. Panther begot Barpanther (for so he was called). Barpanther in turn begot Joachim. Finally, Joachim begot the Holy Mother of God. Again, from the line of Solomon, son of David, Mathan begot Jacob by his wife. When Mathan died, Melchi from the tribe of Nathan (who was the son of Levi and brother of Panther) married the wife of Mathan, who was then the mother of Jacob, and from her he begot Heli."¹⁶

For that matter, even the name of "Joachim" is uncertain as correctly representing the father of Mary and the father-in-law of St. Joseph. When Augustine mentioned the name, he commented, "I would give credence to this or to something rather like it if I were obligated by the authority of the apocryphal writing where Joachim is recorded to be the father of Mary."¹⁷ St. Pius V suppressed the feast of St. Joachim on the grounds that it was based almost exclusively on the narratives of the apocrypha. The feast was later reintroduced into the Church calendar by Paul V, but this action in the liturgy does not indicate the Church's guarantee of Joachim's name. The feast honors the father of Mary as a person, and does not intend to teach historical details concerning him.¹⁸

We should not leave the subject of St. Joseph's genealogies without noting an example of delightful allegorical interpretation. This allegory comes from a century long after the time of the Fathers of the Church. Rupert of Deutz (*1135) compares the list of Joseph's ancestors to the heavenly ladder which the Patriarch Jacob saw in his dream (Gen. 28:12). "The highest rung of this ladder, on which God rests, is St. Joseph, the husband of Mary from whom Jesus was born. But how does the Lord and God rest on him? As the ward rests on the guardian. Since He is born into the world without a father, He rests on St. Joseph so that Joseph is to the Child as the best of fathers, and through his paternal solicitude is to support the boy as well as His virgin mother."¹⁹

Rupert's explanation of why Christ's ancestry is traced through Joseph vies with that of Augustine in its glowing terms of deep respect. "Since the first three and the most outstanding, surpassing all others, are Abraham, David, and Joseph, to whom a promise was given, we ask what was the intention of the evangelist in marking them with such honor. He was thinking of the growth of the promise wherein Christ was promised to these men at different times as man, as king, and as God." Christ was promised to Abraham as man, to David as king, and finally to Joseph as God and Savior, for the angel said, "He shall save His people" (Mt. 1:21), and only God can save from sin. "Thus is the ancestry traced to Joseph, to whom the last but the greatest promise was imparted."²⁰

In another of Rupert's similes the genealogy is likened to "a long fishing-line of a fisherman, which is thrown into the sea of this world and at its end carries an iron hook with bait. That is, it bears the true God in true flesh, in order to ensnare the leviathan, that great serpent who devours the souls of men like little fish. But we know that the fishing line is attached not to flesh but to iron . . . Thus the ancestry of the Savior does not lead to Mary according to His fleshly descent but to Joseph according to His divine relationship, Christ's father not in the flesh but in faith."²¹

Were Joseph and Mary Blood Relatives?

Ever since patristic times, it seems to have been taken for granted that Joseph and Mary were blood relatives from the same tribe. Actually, the only credible reference in antiquity to any relative of Joseph was the statement attributed to Hegesippus (*200?) by the historian Eusebius, namely, that a certain "Clopas" was the brother of Joseph.²² Later, Epiphanius made the same reference (which we have already quoted on p. 47). The most likely person to be identified as this "Clopas" is the husband of the "Mary" who stood at the foot of the cross with the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalen (John 19:25). Mark describes her also as the "Mary of Clopas" who is the mother of James the Less and of another Joseph (Mark 15:40). This would indicate a group of relatives of St. Joseph, among whom the names of "James" and the other "Joseph" recur as "brethren of the Lord."

Confusion occurs here because of the varying forms of "Clopas" appearing as "Cleopas" and "Cleophas." It does not, however, seem likely that Clopas, the brother of St. Joseph and father of James the Less, is the same "Cleophas" named as one of the disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday afternoon (Luke 24:18).

We must admit that no primary evidence exists to support the claim of a blood relationship between Joseph and Mary. The book of Numbers (36:6) prescribed that daughters *who had no brothers* "are to wed . . . only . . . men of their tribe." But was Mary an only child? Not a few Fathers of the Church claimed that the Law forbade marriage between persons of different tribes.²³ Relying on this supposition, Jerome (*420) stated, "Because of the Law (Joseph) was obliged to accept her as his relative . . . for they were descended from common ancestry."²⁴

As we have already noted, Suarez firmly held that such a relationship did exist between Joseph and Mary. For him, it was "certain as of faith" that the Blessed Virgin descended from Abraham and Jacob, of the tribe of Juda through the family of David. The fact that Jesus was recorded to be the son of Joseph only referred, so he continued, to Christ's quasi-adoption of Joseph, by right of Joseph's marriage to our Lady. Hence, there was need for Jesus to have a blood descent from David, and this could only be through Christ's mother Mary. For Suarez, since Jewish law required that

the wife be of the same' tribe' as the husband, Joseph's Davidic ancestry implicitly revealed the Davidic ancestry of our Lady and therefore via Mary, the blood line of Jesus.²⁵ None the less, he admitted, "it is not sufficiently clear in what degree of blood relationship [Joseph and Mary] were joined."²⁶

Accordingly, we may best conclude that the question of Joseph's relationship to our Lady remains open to free discussion.

St. Joseph's Homeland

Another interesting question concerns St. Joseph's homeland. Did he originally live in Bethlehem, Nazareth, or Jerusalem? These are the only three possibilities according to all ancient testimonies, whether in or outside the canonical gospels. We can safely dismiss at once the references of the apocrypha which claim that Joseph was born or had lived at Jerusalem, even as a priest in the temple, as, for example, "There was a man whose name was Joseph, sprung from a family of Bethlehem, a town of Judah, and the city of King David. This same man, being well furnished with wisdom and learning, was made a priest in the temple of the Lord."²⁷

Evidence for Nazareth seems to grow out of Luke's narrative. There we read that Mary is espoused to Joseph apparently at Nazareth (Lk. 1: 26 ff.), and Joseph leaves Nazareth to go to Bethlehem on the occasion of the Roman census (Lk. 2:4). The text, "There was no room for

them in the inn" (Lk. 2:7), would seem at first sight to prove that Joseph did not possess his own home in Bethlehem. None the less, the absence of such domicile on Joseph's part cannot be argued to eliminate Bethlehem as the place where Joseph was born and where his family had previously resided.

The positive evidence in favor of Bethlehem is impressive. Luke says that Joseph went "into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and family of David" (Lk. 2:4). The particular detail of Joseph's Davidic descent cannot prove that Joseph himself had been born at Bethlehem. The really weighty proof comes from the fact that upon Joseph's return from the exile in Egypt, "hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there; and being warned in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee" (Mt. 2:22). In other words, Joseph planned to establish his fixed residence in Bethlehem until information about the dangerous circumstances indicated to him the wisdom of changing his plan. Might we not suppose that his intention to return to Bethlehem from Egypt was an intention to return where he had originally lived? Of himself, he originally showed no inclination to settle down at Nazareth in the north.

Strong confirmation for the opinion that Bethlehem was Joseph's homeplace comes from one of the earliest witnesses possible. In the words of

Justin Martyr writing some time before the middle of the second Christian century, Joseph "betook himself from the village of Nazareth where he was living, to go to Bethlehem, where he had originated."²⁸

CHAPTER FOUR

ST. JOSEPH'S TRADE

“Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Mt. 13:55)
To the Nazarenes this question seemed to be the most effective slur they could cast on Christ’s authoritative way of speaking. Yet, as often happens in God’s providence, the things that are lowly in the world’s esteem are raised to a level of nobility far above the ephemeral standards of worldlings, and these very words of derision, “the carpenter’s son,” came to be one of the most appealing titles of the most lovable and perfect of men. He who had drawn all creation out of nothingness and who is Wisdom itself deigned to submit to the discipline of learning from one of His creatures. The thought

of His infinite condescension strikes us with awe. Yet, if we think instead of Christ's apprenticeship from the viewpoint of St. Joseph and consider him as the man chosen by the Eternal Father to teach the divine child, our awe must be unspeakably profound. It is merely another indication of the holiness that dwelt in the carpenter of Nazareth that he would be chosen to be the tutor of the sacred humanity of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Was St. Joseph actually a carpenter? We cannot give the answer directly. Even before consulting early documents we would not expect to find explicit mention of St. Joseph but would rather be prepared to learn that Jesus Himself was a carpenter, taking up Joseph's craft according to the customs of His time. This is what the evidence indicates. Justin Martyr again writes, "When Jesus came to the Jordan, He was considered to be the son of Joseph the carpenter; and He was deemed a carpenter, for He was accustomed to work as a carpenter when among men, making plows and yokes by which He taught the symbols of justice and work."¹ Not only is this the earliest testimony we possess apart from the gospels; it is practically the earliest testimony possible. Justin was born in Palestine about the year 100 A.D., when grandfathers could still give eyewitness accounts of Jesus. We cannot doubt that he was well informed, and in view of his generally reliable testimony, we can accept this statement as a true explanation of Matthew's and Mark's indirect

references to St. Joseph when speaking of Jesus: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Mt. 13:55) and "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3)

The reason why a further explanation is necessary lies in the fact that the Greek manuscripts of the gospel use the word *tehton*, which is translated into English as "carpenter." Literally, however, it could merely mean "craftsman," just as its Latin equivalent *faber* can do. But what kind of "craftsman" would this make St. Joseph? The testimony of the apocrypha, while of course not reliable, is none the less interesting because it shows what the readers of the legends were expected to believe. The evidence from the apocrypha is unanimously in favor of wood-working as St. Joseph's trade, except for one reference that speaks of him as a builder of houses, and this single comment does not exclude the validity of the others.

Beginning with the *Protoevangel* we read, "And Joseph, throwing away his axe, went out to meet them." ² "And Joseph said to Mary, 'Behold I have received thee from the temple of the Lord; and now I leave thee in my house, and go away to build my buildings.' " ³ "Now Joseph was a carpenter and used to make nothing else of wood but ox-yokes, and plows, and implements of husbandry, and wooden beds." ⁴ "The history of the death of our father, the holy old man, Joseph the carpenter. . . . This same man, being well furnished with wisdom and learning, was made a priest in the temple of the Lord. He was, besides, skillful in his trade,

which was that of a carpenter. . . . He went away with his sons to his trade, practicing the art of a carpenter. . . . Thereafter, Joseph left Mary at home, and went away to the shop where he wrought at his trade of a carpenter.”⁵ “And Jesus’ father was a carpenter, and at that time made plows and yokes. And a certain rich man ordered him to make a couch.”⁶ “And Joseph used to go about through the whole city, and take the Lord Jesus with him, when people sent for him in the way of his trade to make for them doors, and milkpails, and beds, and chests.”⁷

All early tradition, therefore, uniformly thinks of Joseph as a worker in wood. Does this mean that Joseph worked exclusively in wood? Might he not also have been a craftsman making homes, and therefore working in stone and baked clay and cement, since the houses were of such material? These two forms of the same occupation would not be incompatible, and the descriptions of them would not be anachronistic. However, we cannot say the same of the later opinion which sprang up to the effect that Joseph was actually a worker in iron and a sort of blacksmith.

This unusual interpretation of *faber* as meaning “blacksmith” was held as late as the ninth century because some of the patristic commentaries on the gospel of Matthew were misunderstood. As a matter of record, Hilary (*368), Ambrose, and Peter Chrysologus (*450,) whose statements were taken out of context in this connection, were concerned with the allegorical meaning of the “carpen-

ter" text. They applied it to the Eternal Father who works in the world just as well as the Son who works in the souls of the men who live in the world. They did not refer it even remotely to St. Joseph.

Hilary's statement is the most ambiguous of the three. "In truth," he writes, "this man was the son of a laborer who conquers the iron with fire, who forms the mass into everything for human use and makes the material of our bodies for all works of eternal life."⁸

Ambrose writes, "Through this symbol Christ shows that He has Him for a father who as creator of all things called the world into existence. The Father of Christ works with fire and the spirit and swiftly lays the axe to the unfruitful tree."⁹

In the case of Peter Chrysologus it is even more clear that he does not refer to St. Joseph. "Christ was the son of a workman, of Him who made the edifice of the world not with a hammer but with His word; who by His omnipotence and not by coal smelted the mass of the world."¹⁰

In the seventh century, St. Isidor of Seville by a play on the Latin word *faber* stated that Joseph was a smith: "*Faber a faciendo ferrum impositum nomen habet.*"¹¹ However, this sort of reasoning in itself cannot lead to a valid conclusion any more than if we were to say in English, "A steelworker by the fact that he works with steel is a stealer, and therefore a thief."

Actually, the evidence from early tradition to show that St. Joseph was a woodworker is over-

whelming. Origen, writing in the third century, quotes at length from the philosopher Celsus, who scornfully ridiculed Christianity. Celsus stated, "For this reason is the tree (of life) introduced either because our teacher was nailed to the cross or because He was a carpenter by trade," to which Origen rejoined, "he, being blind to this, that in none of the gospels current in the churches is Jesus Himself described as a carpenter. Celsus, moreover, thinks we have invented this tree of life to give an allegorical meaning to the cross, and in consequence of his error, he adds, 'If He had happened to be cast down from a precipice or shoved into a pit or suffocated by hanging, there would have been invented a precipice of life far beyond the heavens or a pit of resurrection or a rope of immortality.' And again, 'If the tree of life were an invention because He is reported to have been a carpenter, it would follow that if He had been a leather-cutter, something would have been said about holy leather; or had He been a stone-cutter, about a blessed stone; or if a worker in iron, about an iron of love.'"¹²

When Origen says that "in none of the gospels current in the churches is Jesus Himself described as a carpenter," he is really intending to distinguish the apocrypha from the canonical gospels. His sense is this: "Joseph is called a carpenter in the gospels, but Jesus is called a carpenter only in the apocrypha." We might ask, however, whether Origen was aware of Mark 6:3, referring to Jesus and reading, "Is not this the carpenter?" The answer seems to be

that Origen was using a manuscript which offered the unacceptable variant, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" presented as if it had originally been in Mark, instead of its actual correct position in Matthew 13:55.

Julian the Apostate is reported to have asked insolently, "What is the carpenter's son doing?" The answer was given, "He is making a wooden coffin for your burial."¹³ The scoffer Libanius was told, "This Creator of all things whom you contemptuously call the son of a carpenter is making a bier for you."¹⁴

There have always been allegorical interpretations based on the connection between the son of a woodworking craftsman and the wood of the holy cross. A charming commentary that appeared about the time of St. John Chrysostom (late fourth century) suggests that "Mary was wedded to a carpenter because Christ the bridegroom of the Church, wished to accomplish the salvation of all mankind and to fulfill all His work by means of the wood of the cross."¹⁵

St. Ephrem (*379) in attractive poetic style addresses Christ thus: "You are the son of the living God; so, too, are you the son of dying man. You are the son of the Creator by whose will the world grew out of nothing; so, too, are you the son of Joseph. He was a carpenter in whom you first infused skill. Through you, not however taught by you, the Parent of all things created His work. By your finger the supreme craftsman brought together all things. In like manner Joseph carried out his work under

your tutelage, you whom he had in his presence as his master. O son of the Creator, you who are also son of the carpenter, who when you were constructing the framework of the world were referring everything to the hidden mystery of the cross, perchance in that very house of Joseph the thought of the cross never left your heart.”¹⁶

Joseph was a laboring man, probably in moderate circumstances. We know from Luke 2:24 that Joseph and Mary offered “a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.’” This was considered the offering of the poor (Lev. 12:8). None the less, we are not justified in concluding that Joseph’s occupation gave him so scanty a remuneration that Mary and Jesus lived with him in great want. He was “poor” in the sense that he was not rich, and that the modest living which he made was obtained by the labor of his hands. Perhaps we might best characterize him as (according to his occupation) bracketed in the upper “poor” class, since a middle class as such did not exist in Jewish society at the time of our Lord.

In earlier literature there appears a fleeting reference to the title whereby Joseph was to be worthily designated in far-distant ages as the patron of workmen. Augustine holds up Joseph to monks as a model of industry, pointing out that “that just man chosen to be a witness of perpetual conjugal virginity, he to whom was espoused the virgin Mary who brought forth Christ, was a carpenter.”¹⁷

John Chrysostom, too, defends the essential dignity of Joseph in his words of rebuke to those who contemned Jesus because of His apparent descent from a craftsman. "Since there are many examples from earlier times of those who were born of humble fathers but became eminent by their works"—for example, David, Amos, and Moses—"they should have marvelled that one of common extraction could speak in so sublime a manner. In this was it apparent that His sublimity did not come from human effort but from divine grace."¹⁸

The honorable position Joseph held in life was exceptionally honorable in view of the dignity to which it was raised by Christ's participation in it. There is an old saying that God is so good that even His curses turn out to be blessings, and that the curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19) was one of the greatest blessings mankind received after the fall of Adam. Work makes man's life happy on earth, and Joseph ever so clearly illustrated this. In him appeared the dignity of labor, and particularly the value of all work done in a spirit of faith for the intention of pleasing our loving Father in heaven.

We conclude, therefore, with the opinion that Joseph was a craftsman who worked principally in wood constructing houses (whose roofs alone were wooden, but whose walls were made of stone or baked clay), and performing in general the services of a handyman. As confirmatory evidence for Joseph's craft as a builder, Miller cites the reputa-

tion of the Bethlehemites as stone-masons.¹⁹ Accordingly, we understand Joseph's carpentry in this wide sense as including construction work but emphasizing craftsmanship in wood. This would fit the simple conditions of living in the hamlet of Nazareth, where fine distinctions would hardly be drawn between the types of work done for a livelihood.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW OLD WAS ST. JOSEPH?

At the present time when the true greatness of St. Joseph is officially recognized by the Church, it is especially fitting that our conception of the saint be in full accord with his sublime and unique dignity. The portrait of Joseph as an old man who is venerable at best if not at times feeble seems unworthy of his status and particularly untrue to life.

The first reference to Joseph's extreme age is not found in the gospels (which make no comment whatsoever on the subject) nor in the writings of the early Fathers but in the apocryphal *Protoevangel of James*. After relating the miraculous choice

of Joseph as Mary's guardian, the *Protoevangel* ascribes the following statement to the saint, "I have children and I am an old man, and she is a young girl. I am afraid lest I become a laughing stock to the sons of Israel."¹ The same theme appears later with added elaboration in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. We now read: "Whence it happened that Joseph brought his staff, together with the young men . . . but because he was an old man he had been cast off."² "Then all the people congratulated the old man, saying, 'Thou hast been made blessed in thy old age, O father Joseph!'" To this Joseph replies, "I am an old man and have children; why do you hand over to me this infant, who is younger than my grandsons?"³ At a still later period, the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* has this to say: "Now there was among the rest Joseph, of the house and family of David, a man of great age."⁴

The final source of apocryphal references to the aged Joseph is the *Coptic History of Joseph the Carpenter*. With its own peculiar details, it caps all other accounts. According to it, Joseph marries at 40, becomes a widower at 89, receives Mary at 91, and dies twenty years later at 111! It repeatedly uses the title, "Joseph, that righteous old man," in a way that leaves no doubt as to its implication.⁵

These, then, constitute the original sources that account for the belief in Joseph's advanced age. Although they were not unknown to the Fathers of the Church, the Fathers did not quote them nor

comment on them to any great extent. The reasons for this neglect lay, of course, in the fact that most of the Fathers considered these fonts suspect, understanding that only the canonical gospels were to be trusted.

Epiphanius, however, repeatedly accepted the description of Joseph as "being an old man," and was followed in this by other writers in the East such as Pseudo-Chrysostom, Germanus of Constantinople, and Nicephorus Callistus. ⁶ Thus it was that the stories describing Joseph as a nonagenarian widower were commonly accepted in the Eastern Church after the eighth century and were incorporated into the cultus paid to him.

In the West, Joseph's virginity came to be stressed more and more so that the tale of his earlier marriage was necessarily put aside. However, with a definite lack of consistency, the parallel apocryphal story of his hoary age was accepted with no scruple, and was, in fact, improved upon. With the turn of the ninth century and particularly in the tenth, popular devotion began to manifest itself in a splendid outpouring of poetic and prose lives of Jesus and Mary. The movement continued for several hundred years, and was vitally influenced by the apocrypha throughout.

During this period it is to be noted that the medieval Scholastics abstained from utilizing the apocryphal tales of the Holy Family, but popular devotional writers did not hesitate to fill in the gaps of the gospel story with material drawn directly

from the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*. The first of these writers was Hroswitha, a nun of Gandersheim, who in 999 set Pseudo-Matthew into Latin poetry and thus helped revive the legends of St. Joseph among the common folk. Then came the series of poems from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries which narrated Mary's life in the fullest detail, each depending on its predecessors for its material. These were highly popular during the Middle Ages, and in lengthy descriptions (from 5000 to even 30,000 verses long) they consistently pictured St. Joseph as an old, old man of 80, 120, and in three or four instances, even 200 years. They also influenced in their turn two widely read books: the *Meditations on the Life of Jesus Christ* (falsely attributed to St. Bonaventure) and, through the *Meditations*, Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*. Thus, the theme of St. Joseph's great age was propagated even through the Renaissance.

Earlier, in the heart of the Middle Ages St. Bridget of Sweden stirred the imagination of the faithful by describing St. Joseph in terms of the contemporary legends. Thus, too, did the Miracle plays dramatize him; and the medieval masters of painting and sculpture immortalized the bearded and venerable "old" St. Joseph on canvas and in stone. It was all done in a spirit of deepest, loving devotion—there is no doubt of that; but it was all an uncritical acceptance of Joseph's advanced age, repeated in so many places and at so many times

that the devotional literature of the Church and the piety of the faithful still occasionally show something of its deep impress.

Let us now consider the facts. The only sources for the age of St. Joseph are the apocryphal accounts previously quoted. We have already said enough about their unreliability, both from external evidence of anachronisms and contradiction of the gospel story, and from internal evidence of self-contradiction and polemical purpose. In the present instance, we must emphasize that the tendency to depict Joseph as senile betrays the ulterior purpose of the apocrypha. Their desire was to safeguard the universal belief in Mary's virginity in the face of impious heretical insinuations. According to the tenor of their times, they adopted old age to symbolize deadened passions, and to certify Joseph's absolute continence with Mary. They were also acutely aware of the difficulty of explaining away the "brethren of the Lord" passages in the gospel (e.g. Mt. 13:55) so that the "brethren" would not seem to be blood brothers of Jesus and children of Mary from St. Joseph. Comments on this question of "brethren" will recur repeatedly in the following pages, but for the moment we should point out that the apocrypha wished to avoid the problem by making the "brethren of the Lord" children of Joseph from a former marriage. Thus, they had to give Joseph sufficient years to generate these children, then to become a widower, and only after that period to take Mary into his charge as her

guardian. When once we reject the unfounded supposition of this earlier marriage of St. Joseph we will have all the more reason to justify his youth at the time of his marriage with our Lady.

To reply to the argument of the apocrypha on another score, we do not have to postulate senility as a necessary means to preserve virginity, especially in so unique a marriage as existed between two people so holy as Joseph and Mary. God's grace is more than sufficient to observe continence if such be God's will.

Above all, the idea that St. Joseph would be an old man of eighty years or more stands in direct contradiction with the requirements of his vocation. Joseph was to appear publicly as the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus, at least in order to safeguard the honor of mother and son. *Yet how could a man of patriarchal years be considered capable of fatherhood?* A decrepit, senile guardian of Mary would open the door to public suspicion of adultery and illegitimacy.

Again, laborious tasks and trying situations of all sorts beset the Holy Family. How could such an old man perform duties that called for a robust provider and protector? The general tenor of the gospel accounts points to the conclusion that Joseph was of an age customary for marriage; and that age was certainly not advanced to the evening of life.

On the one hand, then, there is the strong tradition of St. Joseph's virginity, flourishing despite the disagreement of most of the apocrypha; on the

other, there was the "tradition" of St. Joseph's great age because of the testimony of the apocrypha. Granting the truth of St. Joseph's virginity and therefore the falsity of any tales of his earlier marriage, could we hold that a devout Jew would remain unmarried until extreme old age in defiance of the customs of his day? Indeed, we must assume that Joseph lived during the major portion of Christ's hidden life at Nazareth, as would appear from the text of St. Luke, "He was subject to them" (Lk. 2:51).

In short, there is no fact from history and no logic arising from considerations of propriety that forces us to assume Joseph's advanced age. Rather, in accordance with the reasons militating against the truth of the apocryphal tale, we can feel safe to assert that Joseph must have been espoused to Mary when he was in the prime of his life. This assumption that Joseph was in stalwart maturity can alone be taken as agreeing with the definite requirements of his vocation. We have no way of determining his age more exactly except to study the customs of his time and determine if possible what the normal marriageable age must have been.

Information suggested by the Dead Sea scrolls indicates such an average age when the male was considered marriageable. The Essene community wished its members to delay marriage (if they were to marry at all) until well after the customary time, and the twenties were considered beyond that time.⁷ We can conclude, then, that the normal age for the male to enter marriage would have been

in his middle teens. In such a hypothesis, Joseph would have been about 16 at the time of his espousal to our Lady.

On the surface, it is true, the widespread and long-standing tradition of the body of the faithful was in error concerning St. Joseph's age, but fundamentally it did not err. There was the assumption of an intellectual error—his extremely advanced years—but the underlying principles remained sound and consonant with genuine Catholic piety. The tradition of Joseph's age was manifestly concerned not so much with explicitly fixing the duration of his life. Its real purpose was to elevate the virginal dignity of the Mother of God beyond all doubt.

When Did St. Joseph Die?

According to the gospels it seems likely that Joseph died in the latter part of the Hidden Life and certainly before the Public Life and Passion of Jesus. He must have been father of the family at Nazareth for some time since he was subject not to Mary alone but to "them" (Lk. 2:51). On the other hand, Joseph no doubt would have been present at the marriage at Cana if he had been living. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the subsequent text, that Jesus left Cana and went to Capharnaum, "He and His mother and His brethren and His disciples" (Jn. 2:12). Again, when Christ's fellow citizens attempted to refute Him by naming His living relatives, they omitted to mention His supposed father (Mt. 13:55). Perhaps our clearest

indication lies in the action of Jesus on the cross in commending His mother to St. John's care (Jn. 19: 27). Joseph was the official protector of the Blessed Virgin because he was her husband. If he had been living at the time of the Passion, there would have been no need for John to assume the right and the obligation that belonged to Mary's husband. Indeed, the action of Jesus in giving His mother to John would seem to show that Jesus Himself had assumed the guardianship of Mary. This would still further confirm the supposition that Joseph had died by then.

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PART III

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO
ST. JOSEPH'S MARRIAGE

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CHAPTER
SIX

THE QUESTION OF JOSEPH'S
MIRACULOUS SELECTION

Three of the six apocrypha which originated the legends of St. Joseph assert that he was chosen to be the spouse of Mary by means of a public miracle. Since this statement is one of the few that from its nature might seem to conform to authentic tradition, let us compare the various forms in which the miraculous selection is described. These forms were eventually incorporated into the concept of St. Joseph in literature and art, and are indirectly responsible even today for the lily which on statues of St. Joseph is placed in the saint's hand.

The *Protoevangel of James* relates the event thus: "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by

him (the high priest), saying unto him, 'Zacharias, Zacharias, go out and assemble the widowers of the people and let them each bring his staff; and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be.' . . . And he taking the staffs of all of them entered the temple and prayed; and having ended his prayer, he took the staffs and came out and gave them to them; but there was no sign in them, and Joseph took his staff last; and behold, a dove came out of the staff and flew upon Joseph's head. And the priest said to Joseph, 'Thou hast been chosen by lot to take into thy keeping the virgin of the Lord.' " ¹

The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* makes the scene more colorful and exciting. "And the priest said: 'Tomorrow let everyone who has no wife come and bring his staff in his hand.' . . . And the Lord said to him, 'Put all their staffs in the holy of holies of God and let them remain there and order them to come to thee on the morrow to get back their staffs; and the man from the point of whose staff a dove shall come forth and fly toward heaven and in whose hand the staff, when given back, shall exhibit this sign, to him let Mary be delivered to be kept.' "

"On the following day . . . the high priest went into the holy of holies and brought forth the staffs. And when he had distributed the staffs and the dove came forth out of none of them . . . an angel appeared to him, saying, 'There is here the shortest staff of which thou hast made no account . . . ' Now

that was Joseph's staff; and because he was an old man, he had been cast off, as it were, that he might not receive her, but neither did he himself wish to ask back his staff But as soon as he stretched forth his hand and laid hold of his staff, immediately from the top of it came forth a dove whiter than snow, beautiful exceedingly, which after long flying about the roofs of the temple, at length flew towards the heavens And the priests said to him, 'Take her.' " 2

The *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, here as elsewhere, makes a selection of the best elements from the earlier apocrypha, but differs appreciably from its sources in several details. We read: "And when all bowed themselves in prayer, the high priest went to consult God in the usual way. . . . A voice issued from the oracle and from the mercy seat, that according to the prophecy of Isaias a man should be sought out to whom the virgin ought to be entrusted and espoused. For it is clear that Isaias says, 'There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.' According to the prophecy, therefore, he ordered that all men of the house and family of David that were unmarried and fit for marriage should bring their staffs to the altar; and out of whosoever staff a flower should bud forth after it was brought, and upon the end of whose

staff the Spirit of the Lord should settle in the form of a dove, he should be the man to whom the virgin ought to be entrusted and espoused. . . . And when all brought their staffs according to the order, he (Joseph) alone withheld his. . . . When he brought his staff and the dove came from heaven and settled upon the top of it, it clearly appeared to all that he was the man to whom the virgin should be espoused.”³

In the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* the choice of Joseph is made simply by lot. No miracle is postulated. No other writings mention the miracle except in dependence on the three sources already quoted. These three agree in claiming that a miracle occurred, but their details differ notably. For the *Protoevangel*, a dove flies out of the staff and alights on Joseph's head just as an angel prophesies. For *Pseudo-Matthew*, the dove flies out of the staff and wings its way into the heavens only after the angel calls attention to Joseph's neglected staff; moreover, the angel previously prophesies the outcome in detail. As a sort of culmination of these accounts, the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* invokes the prophecy of Isaiah (11:1), adds the miracle of the budding staff to that of the dove, explicitly states the symbolism of the dove as representing the Holy Spirit, and brings the dove down from heaven, not from the top of the staff.

If we keep in mind the frequent apocryphal device of concocting miracles in such a way that the legends can later add, “Then was fulfilled that

which was spoken by the prophet," or a similar phrase, we are not wrong in seeking a scriptural interpretation of the three accounts of the miracle. The model is not difficult to find, for the episodes are patently built around the miracle of Aaron's blooming staff, as related in the book of Numbers (17:1, 5, 6-8): "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, '... whomsoever of these I shall choose, his rod shall bloom.' . . . And there were twelve rods beside the rod of Aaron And when Moses laid them in the tabernacle of the testimony, he returned on the following day and found that the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded; and that the buds swelling, it had bloomed blossoms."

Now, the *Protoevangel*, *Pseudo-Matthew*, and the *Gospel of the Nativity* are, despite their errors, orthodox writings in the sense that they were composed in good faith to further edification and piety. Accordingly, their selection of the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit is not surprising. As deliberate imitations of the canonical gospels, they are never loath to borrow authentic episodes or symbols. In this case they imitate the passages where all four evangelists represent "the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him" (Mt. 3:16). In the *Protoevangel* the symbolism represents the Holy Spirit settling on the head of Joseph. *Pseudo-Matthew* weakens this beautiful allegorical feature by sending the dove into the heavens, but the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* replaces the dove and confirms the correctness of our surmise by explaining

the dove's meaning and by bringing it out of heaven. Here, too, in the *Gospel of the Nativity* is combined the reference to Isaiah's Messianic prophecy with the events of Aaron's election to the priesthood.

What, then, are we to believe concerning the fact of Joseph's selection? On the one hand we possess certain evidence of the spurious character of the apocrypha, and their mutual contradictions count heavily against the truth of the story. On the other hand it is possible that we might here be dealing with a detail of primitive tradition that managed to survive the long series of doctored readings which befell the original legends. If we consider the propriety of the matter, it seems most disrespectful to set up Mary, the future Mother of God, for public scrutiny much like the slave on the block during an auction. Moreover, too striking a miracle would never have been forgotten in an Oriental town, and the early obscurity which Jesus willed for Himself would have been out of the question if His ostensible parents had been marked out as wonder workers.

Nevertheless, it would seem that God must have used some extraordinary means to bring together Joseph and Mary, in preparation for the greatest event in the history of creation, the Incarnation. Their vocation was most extraordinary, and in God's present providence it was an essential condition connected with the Redemption. In so important a matter God may have permitted an outward expression of His will in order to help Joseph and

Mary begin the fulfillment of His all-wise, eternal designs. A miracle for Joseph was possible and fitting, but it was not necessary, for God might have used natural means to attain His end. It is equally possible and fitting that God would have led Joseph and Mary by the natural way of blind faith in His providence, since He certainly did not exempt them from the necessity of faith during the time of their life together.

That a miracle probably occurred to bring together Joseph and Mary has been suggested by many Christian writers of the past. Their reasons, however, for postulating such a miraculous intervention of God are drawn not from the apocrypha but are logically and independently deduced from considerations of propriety. Hence, the details of the apocryphal legends are useless in this matter and can be dismissed in their entirety by anyone seeking the truth. We must always return to the fact that the apocrypha invent episodes for polemical reasons. In the present instance they leave no doubt as to the point they wish to make. They are concerned not about a divine selection of Joseph as such, but rather about emphasis on the divine providence surrounding the early life of Mary and revealing from the beginning the glorious holiness of the future mother of Jesus. Then, too, the story of Joseph's blooming staff is closely connected with the apocryphal presentation of him as the aged widower. It would seem more logical that if the motif of the widower advanced in years is to be discarded for very sound reasons (as it has been al-

ready explained, and will be further rejected in the next chapter), then the related and somewhat dependent story of the blooming staff should receive the same rejection.

By way of conclusion it is worthy of note that in most medieval paintings representing St. Joseph, the saint holds the blooming staff. This portrayal follows the account of the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, so influential in shaping the medieval concept of St. Joseph. Eventually the blooming staff was replaced by the lily as an emblem of purity. In all likelihood the first occasion of this substitution was in the "Espousal," one of a series of frescoes painted by Giotto between 1303-1306 for the chapel of Santa Maria dell'Arena at Padua. Slowly the lily replaced the staff in all art. Today it is a universal symbol on statues and paintings of St. Joseph.

CHAPTER
SEVEN

THE "BRETHREN OF THE LORD"
AND THE QUESTION OF
JOSEPH'S EARLIER MARRIAGE

No one can reasonably deny the tremendous influence of the apocrypha in shaping the concept of St. Joseph such as it was held for many centuries. The apocryphal portrait of Joseph as the aged widower with several children became the stereotype continuously in the East, and for some time in the West. It stubbornly resisted all influences that worked to replace it with an impression more consonant with the vocation of St. Joseph as described in the gospels. Thus, it is paradoxical to find that the apocrypha was rejected more and more in Europe during the later Middle Ages, as far as Joseph's earlier marriage was concerned, even while they

were wholeheartedly accepted on everything else. In learned circles in the West, of course, the legends had been refused credence, so that from the time of the Fathers of the Church the tales of Joseph's earlier marriage and children never gained the ascendancy—contrary to what happened in the East. After the year 1100 no Western theologian of any worth denied that Joseph had married only once; and the popular literature, which had lagged on this point, eventually followed suit. Such in brief outline is the interesting development we are about to trace.

As we have already intimated earlier in these pages, the story of Joseph the widower did not originate spontaneously. It was a very definite attempt to give an orthodox explanation to the perplexing texts where the gospels refer to the "brethren of the Lord." These texts should be kept in mind always as the background and the occasion for the apocryphal expedient of making Joseph the aged widower. They are the following:

(a) "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? And His sisters, are they not all with us?" (Mt. 13:55-56)

(b) "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon? Are not also His sisters here with us?" (Mk. 6:3)

(c) "While He was still speaking to the crowds, His mother and brethren were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him" (Mt. 12:46).

(d) "Now His mother and brethren came to Him" (Lk. 8:19; also 20-21).

(e) "After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brethren and His disciples" (Jn. 2:12).

(f) "His brethren therefore said to Him, 'Leave here and go into Judea' . . . for not even His brethren believed in Him" (Jn. 7:3-5).

(g) "All these with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (Acts 1:14).

(h) "Have we not a right to take about with us a woman, a sister, as do the other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9:5).

(i) "But I saw none of the other apostles, except James, the brother of the Lord" (Gal. 1:19).

Certainly, one might at first sight consider these "brethren" and "sisters" as blood relatives of Jesus, from the same mother and father. On the other hand, overwhelming evidence both from the text of the gospels as from unanimous early Christian tradition militates against such a conclusion. The only final conclusion must be that the words "brother" and "sister" evidently are to be understood in a wider sense, namely, as cousins or as even more distant relatives.

This is not the place to present all the data in full detail. We should, however, note the main facts pointing out that the "brethren" cannot have been blood brothers of Jesus and born of the same par-

ents. The text, "He did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Mt. 1:25), cannot justly be alleged. All that can be gathered from it is that Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus. Similarly, the use of "firstborn" (as in Lk. 2:7 as well as Mt. 1:25) refers to the first male child, according to scriptural usage (cf. Exod. 13:2; Num. 3:12).

Since the "brethren" are pictured as acting rather superciliously and imperiously toward Jesus, they are evidently older than He; yet Jesus is certainly the first son of Mary. At the age of twelve, Jesus again appears as an only child (Lk. 2:41). He alone is referred to as the "son of Mary" (Mark 6:3); the "brethren" are never called sons of Mary or sons of Joseph. Finally, on Calvary Jesus confides Mary to the care of John the beloved disciple. Not only does this imply that Joseph was already dead; it also implies that no other children existed in the Holy Family, who would have been the logical ones to have taken care of our Lady. Nor can we claim that these older "brethren" would have deserted her, for the later text in the Acts of the Apostles (1:14) shows a continuing bond of intimacy.

All these considerations show the logic of the conclusion that the "brethren" were at least cousins of Jesus, "brothers" in a wide sense of the word. We have mentioned earlier (p. 50) that Clopas is recorded as the brother of St. Joseph. Accordingly, James and Jude (two of the "brethren"), sons of Mary, the wife of Clopas, would have been the nephews of St. Joseph and cousins of Jesus.¹

If these ideas were noted in early Christianity as clearly excluding the descent of the "brethren" from Joseph and Mary, they did not of themselves afford a positive explanation of the identity of the "brethren." Thus it was that the apocrypha took an easy way out and ascribed them to Joseph as children from the former marriage.

The references in the apocrypha are so frequent that it would be tedious to repeat them all here. It will be sufficient to mention that the *Proto-evangel of James* states in Joseph's words, " 'I have children,' " and later speaks of Joseph's desire to register his sons for the census, and that he left his two sons with Mary in the cave at Bethlehem while he went to search for a midwife.² The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* adds that Joseph is a widower and grandfather as well; some of its manuscripts call themselves the products of "James, the son of Joseph."³ The *Gospel of Thomas* speaks of James, the son of Joseph,⁴ and the Coptic *History of Joseph the Carpenter* names Justus, Judas, James, and Simon as Joseph's sons, and Assia and Lydia as his daughters.⁵

Most noteworthy in this regard is the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, for although it mentions Joseph's great age, it is silent concerning his marriage and his children. Since this life of Mary was widely circulated during the Middle Ages—as much as, if not more than any other of the apocrypha—its silence may well have been one of the extrinsic

reasons why the medieval faithful were so strongly inclined to accept the belief that Joseph as well as Mary preserved virginity.

It is unfortunate that numerous Fathers of the Church believed the tale of Joseph's first marriage. Epiphanius is credited as one of the foremost proponents of the belief. He attributes six children to Joseph from the former marriage on at least four occasions.⁶ Gregory of Nyssa in the East⁷ and Hilary in the West⁸ certainly subscribed to the idea; the meaning of Ambrose is not too clear. "The 'brethren' could have been from Joseph, but not from Mary. If anyone wishes to follow up the question, he can find the answer for himself. We did not think it necessary to investigate, since the name of 'brother' evidently can belong to many persons."⁹

Even St. Ephrem (*379), the Syrian poet and Doctor of the Church who has given warm tributes and appreciation to Joseph, seems to have accepted the story of Joseph's children. "Simon (Shmavon) the Zealot is by Matthew and Mark called Simon the Cananean. Perhaps in Hebrew he was called literally zealot; and it is affirmed by many that he was son of Joseph, father of God, and brother of the Lord." Then Ephrem adds, "Moreover, Jude of James was the brother of the same Simon and was the son of Joseph, who was also a brother of the Lord."¹⁰

None the less, if we examine the context of these writings rather closely, an important fact emerges. Often enough the supposition that Joseph

was the father of children by a previous marriage is adopted as a means of refuting the heretics' insinuations that the brethren of Jesus were children of Mary. The supposition is stated more as an incidental theory rather than an absolute historical fact—except, of course, in the case of uncritical borrowing from the apocrypha.

Origen, writing in the third century, clearly states that the theory looks to Mary's protection. "Induced by the report of the gospel named after Peter or the Book of James, some affirm that the brethren of Jesus are sons of Joseph from a former wife whom he wedded before Mary. However, those who make this assertion ultimately wish to safeguard the dignity of Mary's virginity in order that the body chosen to minister to the Word . . . might never know man's consortship."¹¹

Origen's opinion of some of the sources of the theory, incidentally, is far from complimentary. "Only the four gospels are approved, from which are to be taken the dogmas concerning the person of our Lord and Savior. I know of a certain gospel which is called according to Thomas and one called according to Matthew; and because of these people who think they know something if they know these, we read much extra material lest we appear ignorant on some subject. But in this matter we approve of nothing except what the Church approves, that is, only the four gospels are to be accepted."¹²

St. Jerome (*420) is the outstanding defender of Joseph against the apocrypha and their early mar-

riage, and protests even more strongly. "Certain people who follow the ravings of the apocrypha fancy that the brethren of the Lord are sons of Joseph from another wife and invent a certain woman, Melcha or Escha. As it is contained in the book which we wrote against Helvidius, we understand as brethren of the Lord not the sons of Joseph but the cousins of the Savior, children of Mary (the Lord's maternal aunt) who is said to be the mother of James the Less and Joseph and Jude, who, as we read, were called brethren of the Lord in another passage of the gospel. Indeed, all scripture indicates that cousins are called brethren."¹³

Against the heretical interpretation of the text, "And he did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Mt. 1:25), Jerome staunchly defends the mutual perpetual virginity of Joseph and Mary. The difficulty, of course, lies in determining the proper sense to be attributed to the words "till" and "firstborn" as translated from the original idiom. "From this passage," Jerome writes, "certain people have perversely conjectured that Mary had other sons, for they assert that he alone is to be called 'firstborn' who has brothers. However, it is customary in holy scripture to call 'firstborn' not him whom brothers follow, but him who is first begotten."¹⁴ Likewise, according to scriptural usage, the word "till" denotes a state or action up to a certain point, but does not necessarily suggest a change thereafter, as in St. Paul's quotation from Psalm 109:1, "For He must reign 'until He has put all His enemies under His feet'" (1 Cor. 15:25).

And now, in one of the most precious tributes to St. Joseph to be found anywhere in the literature of the Church, Jerome proceeds to affirm that Joseph, like Mary, was perpetually virginal. "But just as we do not deny what is written, we do reject what is not written. That God was born of a virgin, we believe because we read it. That Mary consummated marriage after her childbirth, we do not believe because we do not read it. Nor do we say this in order to condemn marriage—for virginity is itself a fruit of marriage—but because there is no license to draw rash conclusions about holy men. For if we wish to take the mere possibilities into consideration, we can contend that Joseph had several wives because Abraham and Jacob had several wives, and that from these wives the brethren of the Lord were born—a fiction which most people invent with not so much pious as presumptuous audacity. You say that Mary did not remain a virgin; even more do I claim that Joseph also was virginal through Mary, in order that from a virginal marriage a virginal son might be born. For if the charge of fornication does not fall on this holy man, and if it is not written that he had another wife, and if he was more a protector than a husband of Mary, whom he was thought to have as his wife, it remains to assert that he who merited to be called the father of the Lord remained virginal with her." ¹⁵

Jerome perceived that there were no historical reasons for supporting the tale of Joseph's wife and children; therefore, he constructed this magnificent

argument on grounds of so-called congruity or propriety. Of itself, the argument does not lead to certainty, but it is highly probable and can be relied on far more than the manufactured legend which it opposes. The logic rests on a sort of trilemma: either Joseph had other wives, or he committed adultery outside marriage, or he lived virginally with Mary. But we reject the fiction of other wives because its sole claim to notice is its origin in an unreliable source; we reject the charge of adultery against Joseph because he was a holy man; therefore, we can accept only the final possibility; namely, that Joseph lived virginally with the Mother of God, as her husband.

We might add a further consideration to Jerome's argument against the apocrypha. For Joseph to have been a widower with several children, it would have been necessary for him to have reached at least middle age when he took Mary into his keeping; but all the evidence for his marriage to our Lady at the normal young age (as we have already listed it in Chapter 5) would show that he was not old enough to have raised such a family.

A homily incorrectly ascribed to St. Augustine but actually written by some unknown author of his time, likewise portrays beautifully the virginity of St. Joseph, as the angel is described speaking to Joseph in these words: "Preserve, O Joseph, together with Mary your wife, the virginity of your members; for out of virginal members is begotten the power of angels. Let Mary be the spouse of Christ

in the flesh by preserving her virginity. You, however, are to be the father of Christ by safeguarding her chastity and honor.”¹⁶

We can only infer Augustine's true opinion since he does not express himself clearly at all times. In a commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Augustine remarks that "James the brother of the Lord" should be understood either as one of the sons of Joseph from a first wife or as a relative of Jesus through Christ's mother.¹⁷ Here Augustine makes no decision, but immediately continues with another thought. Nevertheless, since the great bishop of Hippo emphasized the importance of virginity in our Lady's marriage and since he praised the perfect continence of Joseph and Mary as man and wife, he logically must have thought that with Joseph, just as with Mary, this continence covered the entire period of Joseph's life. We can hardly doubt Augustine's true opinion if we consider phrases such as these, taken at random from Augustine's *Sermon 51* and referring to St. Joseph: "His greater purity made his fatherhood secure." "He was so much the more truly the father as he was virginaly the father."¹⁸ As we shall have to emphasize later when considering these passages with respect to Joseph's fatherhood, the question might arise why the Latin *castus*, which is ordinarily translated as "chaste," is here given the meaning of "virginal." The reason seems evident from Augustine's context. Certainly, he conceded that a marriage in which the rights were exchanged in accordance with God's

law was "chaste." Hence, we must here translate *castus* as indicating that special element in which the marriage of Joseph and our Lady differed from unions which were consummated. Moreover, since Augustine uses this same word—*castus*—with reference to Mary's conception and childbirth, the parallelism requires that it be rendered as "virginal" with reference to St. Joseph.

On at least five occasions Augustine clearly describes the "brethren of the Lord" as blood relatives of Christ through Mary.¹⁹ His apparent hesitation in deciding the question in his *Commentary on Galatians* (written earlier than some of the other works we have here noted) can be explained merely as his citation of two possible opinions proposed by others, without a decision of his own at this point. Accordingly, all the evidence points to the conclusion that Augustine did not accept the supposition of the earlier marriage of St. Joseph.

Inasmuch as the apocrypha were adopted far more widely among the Greek than the Latin Fathers, it is not surprising to find that the Eastern Church did not profess belief in St. Joseph's virginity; that is, the supposition was common that Joseph was father of the "brethren of the Lord." There never was the slightest question of impugning the mutual virginity of Joseph and Mary before or after the Incarnation of Jesus. In their use of the apocrypha, various Greek writers were usually more intent on emphasizing Mary's virginity than in detracting from Joseph's dignity. As a matter of history, the

Greeks instituted a feast of St. Joseph long before the Western Church began to pay him liturgical honors, although the emphasis of this feast was markedly different.

Joseph's purity is eulogized in exalted terms in the eleventh-century canon—a liturgical hymnlike poem—for the Greek Feast of St. Joseph. According to it, he was “wholly sanctified from his childhood and therefore was a holy protector of the All-blessed One.” He was “all-pure in soul as a servant of Christ.” “Joseph, thou standest before God who has become a child in the flesh; O wise Joseph, thou servest Him like an angel, and directly from Him dost Thou shine brilliantly since thou dost accept His spiritual rays into thyself. Thou art seen blessed and luminous in soul.”^{19a} We must comment, however, that all these praises might just as fittingly have been directed toward Joseph the widower as toward Joseph the virginal young husband of Mary.

This erroneous picture of Joseph the widower was taught in all the liturgical books of the Eastern churches and as a result became widely accepted. It was annually proposed to the faithful on every day when the memory of St. Joseph or of one of the “brethren of the Lord” would be held up for honor. We should note, however, that it has been removed from the texts of Eastern churches that are Catholic.²⁰

Holzmeister can find only eight among the outstanding Greek writers who did not teach the story of Joseph's earlier marriage. Hegesippus, John

Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Photius believed that the "brethren of the Lord" were relatives of Jesus. Irenaeus, Didymus the Blind, and John Damascene never seem to have discussed the question, as seems also to have been the case with Cyril of Jerusalem.²¹

In the Western Church Joseph was not forgotten during the centuries after the age of the Fathers. Ever since earliest times the gospel of the mass for the vigil of Christmas was that of St. Joseph's espousal and doubt, as taken from the first chapter of St. Matthew. Since Jerome's commentary on Matthew was used as the norm for commentaries on this passage, all Jerome's tributes to Joseph were re-studied and amplified by writers of this period such as St. Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Haymo of Halberstadt, Rabanus Maurus, and Walafried Strabo, the abbot of the great Benedictine monastery of Reichenau.

Against those who calumniate Mary's virginity, Bede prays, "May God grant us to perceive with pious Catholic attitude that the parents of our Redeemer were continually distinguished by unimpaired virginity, and that according to scriptural custom the brethren of the Lord were named as relatives and not as sons."²² Alcuin adds. "But we, beloved brethren, must without question and hesitation realize and affirm that not only the blessed mother of God but also Joseph, the blessed witness and guardian of her virginity, always withheld himself from any marital act."²³ Haymo interprets

Isaiah's text (62:5), "For the young man shall dwell with the virgin," or "As a young man marries a virgin," thus: "In the chastity of the flesh, like Mary and Joseph."²⁴

St. Peter Damian's reference to Joseph is momentous; it was written about the middle of the eleventh century. "If it does not suffice for you that not only the mother is a virgin, there remains the belief of the Church that he who served as the father is also a virgin."²⁵ Henceforth, no theologian raised a serious difficulty against this "belief of the Church." Concerning Joseph's virginity, at least, the effect of the apocrypha on Western theology was definitely nullified.

In the realm of devotional literature, however, the case was different. We have seen how in 999 Hroswitha, the nun of the Benedictine convent of Gandersheim, made the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* into a Latin poem. Other translations of *Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Protoevangel*, and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* subsequently appeared, and because of the tremendous upsurge of piety as the so-called ages of faith began, all writings that purported to give details of the lives of Jesus were received eagerly and uncritically as well, no matter what their source.

In the earlier poetic lives of Jesus and Mary, Joseph was described in true apocryphal style as an aged widower. Although Frau Ava, a German poetess of the eleventh century, openly lauded Joseph's purity in her *Life of Mary*, it was not until

the great *Passionale* of 1300 that he was considered a virginal though elderly man. St. Bridget of Sweden (* 1373) in narrating her private revelations affirmed that he was "dead to the flesh and to the world." Incidentally, it should be mentioned that in the judgment of competent theologians many legendary details are interwoven in these writings of Bridget. Her influence, however, in determining the concept of St. Joseph in the popular mind was considerable.

Fortunately, the *Rhythmic Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Savior* was most influential of all. This fourteenth-century poem, with its tribute to Joseph's chastity was copied and imitated widely throughout Europe. It represented the apex of the development of the medieval Marian legends and crystallized the variations on the apocrypha so that all succeeding poetic lives of Mary used it as their source and model. Particularly gratifying to read is its portrayal of Joseph's virginity; for here an angel reveals to both Joseph and Mary that the other wishes to live continently in marriage.

Among the medieval scholastic theologians, tributes to Joseph increased as these scholars pondered more and more deeply the exceptional virtues which he manifested in fulfilling his unique vocation. Peter Lombard believed that Joseph as well as Mary had resolved to live a virginal life unless God disposed otherwise.²⁶ Abelard believed that "the Virgin knew the virginal Joseph."²⁷ St. Albert the Great in his commentary on Matthew's gospel

remarked simply, "Joseph is called Mary's husband. By his solicitude he was like a father; by his espousal he was like a husband; by his protection of chastity, he was the guide of virginity."²⁸ Thus, writers of these centuries amply confirmed Peter Damian's statement that belief in Joseph's virginity had long been the belief of the Church. The title *virgo* was ever recurring in references to him, as in Peter Comestor's *Scholastic History*: "Joseph took his spouse as his wife and lived as a virgin with a virgin."²⁹ Bartholomew of Trent stated that "God sent an angel to Mary the virgin, who was espoused to Joseph, who himself was always a virgin."³⁰

The crowning theological opinion was that of Thomas Aquinas, which all Catholic theologians as a body have followed. Aquinas is making the comparison between the action of Jesus in commending Mary to the care of St. John on Calvary, and the earlier effect of divine providence in placing Mary under the care of St. Joseph. "We believe that just as the mother of Jesus was a virgin, so was Joseph, because He placed the Virgin in the care of a virgin, and just as He did this at the close, so did He do it at the beginning."³¹ "If the Lord was unwilling to commend His virgin mother to the care of anyone except a virgin, how could He have borne the fact that her husband had not been a virgin and remained as such?"³²

Thus, the process of clearing away the dross of the apocrypha came to an end, and the untarnished luster of St. Joseph's virginity was revealed to all.

From the fifteenth century to the present, it has been acknowledged by all the Catholic faithful. Theologians have not been lax in imitating the example of Suarez, who composed a special defense of Joseph's dignity and holiness and vigorously rejected the legend of Joseph the widower.³³

The question logically arises whether Catholics are obliged in virtue of their Catholic faith to accept the virginity of St. Joseph as revealed by God and contained in the deposit of faith confided to the Church. There seems to be no theologian who has made this claim, which would seem to overreach by far the evidence at hand. Probably the correct theological note to ascribe to this belief is that it would be rash for a Catholic to deny it, although, strictly speaking, no Catholic is bound to accept it as part of official Catholic doctrine. The reason for this opinion lies in the continuous modern teaching of the Church that St. Joseph lived virginally. In 1889 Leo XIII wrote in his encyclical *Quamquam Pluries*, "Virgins can look to him for their pattern and as the guardian of virginal integrity."³⁴ Pius X approved the indulgences for the prayer beginning with the words, "O Joseph, virginal father of Jesus. . . ."³⁵ The Litany of St. Joseph salutes him as "Joseph most chaste" and "Chaste guardian of the Virgin." The Divine Praises refer to him as Mary's "most chaste spouse."

CHAPTER
EIGHT

THE GENUINITY
OF JOSEPH'S MARRIAGE

Vitally important for the understanding of St. Joseph's relationship to Jesus, and for that matter, of the dignity of his vocation are certain ideas concerning his marriage to our Lady. We begin with the opinions of the Fathers of the Church, understanding that blanket statements concerning them are more or less general at best, covering a period of six or seven hundred years and applying more exactly to the predecessors of Ambrose and Augustine in the first three or four centuries of the Church.

The early Fathers proceed cautiously when they speak of Joseph as husband and even more cautiously when they speak of him as father. They

were pioneers in expounding and defending the doctrine of Christ, often lacking a terminology adequate to express it. On the subject of the Holy Family difficulties arose for them in every direction. The situation was wholly without parallel. Especially, how were they to consider the marriage?

Perhaps it was a genuine marriage only in outward appearances. Certainly, nothing like it had been known in the pagan world, and as far as the Fathers were aware, in the Jewish world as well. The fact is, of course, that celibacy had existed among the ascetical Essene sect, as the Dead Sea scrolls testify. But, we repeat, the evidence seems to show that this was not understood by the Fathers. The validity of a marriage had hitherto connoted its eventual consummation. In all terms describing marriage the idea of conjugal intercourse had been understood. Consequently, was a union in which this consummation did not occur, to be understood as a true marriage? As an even more perplexing question, was a union in which consummation was excluded by the spouses at the time of their contract to be understood as a true marriage?

Was it to be considered merely as an "espousal" in the sense that it contained the promise of a future marriage, as in our modern engagement? Perhaps the unconsummated marriage of Joseph and our Lady was a union which looked forward to a future contingency which never eventuated. Roman Law recognized something of this sort: "Espousals are the promise and exchanged promise of a future wed-

ding." Ulpian in the third century had written, "It was the custom of our ancestors to arrange for and to espouse to themselves future wives."¹

For the Fathers a real danger threatened if the marriage were to be judged genuine. Such a stand appeared to play into the hands of the heretics who held, against the clear meaning of the gospel, that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph. These were sects and men like the Ebionites, Cerinthus, Carpocrates, Justin the Gnostic, and Julian the Apostate. On the other hand, there were heretics who in their misguided zeal warped the sense of several gospel texts in order to deny our Lady's virginity. These were the ones who asserted that after Christ was born, Mary had consummated her marriage with Joseph, and had borne to him the "brethren of the Lord." Their names have come down to us as the Eunomians, Apollinarius and the Antidicomarianites, the Paulicians, and Tertullian himself after his lapse from Catholicism (i.e., after 212 A.D.). And in the time of Augustine (early fifth century), arguing from still another direction, heretics like Julian the Pelagian alleged that the evangelists described what was popularly *thought* to be, but actually was not, a true marriage. Jesus was the supposed son of Joseph, so the objection ran, because Joseph was the supposed husband of Mary.²

These divergent opponents and opinions constituted the attack against which Christian writers had to unite. Against one group the idea of marital intercourse between Mary and Joseph had to be em-

phatically rejected. Against the others, the genuinity of the marriage had to be maintained. In every case the divine origin of Jesus from Mary had to be safeguarded. How, then, could Joseph's relationship to Mary be explained in a positive way? Not only what was it not, but what was it?

Since so many of the Fathers were at a loss to describe this exceptional union, they had to fall back on the ordinary innocuous phrases. In general, many of them remained satisfied with portraying Joseph as Mary's "betrothed," understanding in this sense the expression of scripture which calls him Mary's "husband" and which calls her his "wife" or his "espoused wife."³

However, a most important fact emerges from closer inspection of what the Fathers wrote and said. Their definition of marriage seems to have been a notion that agreed with the common ideas of their day. They evidently were not concerning themselves with the technical definition of marriage, but were satisfied to exclude the carnal element from the marriage of Joseph and Mary. Their guiding rule and directive was the protection of the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. Not penetrating into the characteristics of the relationship between Joseph and our Lady, they cannot be held to be conscious opponents of the genuinity of the marriage, since they never discussed this precise question technically.

It is not difficult to prove this contention. On the one hand, the Fathers *tend* to say that the mar-

riage did not exist because they are thinking of the exclusion of the carnal element; but, on the other hand, by their vagueness and their reluctance to give a categorical denial of genuinity, they show that in their own minds they are prescinding from an examination of the essence of the marriage as such. We shall give sufficient evidence of this outlook in the sample texts which will follow.

A warning such as this is very necessary inasmuch as the strict wording of the Fathers might in many cases convey an impression vastly different from their context. In each case we must think of the intention of the particular writer. Is this Father of the Church attempting to analyze the exact position of St. Joseph with respect to our Lady, or is he pursuing a different course—that of making sure that Joseph's marriage is not to be understood in any sense as including the exchange of physical marriage rights?

As an example of such patristic thought, we can mention a homily attributed doubtfully to St. Basil (fourth century): "Although he recognized his wife by tenderness and love and all the devotion proper to spouses, nevertheless he abstained from the marriage act."⁴

A homily spuriously attributed to Origen has great historical interest because of its wide use for so many centuries. Already accepted in the ninth century as the work of Origen it was included by Deacon Paul Warnefried in Charlemagne's *Liber Homiliarius* as a Lesson for the gospel of the Vigil

of Christmas. It did not disappear from public use until the sixteenth century at the time of the reform of the breviary by Pope St. Pius V. The writings of both St. Bernard and St. Francis de Sales were influenced by it, so that through them its concept of Joseph's vocation has been prominently emphasized in the popular notion of St. Joseph even today. Thus, its relatively few lines have strongly determined much of the devotional literature written concerning the Saint. Its outlook on the marriage is typical of so many others. The angel speaks:

“Although Mary is called your wife and ‘espoused to you,’ she is not your consort but rather the chosen mother of the only-begotten God . . . and I will show you later that she may not be held as your wife according to the usage of marriage nor may He who will be born be considered your son.” The apparent denial of the genuinity of the marriage is actually the recurrent denial of its consummation. “Wherefore, Joseph, minister to, serve, guard, be watchful, look to both Him who is born and to her who gives birth.”⁵

Maximus of Turin (*420) refers to Joseph as “always spouse but never husband” of Mary.⁶ Hilary (*368) follows a similar course, although we must note a rather unusual interpretation which he makes of the gospel text, “He did not know her until she brought forth” (Mt. 1:25). “Because she was espoused, she is received as a wife. She is known therefore after her childbirth, that is, she now advances to receive the name of wife. For she

is known, but she has no physical union. . . . Whenever either of these terms are used, she is called rather the mother of Christ, because that she was; but not the wife of Joseph, for that she was not. . . . Therefore, the spouse received the name also of wife, and after her childbirth having only been known as wife, she is manifested as the mother of Jesus.”⁷

Epiphanius (*404) can well represent the tradition in the East on this subject, as he writes in several texts, “But you may ask: ‘Why then was he called her husband, unless he would have possessed her?’ Anyone who has such a doubt is ignorant of the prescription of the old law, namely, that from the time a woman was espoused, whether she was a virgin or whether she still lived in the house of her father, she was called a wife as far as the title was concerned. . . . Therefore, since the Blessed Virgin was entrusted to Joseph, by whom the laws of chance had acted, in no way was she given to him for physical union, if we wish to assert what is the fact of the matter, since indeed he was a widower. But he is called her husband because of the law.”⁸

St. Jerome can serve aptly as a final example of the Fathers who wrote in this cautious way in the West. “No one should be influenced by the fact that she was called ‘wife,’ as if by that she ceased to be ‘spouse,’ for we know that it is the custom of scripture to call spouses wives. . . . If anyone full of inquietude is wondering why an espoused virgin con-

ceived, instead of one without a spouse or (as scripture uses the title) a husband, let him know the three reasons for this.”⁹

St. Ambrose (*397) is given the credit for enunciating the principles for the true understanding of the marriage between Joseph and Mary, and with him there begins the patristic tradition of recognizing the genuinity of the marriage. His thought is somewhat involved at times, but in general it follows an interpretation of the marriage according to Roman legal principles. Ambrose does not deny the essence of the marriage, although he will limit to some extent the area where it holds valid, as in his reference to the “separation” of Joseph from Mary on Calvary. Basically, he sees in the union the true marriage consent which makes matrimony valid; he also recognizes the common life of the spouses, which is the exterior expression of their marriage consent. Nonetheless, in his emphasis that this union was not consummated in physical intercourse, he reasons that as a result it is not absolutely indissoluble. We should note that as the foundation for the proof of this opinion, he must assume that St. Joseph was still alive at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion. In Ambrose’s words, “And Joseph showed that [he had not known his wife in marital relations] when he took action to dismiss her when he saw her pregnant whom he had not known. The Lord Himself on the cross indicated the same thing when He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son,’ and then to the disciple, ‘Behold thy mother’ (Jn. 19:26-27). Each of them made the same testi-

fication, the disciple and the mother, for 'from that hour the disciple accepted her into his home.' Certainly, if [Joseph and Mary] had lived together [as husband and wife], she would never have left her own husband, nor would the just man have tolerated her to leave him. For how could the Lord have ordered a divorce to occur? . . ."

"You should not be influenced by the fact that scripture frequently calls her a wife, for it is not the loss of virginity but the proof of their marriage and the celebration of their marriage that is affirmed. Finally, no one puts away a person whom he has not accepted; hence, he who wished to put her away acknowledged that he had accepted her." ¹⁰

Ambrose continues the same thought elsewhere, and uses a play on words to illustrate his point if not to prove it. "The woman espoused to the man receives the name of wife, for when marriage is entered upon, then the title of marriage is acquired. The loss of virginity does not bring about marriage, but the marriage contract does. Finally, when a maiden is united, then marriage exists (*cum jungitur puella, conjugium est*), not when she is known by union with her husband." ¹¹

John Chrysostom (*407) should be mentioned at this point not so much because of his clarity in teaching the genuinity of Joseph's marriage to our Lady but because he like Ambrose draws an argument from the conduct of Jesus on the cross in bestowing Mary on the disciple St. John. Implicitly, Chrysostom betrays his conviction of the juridical

reality of the marriage by showing Joseph's hesitancy when Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy but not its cause. Here, Joseph's reluctance to perform even the slightest action contrary to the law of God indicated the saint's belief in the validity of the espousal. Accordingly, when Chrysostom seems to deny the validity of the marriage because of what happened on Calvary, it seems that we ought rather to see here the common hesitation concerning terminology that might indicate physical relations between Mary and Joseph. Chrysostom like Ambrose supposes that Joseph is still living at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. He writes, "If Joseph had known her and had held her as his wife, how would [the Lord] have entrusted her to the disciple as if she had had no husband, commanding him to take her into his home. How then, you will ask, were James and the others called His brethren? In the same way that Joseph was considered to be the husband of Mary." ¹²

The Syrian poet and Doctor of the Church, St. Ephrem (*379) should also be cited here as an example of belief in the genuinity of the marriage as it appeared in his writings. "A name," he comments, "does not impart a reality, for we ourselves frequently call men fathers who are not indeed progenitors, but are outstanding for their advanced age. On the contrary, reality itself gave Joseph his name . . . because the espousal pledges of the Virgin and of Joseph brought about their name as spouses." ¹³ Ephrem seems to understand the ex-

change of the marriage privilege as implied in the word "husband" and so confines himself to the word "spouse." Can it be said then, that he excludes a true matrimonial bond, and that he is thinking merely of some sort of pledge as in an engagement? This is certainly not the case, for while not entering into the precise question of the nature of the marriage, he seems to consider the "espousal pledges" of Mary and Joseph so binding and of such importance for Mary and Joseph that we would be going against the context of his words were we to think that he considered the union of St. Joseph and our Lady only as a putative marriage, one valid in appearance only and not in internal essence.

Augustine's influence was paramount in the Christianity of the West, and has remained so powerful since his time that we should see in relatively full detail how strongly he supported the genuinity of Joseph's marriage. In his *Sermon 51*, he studies the marriage as a model for Christians of his time, since he must answer the question whether the virginal marriages with which he was acquainted were able to be considered true marriages. "We are aware that many of the brethren, growing in grace, are holding in check their conjugal love by mutual consent in the name of Christ."¹⁴ Elsewhere, treating of marriage in general, he bases his proof for the genuinity of the union of Joseph and Mary on the angel's words, "Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife" (Mt. 1:20). "She is called a

wife because of her first pledge of loyalty at the espousal, she whom he did not know in carnal union nor was to know; nor did this title of wife disappear nor was it untruthful in this instance where there had not occurred nor was there to occur any sort of union in the flesh.”¹⁵

Augustine's views on the genuinity appear again in his polemic against Julian the Pelagian: “Luke says of the Lord that He was thought to be the son of Joseph, since the supposition resulted from the belief that [Jesus] had been generated by Joseph's marital act. Luke wished to remove this supposition, not to deny against the testimony of the angel that Mary was his wife.” Previously, Augustine directly addressed Julian: “You dispute at great length against my opinion, and you try to show that because bodily union was lacking, the marriage did not exist.”¹⁶

But the outstanding justification of the marriage is in an Augustinian passage which became classic throughout the centuries and was repeated and commented upon for further development again and again by the great writers of the Church. It reads as follows: “Every good of marriage was fulfilled in the parents of Christ: offspring, loyalty, and the sacrament. We recognize the offspring in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; the loyalty, in that no adultery occurred; and the indissolubility, because of no divorce. Only conjugal intercourse did not take place.”¹⁷ Fundamental in Augustine's thought is always the genuinity of the marriage;

but since the marriage is genuine, then it must have the characteristics God gave marriage when He instituted it. One could hardly ask for a stronger defense.

These texts will recur in a later chapter on the fatherhood of St. Joseph, and for that matter, the additional quotations from Augustine to be considered in that context will in their turn further reinforce Augustine's thought on the genuinity of the marriage. For the present, however, we should note two other outstanding references to the marriage: "On account of this loyal marriage both merited to be called the parents of Christ, and not only she as mother but he as His father and as her husband."¹⁸ "Because of this holy and virginal marriage with Christ's mother, Joseph merited to be called the very father of Christ."¹⁹

Such was the situation in patristic times. Seven centuries after Augustine's death, the question was reopened. It was an engrossing and at times heated discussion among the medieval theologians whether or not there had existed a true marriage between Mary and Joseph. Actually, another question was also at issue. Directly related to the marriage of Joseph, it raised a fundamental inquiry about marriage in general, namely, what precisely constituted its nature? Was a union of wills of husband and wife sufficient, as Augustine had held long before? Or was the consummation of the marriage so necessary that virginity and the married state could not exist together?

The arguments were directly concerned with preserving the meaning of Holy Scripture, which clearly states that our Lady was both a virgin and the wife of St. Joseph. Matthew refers to Mary as "betrothed to Joseph" (1:18), "wife" of Joseph (1:20, 24), and to Joseph as "her husband" (1:19). Luke speaks of a virgin "betrothed to a man named Joseph" (1:27), and of Mary again as the "espoused wife" of Joseph (2:5). The repeated references in Luke to the joint action of Joseph and Mary and Christ's "parents" would also seem to indicate that they shared the common life of marriage (2:27, 33, 41).

Among the Scholastic theologians, Hugh of St. Victor (*1141) was one of the first to open the subject for discussion. It was an important question, for Joseph's relationship to Jesus is to be judged according to his relationship to Mary. "If he was truly the husband of Mary, he possessed genuine paternal authority by reason of his marriage with our Lady; but if he was merely her guardian, he was also merely the guardian of Jesus and was excluded from intimate participation in the Incarnation just like any other man."²⁰ Hitherto, the argument had been carried no further than to claim one or other meaning of the gospel texts; now Hugh explicitly propounded the question of what constituted the essence and the efficient cause of marriage. The marriage of Joseph and our Lady was to be the touchstone of the answer.

Hugh presupposed that the couple were truly husband and wife "since holy scripture proves this

by its manifest authority and the Catholic religion confirms it by its testimony.”²¹ Then he proceeds to explain how Mary could have given her consent to marry Joseph even while intending to preserve virginity. His opinion was stoutly contradicted by Gratian in his *Decretal* published at Bologna about 1140. This book was originally called *The Concordance of Conflicting Canons* and was a collection of past Church laws, published, however, without receiving an approval of the Church which would have made its opinions obligatory. In the *Decretal* Gratian argued that if our Lady actually vowed perpetual virginity, as theologians generally held, she could not have been Joseph's wife. He explained the terminology of scripture in this sense: “Mary is called the wife of Joseph, because it was thought by him that she would be such.”²²

Probably one of the most decisive factors in the refutation of Gratian and the canonists was the *Book of the Sentences*, published by Peter Lombard about 1150.²³ A part of the fourth section of this collection of philosophical and theological opinions was devoted to the study of the relationship between Joseph and Mary. There Lombard fully agreed with Hugh of St. Victor and with Augustine in affirming that the mutual virginity of Joseph and Mary did not hinder the genuineness of their marriage. Gratian had presented the concept that the marriage bond was to be almost equated with the use of the marriage, and that the marriage contract supposes marital relations.²⁴ Against this view Lom-

bard (*1160) stressed the spiritual aspect of marriage, formulating a noteworthy distinction in his review of Gratian's conclusions: "Sometimes an espousal occurs in which an agreement is made between man and woman concerning a future marriage, but there is no consent for the present. However, there is also an espousal which contains this consent for the present—the marriage contract—and this by itself effects marriage."²⁵

Lombard also appealed to texts of Augustine such as we have already seen. In this way his *Four Books of Sentences* propagated not only the ideas but also the very words in which Augustine called the marriage of Joseph and our Lady genuine by reason of its spiritual oneness. Lombard exercised a tremendous influence on Catholic thought, continuing actively up to the sixteenth century, for his work became the standard theological textbook in the medieval universities, and the opinions it voiced were considered as general norms to be followed.

By 1200 the canonists had to change their opinion. Roland Bandinellus (*1181), a doctor of theology at Bologna, was elected pope in 1159 and soon afterward as Alexander III decided several marriages in the sense of Peter Lombard and against that of Gratian. With this official sanction of Lombard's defense of the holy marriage, the canonists gradually deserted Gratian's views.

Lombard's text was used as the subject of commentary by both Albert the Great (*1280) and Thomas Aquinas (*1274), his famed pupil. Since

Albert's thought is developed so much further in Aquinas, we can reach the final decision of Catholic theology in the vital text of St. Thomas which proves and explains the genuinity of the marriage: "Marriage or wedlock is said to be true by reason of its attaining its perfection. Now, perfection of anything is twofold; first and second. The first perfection of a thing consists in its very form, by which it receives its species; while the second perfection of a thing consists in its operation, by which in some way a thing attains its end. Now, the form of matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls by which husband and wife are pledged to each other with a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered. And the end of matrimony is the begetting and upbringing of children; the first of which is attained by conjugal intercourse; the second, by the other duties of husband and wife by which they help each other in rearing their offspring. Thus we must say, as to the first perfection, that the marriage of the Virgin Mother of God and Joseph was absolutely true; because both consented to the nuptial bond, but not expressly to the bond of the flesh save on the condition that it was pleasing to God. . . . But as to the second perfection, which is attained by the marriage act, if this is referred to carnal intercourse by which children are begotten, this marriage was not thus consummated. . . . Nevertheless, the marriage had its second perfection in the upbringing of the Child."²⁶

This long passage can ultimately be summarized as the answer to two distinct questions: First,

was the marriage of Joseph and our Lady a genuine marriage? Second, was the end of marriage realized in their union? As to the first question, St. Thomas answers that the marriage is genuine, because of the marriage contract—the “inseparable union of souls”—that existed between St. Joseph and Mary. This was for them the “nuptial bond.” It was not destroyed or vitiated by their conditional consent to the “bond of the flesh,” depending on the specific will of God concerning their marriage.

St. Thomas explicitly refers to Joseph’s consent to the virginity of the union: “*both* consented to the nuptial bond, but not expressly to the bond of the flesh, save on the condition that it was pleasing to God.” He also calls attention to the “second perfection” by which the marriage was to attain its end, just like every other genuine marriage. This represents the actuation of the potency which is in the “first perfection” of wedlock. Did this actuation occur in the case of Mary and Joseph, so that their union can be said to have truly fulfilled the purpose of marriage? A distinction here is necessary. Since the purpose of marriage does not cease with the begetting of children but continues with their education, the marriage of St. Joseph obtained its purpose as far as the *rearing* of the child Jesus was concerned. Does this mean that the union failed to achieve its end with regard to the *begetting* of Christ? Aquinas merely says that the purpose was not attained “if this is referred to carnal intercourse.” But always for Aquinas as for Albert the

Great and for Lombard and for Augustine, the marriage is genuine, and is not to be construed as some sort of shadow of the full reality. The greatest lights of Christian thought are unanimous in their appraisal of Joseph's relationship to Mary. We will continue to meet echoes of the thought of these masters in the later chapters on St. Joseph's fatherhood, since, as we have already mentioned with reference to Augustine, the analysis of St. Joseph's marriage and of his fatherly position regarding our Lord are very intimately connected and interdependent.

The best expression of the mind of the Church concerning St. Joseph's marriage and its genuinity can be found in the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, issued in 1889. There we read that Joseph "indeed was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ. From this arise all his dignity, grace, holiness, and glory. . . . Since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures. . . . Marriage is the closest possible union and relationship whereby each spouse mutually participates in the goods of the other. Consequently, if God gave Joseph as a spouse to the Virgin, He assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life . . . but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself. . . . From this double dignity [of husband and father] such duties arose as are prescribed by na-

ture for the head of a household, so that Joseph was at once the legitimate and the natural guardian, preserver, and defender of the divine household over which he presided. . . . [The Church] is his numberless family, scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority, because he is the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ. . . . Married couples find in him the perfect image of love, harmony, and conjugal loyalty.”²⁷

God's Reasons for the Marriage

It has been a labor of love in all Christian centuries to attempt to find the providential reasons behind God's plans. Such attempts have been made in profusion concerning the marriage of Joseph and our Lady. We present here some of the outstanding contributions, while admitting that many more exist which repeat these ideas.

The first writer to offer an explanation why Christ was born of a married virgin was Origen, the third-century pioneer of scripture study. This was his belief: “Lest the external semblance of virginity would reveal sin if the pregnancy of the virgin were noticed, Christ had to be born of a virgin who was not only espoused, but, as Matthew writes, was already entrusted to a husband even though that husband did not know her. In the letter of a certain martyr—I am speaking of Ignatius, the second bishop of Antioch after Peter, who fought against beasts in the persecution at Rome—I found a

passage which, in relation to this subject, is very choice: 'The virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world.'²⁸ It was hidden because of Joseph, it was hidden because of the marriage, it was hidden because she was thought to have a husband. For if she had not had a spouse and, as was supposed, a husband, by no means could her virginity have been hidden from the prince of this world. A subtle suspicion would have slipped at once into the devil's mind, 'How is this woman pregnant, who did not consort with any man? This son who is conceived must be divine; this is something that exceeds human nature.'²⁹

On his own authority and on that of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Origen's interpretation was accepted by his successors, and although additional reasons were adduced by them to show how fitting and necessary was the marriage, his view was always retained in one form or another. For example, Theodotus of Ancyra affirmed that the deception of Satan was necessary because the devil "set snares against virginity and nowhere allowed it to flourish; for never once was there a virgin among the Jews, and the pagans, too, did not hold her in honor since the devil thus schemed to choke out this virtue from mankind."³⁰ We should add, however, that modern theological opinion would hardly incline to believe that the devil would be deceived in a matter of this sort which involved merely appearances as judged by humans. Nonetheless, Origen's opinion received frequent repetition.

St. Jerome offered four reasons for the marriage. "Why was He conceived not of a simple virgin but of one espoused? First, in order that Mary's ancestry would be indicated by the genealogy of Jesus; second, lest she be stoned by the Jews as an adulteress; third, in order that she would have the consolation of a husband when fleeing into Egypt. Ignatius Martyr adds a fourth reason why He was conceived of an espoused woman, saying that His birth was to be concealed from the devil, who would suppose that the son was born not of a virgin but of a wife." ³¹

Several Fathers discerned in the marriage God's care to safeguard Mary's honor as a virgin and as a mother. In the words of St. Ambrose, "The Lord preferred that some people should doubt His own origin rather than His mother's honor." "He knew the delicate modesty of the virgin as well as the insecure reputation of virginal honor." ³² Yet St. Joseph was to be more than the protector of the Blessed Virgin's honor. He served pre-eminently as an unimpeachable witness to certify her virgin birth. Gregory the Great (*604) likened his purpose to that of Thomas the Apostle, stating, "The Lord permitted the apostle to doubt after His resurrection just as He wished to give a spouse to His mother Mary before His birth, for the doubting apostle by his touch became a witness of the true resurrection just as the spouse of His mother became the guardian of her inviolate virginity." ³³

Through this holy marriage every reason to slander the Savior was precluded. A homily erroneously ascribed to John Chrysostom said, "If the incredulous Jews asked, 'Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph?' merely because the virgin gave birth in the house of her spouse, how much more likely would they not have said, 'Is not this Jesus the son of a harlot?' if He had not been born in the house of a spouse?"³⁴ John Chrysostom wisely called attention to the certain incredulity of Christ's contemporaries if so unheard of a miracle as the Virgin Birth had been proposed to them at once. This was why the mystery was first revealed only to Joseph and to Mary, and why the apostles later observed great prudence and reticence in preaching it. In Chrysostom's words, "If Joseph himself, that just and admirable man, in order to understand what had already happened, required so many signs—the angel, the dreams, the testimony of the prophets—how could the Jews who were corrupt and depraved and full of hatred for Jesus have accepted this belief? This doctrine, so absolutely novel and exceptional, would have thrown them into confusion since nothing of the sort had ever happened in the lives of their ancestors. From the very beginning the apostles said nothing of it, although they constantly preached the Resurrection, of which there had been examples in the past."³⁵

Even more reasons were adduced by early writers to emphasize the workings of divine proxi-

dence in arranging for the marriage. A homily incorrectly attributed to St. Basil expresses the moral significance of the marriage very beautifully. "A virgin, and a virgin espoused to a husband, has become fitted to serve in this work of salvation in order that virginity may come into honor and also that marriage may not be contemned. Virginity, specially suited for holiness, is preferred; but by the espousal the first stages of marriage are likewise accorded consideration."³⁶ Mystically, too, the marriage of Joseph and Mary prefigured the union of Christ with His Church. "Because it was to happen that all the saints would be born of the virginal Church espoused to Christ, Christ was born of the espoused virgin lest the servants be born more worthily than the master. However, in order that the children might imitate in all respects the perfect example of their father's birth, Mary was wedded to a carpenter because Christ, the bridegroom of the Church, wished to effect the salvation of all mankind and to accomplish His work by means of the wood of the cross."³⁷

Down through the centuries these considerations offered by early patristic writers were explained and amplified by ecclesiastical scholars, often in most sublime fashion. St. Bernard (*1153) explains God's plans as follows: "I will say what seems to me to be correct as it did to the Fathers before me. The reason for Mary's espousal was the reason for Thomas' doubt. For just as Thomas by doubting and handling Christ became the most ir-

refutable witness of the Lord's resurrection, so was Joseph an unimpeachable witness of Mary's chastity by becoming her spouse and by carefully approving her mode of life during the time she was in his custody. And just as I who am weak would offer my belief in the resurrection of the Son because of Thomas who doubted and handled the Savior, rather than because of Cephas who heard and believed, so would I more easily believe the virginity of the mother because of the spouse who guarded her and put her to the test than because of the virgin who defends herself according to her own conscience. Necessarily, therefore, was Mary espoused to Joseph since by this means the holy thing was hidden from the dogs, her virginity was attested by her spouse, and the exalted modesty of the virgin was spared as well as her honor safeguarded. What is more wise, what more excellent than divine providence! By this one design a witness is initiated into celestial secrets, the enemy is excluded from them, and the honor of the virgin mother is preserved intact. Otherwise, when would a just man have spared an adulteress? Since he was just, he was unwilling to manifest her. Since he would not have been just if he had consented to one who was known to be guilty, so, by no means would he have been just if he had condemned proven innocence." ³⁸

Aquinas evaluates all the opinions of his predecessors and presents them in a sort of recapitulation which can conclude most aptly this study of God's providential designs. Listing twelve reasons why

Christ chose to be born of a married virgin, St. Thomas believes that Jesus selected the marriage to serve as an outward indication of the legitimacy of His birth. Moreover, He would not have possessed legal ancestry unless He possessed His father on earth. The devil was to be deceived lest he harm the Child Jesus before the time permitted by God. Finally, as far as Jesus was concerned, the rearing and supporting of the infant Savior would have been impossible without the marriage.

For our Lady's sake, Thomas continues, the marriage was determined by God lest she be punished as an adulteress or at least her honor publicly impugned. Moreover, in no other way could she have obtained that intimate protection and consolation of St. Joseph which both she and the Child Jesus required so urgently. In the marriage God also provided for our instruction. By means of it Joseph's testimony proved that Christ was born of a virgin. His testimony was, in addition, an ample confirmation of our Lady's assertion of her virginity. Here indeed was a lesson for all future virgins who by their imprudence and carelessness might lose their good reputation. Because of the marriage they could not justly allege as an excuse that the Virgin of virgins herself permitted evil repute to befall her. As the last two reasons, St. Thomas concludes, the marriage of Joseph and Mary was to signify the mystical union between Christ and the Church, as well as to indicate that God blessed both virginity and marriage. Such a commendation was necessary in order

to refute the heretics who at various times denied the intrinsic sanctity of one or other of these states of life. ³⁹

When Did the Marriage Begin?

For a more detailed estimation of Joseph's position as husband of Mary, a special question arises, concerning which we must consult present-day thought in order to interpret the gospels correctly. This is the problem of determining when Joseph and Mary exchanged their matrimonial consent. In other words, were their marriage rights conferred at their betrothal—and therefore before the Incarnation—or after it? If at the betrothal, then Our Lord was conceived within, even though not by means of, the marriage. On the other hand, if Mary and Joseph obtained the rights of marriage only when their wedding took place, and that after the Incarnation, then Jesus was conceived outside the marriage, and was received into it as a quasi-adoptive son.

Two actions are indicated in the gospel account. First, Mary is espoused to Joseph before they come together (Mt. 1:18), and later, the wedding of the couple is solemnized (Mt. 1:20, 24). It is commonly agreed that Jewish espousals were much more binding than the modern betrothal which we call an engagement. Opinion, however, is somewhat divided in determining the import which law and custom attached to the espousals at the time of Mary and Joseph. We can only indicate here the main lines of the argument, showing that the proba-

bility seems to be far greater for the traditional view. According to this traditional view the rights of marriage were conferred in their essentials at the moment of betrothal although their use was perhaps prohibited until after the wedding.

The most prominent modern adversary of this belief is Donatus Haugg, whose thesis can be presented as three difficulties against the time-honored interpretation of the gospel on this point:

(a) The angel announces to Mary that she will conceive *immediately*.

(b) Mary is espoused at the moment of the Annunciation, and, in the supposition is not yet validly married. *Therefore*, she is shocked at the suggestion that she will have a child conceived within her before her wedding occurs.

(c) A vow or resolution of perpetual virginity was almost unthinkable for a pious Jewish maiden. ⁴⁰

Haugg's theory was ably presented by Gaechter, who, however, himself admitted that "it is a common opinion among Catholic scholars that the betrothal in the days of Mary conferred on the betrothed the right of sexual intercourse. . . . It is easily understood that this point is of no slight importance. If they had full marriage rights, Mary as well as Joseph would have felt quite differently than they did if they did not yet enjoy marriage rights. Could the conception of Jesus during their betrothal be looked upon as a harmless, regular occurrence? Or was it regarded as an act of immorality, or at

least as bad conduct? If we can settle this point, all the subsequent events will be placed in their proper moral background.”⁴¹

Since the question we are discussing is of interest strictly to Catholics, it seems preferable to quote non-Catholic authorities. None of these can justly be accused of interpreting the gospel account in favor of any Catholic theory regarding Mary's vow of virginity and St. Joseph's fatherhood. We will present here four representative non-Catholic opinions.

Montefiore, the eminent Jewish scholar, comments on Matthew 1:18 as follows: “They had not yet lived together in one house as man and wife although they were legally married according to Jewish law.”⁴²

The Jewish Encyclopedia repeats the same thought. “The root, ‘to betroth,’ from which the Talmudic word ‘betrothal’ is derived, must be taken in this sense, i.e., to contract an actual though incomplete marriage. . . . In strict accordance with this sense the rabbinical law declares that the betrothal is equivalent to an actual marriage, and only to be dissolved by a formal divorce.”⁴³

According to George Foot Moore, “Betrothal was a formal act by which the woman became legally the man's wife; unfaithfulness on her part was adultery and punishable as such; if the relation was dissolved, a bill of divorce was required. Some time elapsed after the bridegroom claimed the fulfillment of the agreement before the bride was

taken to her husband's house and the marriage consummated. The term employed for betrothal, *kiddushin*, has religious associations; it is an act by which the woman is, so to speak, consecrated to her husband, set apart for him exclusively."⁴⁴

Finally, we turn to Shailer Mathews, who appears to hold no brief for the virginal conception of Christ but who definitely considers Jesus the legitimate son of the marriage because of the betrothal. He writes, "Betrothal among the Jews in the time of Jesus was in the process of transition. . . . The status of the man and woman was . . . practically the same as that of married persons, although now it was generally customary for the wedding ceremony proper to be celebrated at the expiration of a year. . . . There seems to have been no reason why betrothed persons should not live together as man and wife without a subsequent marriage ceremony. The children of such a union would be legitimate."⁴⁵ He concludes that according to the narrative of Matthew and Luke, the contemporary Jewish customs were followed out by Mary and Joseph.

In addition to this evidence from non-Catholic sources, we may state representative Catholic thought in the words of Holzmeister. "According to the opinion which we defend as certain the effect [of betrothal] differs completely from our espousals, which merely prepare for a future contract. For the Jews, the betrothal was the actual contract of marriage or *matrimonium ratum*, as Philo testifies, 'The betrothal has the force of matrimony.'"⁴⁶

The summaries of many other studies can be adduced to uphold this view that the betrothal of Joseph and Mary linked them in a valid marriage, which was later solemnized by the wedding ceremony. This conclusion is further confirmed by a sort of aprioristic argument proposed by Macabiau and modeled on reasoning of Suarez: The gospels make it clear that Jesus was considered the legitimate son of Mary and Joseph. Therefore, one would be prone to conclude that Jesus had been conceived in Mary at a time when genuine marriage rights were considered by the public to belong to His virginal parents.⁴⁷

In the light of the research upon which these opinions are based, it seems at the minimum highly probable that our Lady was the wife of St. Joseph at the moment when the Second Person of the Trinity took human nature within her virginal womb.

CHAPTER
NINE

ST. JOSEPH'S DOUBT

Matthew's three sentences referring to St. Joseph's hesitation concerning Mary have been the occasion for parallel hesitation among the interpreters of the gospel text in all Christian centuries. Intricate difficulties present themselves; and it would seem that the methods used to avoid these difficulties in each type of interpretation are themselves open to challenge as far as final proof is concerned.

The gospel text seems simple enough. "When Mary His mother had been betrothed to Joseph, she was found, before they came together, to be with child by the Holy Spirit. But Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wishing to expose her to

reproach, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit' " (Mt. 1:18-21).

The problems begin to multiply as soon as further examination of the text begins. How was Mary found to be with child? Did she herself tell Joseph, or did she wish him to know of her pregnancy by means of an emissary, or did he learn of the fact from public gossip? What is the reason for the evident emphatic connection between Joseph's justice and his decision to put Mary away privately? If Joseph wished to proceed with a divorce, then why "privately," for the private nature of his action would practically annul the purpose of the divorce, which was to make it possible for a woman to re-marry?

There are only two points on which all interpreters have agreed. First, Joseph decides to repudiate his espoused wife Mary because she is pregnant; and second, Joseph changes his mind as a result of the message of the angel. There is no doubt that the word used in the gospel is the technical term for divorce (*apoluein*, as in Mt. 5:31 ff. and 19:3 ff.). Although in making this further statement we are already adopting a partisan interpretation, it would seem that the only truth of which St. Joseph could be certain in this matter that was so full of perplexing factors was the knowledge that he was

not the natural father of Mary's child. Hence, as a just man he would feel obliged to divorce Mary since in conscience he could not appear to accept the paternity of her son.

As to the privacy of the divorce, this would indicate that Joseph intended to word its text in such a way that everything would be omitted which could possibly cause disgrace to Mary, especially the cause for the action. Such a document would then read, "I, Joseph, son of ---, declare my espoused, Mary, daughter of ---, as dismissed; and I return her freedom to her." ¹ Even with this knowledge of the nature of a private bill of divorce, we still have the problem that such a bill could not be completely private, for it had to be witnessed by one or two witnesses.

The method by which Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy has always been (and still remains) in doubt. Commentators have noted the sudden use of the passive voice, namely, that Mary "was found to be with child." St. Jerome thought that Joseph possessed practically the liberty of a husband whereby he learned of Mary's condition. But we are certain that no public shame was attached to Mary or later to Jesus. In all the pages of the gospel, the hatred of Christ's enemies manifests itself in all sorts of insults, among them being the charge that Jesus was of lowly origin. They never so much as hint that Jesus might have been conceived in adultery. How could Mary, the holiest of all God's creatures, have permitted the injustice to her

spouse of not revealing to him a fact which concerned him most intimately, yet which others might have noticed? On the other hand, if Mary felt that she should inform Joseph by means of a messenger such as her mother (as has been suggested by Gaechter³), the difficulty is in no way lessened. We can hardly countenance the interpretation that Mary would have confided to her mother the secret of the Incarnation which she would have felt obliged to keep hidden from her husband. The only conclusion that seems to us most logical is that our Lady considered her miraculous conception as a secret known only to God and not within her authority to divulge. God evidently had already manifested the secret to Mary's cousin Elizabeth at the time of Mary's Visitation (Lk. 1:44); what more logical conclusion for the handmaid of the Lord than to believe that God alone could make the same manifestation to Joseph if God saw fit to do so?

On Joseph's part, since the saint knew that he was not the natural father of Mary's child, only two possibilities existed to explain her pregnancy: Either the child was miraculous, or was the result of sin. Sometimes it has been suggested that Joseph should have or might have thought that Mary had been attacked and made pregnant against her will. This solution is out of the question in view of the law (Deut. 22:24-27) that a maiden or wife who was raped would be obliged to cry aloud in protest, and certainly in this case, to make it clear that such an attack had occurred.

These are preliminary notions which we will find are by no means of exclusively modern origin. Among the Fathers of the Church they often recurred in one form or other. The opinions of the Fathers varied greatly in the discussion of St. Joseph's doubt. A very small minority interpreted the doubt in an unfavorable light and attributed to Joseph sentiments of rage, jealousy, incredulity, and revenge. The majority of the commentators discerned exalted nobility of character, deep prudence, and unswerving zeal for justice in Joseph's conduct. Beyond this point, however, agreement ceased to exist.

In broad outline there were three schools of thought. These are still the only three possibilities today. Even the most modern interpretations will always reduce to one of these approaches: At one extreme is the view that Joseph believed Mary had become pregnant by adultery. At the other extreme, Joseph is thought to have guessed or had been informed of the fact of the miraculous conception. Representing the middle and by far the most popularly accepted opinion is the belief that Joseph simply did not know what to do; he could not believe that Mary had sinned, he knew she was pregnant and not by him, and he was left in utter perplexity by the evidence at his disposal. This has always seemed most acceptable to the majority because it avoids the flaws in the reasoning of the other two extremes. If Joseph knew for certain that Mary had been guilty of adultery, then why did he hesitate in

giving her the divorce required by law? If somehow he learned that her child was miraculous, then what sort of false humility can be alleged to justify his wishing to put Mary away, "not wishing to expose her to reproach"?

Many if not most of the Fathers of the Church favored the hypothesis that in Joseph's opinion Mary had become pregnant through adultery or rape. ⁴ This was the view put forward by the apocrypha, whose influence had at least a remote effect in determining the opinions of some of the ecclesiastical writers. Great Fathers, however, did arrive at the opinion independently. According to the law of Moses (Deut. 22:20 ff.)—so it was believed—Joseph was obliged to denounce Mary to the judges as an adulteress worthy of stoning. In some way or other he hoped to obey the law by dismissing Mary privately. By this merciful course he would spare her disgrace and punishment even at the cost of renouncing his right to observe the literal prescription of the law, but he would not cease to be a just man inasmuch as he would be exercising the more perfect virtues of mercy and self-control. Joseph cannot be blamed for suspecting Mary, for (according to this opinion) external indications offered him evidence he could not refuse to accept. With unbounded magnanimity and compassion he wished to dismiss his spouse privately. His love of chastity prevented him from keeping her.

Interpreting Joseph's doubt in this light, both Augustine and John Chrysostom describe Joseph's

nobility in terms of sincere admiration. "The husband was indeed perturbed, but the just man did not rage. He was so just that on the one hand he was unwilling to keep an adulteress; on the other, he would not expose her to punishment. Therefore, he wished to put her away privately. Consider his untainted justice. Many men forgive adulterous wives out of carnal love, wishing to have them even if adulterous; but this just man does not wish to have her. Therefore, he does not love her carnally. Yet he does not wish to punish her. Consequently, he mercifully spares her. What type of person is this just man? Deservedly, indeed, was he chosen as a witness of his wife's virginity." ⁵

John Chrysostom eulogizes St. Joseph at even greater length. "Since he was just, that is merciful and self-controlled, he wished to dismiss her privately. Not only was he reluctant to punish her; but he would not even deliver her up. Have you ever seen anyone who so loves wisdom and who is free from all tyrannical bent? He was so free from (jealousy) this plague of the soul, that he refused to inflict pain on the virgin even in the slightest degree. Accordingly, since it seemed that by law he was no longer permitted to keep her, and since it appeared that to denounce her and to bring her to trial was of necessity to condemn her to death, he chose neither course but began to elevate himself above the law. For with the coming of grace, many prophetic types of this sublime institution were to appear. Just as the sun, not yet showing its rays,

nevertheless illumines the zenith of the celestial vault from on high, so did Christ, who was about to emerge from the womb, illumine the whole world before His actual appearance.

“Do you perceive the moderation of this man? He did not chastise, he mentioned the affair to no one, not even to her who was under suspicion, but he debated the matter with himself, seeking to hide from the virgin the reason for separation. Nor did he say that he wished to cast her off, but rather to send her away, so kind and self-controlled was he. While he was pondering over all this, the angel appeared to him in sleep. And why not openly, in the manner that he appeared to the shepherds and to Zachary as well as to the Virgin? This man was so ready to believe that he did not require such a manifestation.”⁶

These judgments of Joseph's character are a far cry from the impression given by the apocrypha, in a tale equally unworthy of both Mary and Joseph. We should note that Mary is described as claiming *on oath* that she is unaware of the reason why she is pregnant! In the words of the *Proto-evangel of James*, “Behold, Joseph came back from his building, and entering into his house, he discovered that she was big with child. And he smote his face and threw himself on the ground upon the sackcloth, and wept bitterly, saying: ‘With what face shall I look upon the Lord my God? And what prayer shall I make about this maiden? Because I received her a virgin out of the temple of the Lord, and I have not watched over her. Who is it that

has hunted me [her?] down? Who has done this evil thing in my house, and defiled the virgin? For just as Adam was in the hour of his singing praise, and the serpent came, and found Eve alone, and completely deceived her, so it has happened to me also! And Joseph stood up from the sackcloth, and called Mary and said to her: 'O thou who hast been cared for by God, why hast thou done this, and forgotten the Lord thy God? Why hast thou brought low thy soul, thou that wast brought up in the holy of holies, and that didst receive food from the hand of an angel?' And she wept bitterly, saying, 'I am innocent, and have known no man.' And Joseph said to her, 'Whence then is that which is in thy womb?' And she said, 'As the Lord my God liveth, I do not know whence it is to me.' " 7

Suarez, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, presents a terse analysis of patristic opinion. "We are correct," he says, "in judging that Joseph was unwilling to dismiss Mary because he was a just man. The Fathers offer two explanations of this. First, when Joseph saw the evident effect of the conception, he was convinced that adultery had been committed and that he had been wronged. To bear this wrong patiently and without revelation, denunciation, and infamy was an act of great justice. However, lest he appear to consent to sin, he wished to put Mary away privately.

"There is a second explanation. Joseph was unable to judge or suspect the Virgin harshly. Influenced in one direction by the factual evidence he

perceived, but swayed in the other by the exalted sanctity of the Virgin as he knew it from experience, he withheld all judgment because he was overwhelmed by a kind of stupefaction and great wonder. It was indeed a consummate act of justice not to be carried out of himself in so grave a matter, nor to be blinded by extreme passion or feeling. He persuaded himself that the event could have occurred without sin. Consequently, he was unwilling to expose Mary; but since for him nothing in the matter was sufficiently clear, he believed that it pertained to justice to be separated from such a woman and to dismiss her in secret.”⁸

As we have already mentioned, this second interpretation avoids the flaws in the first line of reasoning which some of the later writers noticed and which led to the adoption of the “perplexed doubt” by most commentators. If Joseph the just knew for certain that Mary was guilty of adultery, he would have had no fear nor cause for fear in denouncing her. His justice would have impelled him to obey the legal prescriptions most faithfully, even at the expense of his own feelings of mercy. (We should add parenthetically that it is seriously doubted in our own time whether the penalty of stoning for adultery was actually carried out at the time of Christ.) Moreover, it was hardly consonant with Mary’s purity that the guardian and the very witness of her chastity would have ever harbored a definite evil suspicion of her. Joseph, if certain, would have fulfilled the law; he would have had no

right to exempt himself from its clear regulation. But Joseph hesitated and was in extreme doubt about his obligation. *Therefore*, Joseph could not have been convinced that Mary had been unfaithful to him and to God. His perplexity indicates the force of his conviction that our Lady was immaculate.

On this score the unknown author of a commentary incorrectly ascribed to John Chrysostom deserts the first and earliest opinion of Joseph's doubt and soars into eloquent words of praise. "O inestimable tribute to Mary! Joseph believed in her chastity more than in her womb, in grace more than in nature! He plainly saw the conception, and he was incapable of suspecting fornication. He believed that it was more possible for a woman to conceive without a man than for Mary to be able to sin." ⁹

St. Jerome, too, discerns the proof of Mary's fidelity in Joseph's irresolute conduct. "This is evidence for Mary, that Joseph, knowing Mary's chastity and wondering at what had occurred, concealed in silence the mystery he did not fathom." ¹⁰

In some writers of the early centuries Joseph's hesitancy found a third explanation that was particularly favored in the Middle Ages. In this opinion both Mary's purity and Joseph's heroic virtue are unquestioned. The reason for his wish to be separated from Mary is placed in his deep humility and in his self-effacement before the overwhelming mystery of the Incarnation. This explanation seems

less practical and far less in accordance with the gospel narrative, but it certainly redounds to the praise of St. Joseph.

One of its earliest forms appears in the fourth-century homily ascribed to St. Basil. "Joseph discovered both Mary's pregnancy and its cause, namely, that it was of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he feared to be called the husband of such a wife, and wished to put her away privately since he did not dare to reveal what had taken place in her. Yet because he was just, he desired a revelation of the mystery." ¹¹

The homily incorrectly attributed to Origen and in great favor in the Western Church for many centuries describes Joseph's feelings tenderly. "Joseph was just, and the Virgin was immaculate; but when he wished to put her away, this happened from the fact that he recognized in her the power of a miracle and a vast mystery which he held himself unworthy to approach. Humbling himself therefore before so great and ineffable a phenomenon, he sought to retire, just as St. Peter humbled himself before the Lord and said, 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man,' and as the ruler confessed who sent word to the Lord, 'I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, for I have considered myself not even worthy to come to Thee,' or as St. Elizabeth said to the most blessed Virgin, 'And how have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' In like manner did the just man Joseph humble and look to himself and

fear to enter into a union with such exalted holiness.”¹² Since this homily was for centuries a part of the liturgy for the Vigil of Christmas, these thoughts endured down through the Middle Ages and became deeply entrenched in pious tradition concerning St. Joseph. St. Bernard of Clairvaux took them up and lent the weight of his authority to make them seem a most plausible interpretation.

In our own day two highly respected scholars have proposed their own versions of St. Joseph's doubt, which in both cases can be reduced to this opinion that Joseph wished to withdraw from the marriage with our Lady because of humility and a sense of unworthiness on his part. In 1957 Karl Rahner, S.J., proposed an explanation of the events in Mt. 1:18-25, particularly the import of the phrase, “She was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.” Some of the key phrases in his approach are the following:

(a) “Everyone agrees that the phrase, ‘is found,’ means that Joseph noticed or discovered the pregnancy.”

(b) “Suppose we assume that the text means what it says. Joseph notices Mary's condition and at his question is informed by Mary of the heavenly cause of this event.”

(c) “It is therefore completely arbitrary to interpret verse 20 to mean that Joseph could not have known about the divine origin of the Child before the dream.”

(d) "What other course would suggest itself but that he consider himself out of place in this holy drama? When Joseph learned from Mary what great things God had done in her, he must have thought immediately: 'I have no further claim on my spouse; heaven has claimed this girl; I must retire from the scene if I am a just man.' " ¹³

Unfortunately for Rahner's position, his fundamental assumptions do not necessarily call for acceptance. The phrase, "Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit," by no means has to receive the supposedly universal interpretation which Rahner claims for it, namely, that Joseph himself discovered Mary's pregnancy. Joseph might just as easily have been informed by Mary or by her representative.

Another assumption that is essential in the Rahner theory is that Mary herself tells Joseph that Jesus is of the Holy Spirit. Against this is the fact of the angel's message to Joseph, "Fear not to take to thyself Mary thy wife," with the addition, "for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:20). Rahner, claiming that this is the angelic confirmation of what Joseph already knew, asks the rhetorical question, "Would a second witness in such a question that demands so much of our faith be superfluous and without meaning? Hardly!" Our answer is that a second witness would be decidedly superfluous. If Joseph the just man would not have believed what his wife, the Mother of God, told him,

can we believe that a man with such a lack of faith in Mary would have believed an angel? The whole presumption, we fear, implies an odious lack of trust in our Lady.

Worst of all, the Rahner theory actually ends up in destroying the foundation of St. Joseph's fatherhood even while it sincerely professes to increase the appreciation of Joseph's dignity. Instead of making Joseph father of Jesus because Jesus is the miraculous fruit of the marriage, this would make him "father" only extrinsically, i.e., because of the command of the angel to take Mary into his home, not because Mary had already been his espoused wife.

Another modern attempt to solve the problems concerning Joseph's doubt comes from the pen of Xavier Leon-Dufour, S.J. According to Leon-Dufour's thought, the usual translation of the gospel message is misleading if not false in its implication. Presenting it in the following form, he would re-translate the words of the angel in Mt. 1:20 thus, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take to yourself Mary your wife, for no doubt it is true [i.e., "on the score that it is true"] that what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; but she will bring forth a son to whom you will give the name of Jesus."

Leon-Dufour cannot accept the middle-ground opinion of Joseph's hesitancy. He thinks of Joseph as certain either of Mary's guilt or of her innocence. If Joseph is supposedly certain of Mary's guilt, then why would he wish to arrange for the *private*

divorce? If Joseph is supposedly certain of Mary's innocence, then we can approve of his kindness in not enforcing the law, but we cannot approve of his justice, and this would seem to contradict the gospel testimony to Joseph's justice. Accordingly (just as Basil, Ephrem, Pseudo-Origen, and Bernard thought), the only conclusion remaining for Joseph must have been that Mary's child was miraculous. The difficulty then concerns the words of the angel to Joseph. Are these words the first revelation to Joseph of the mystery of Mary? Or are they an unnecessary second "confirmation"? Or should we not rather deny—as Leon-Dufour denies—that they are any revelation at all? In such a case, they would merely refer to a fact of which Joseph is already aware, namely, the miraculous origin of Jesus in Mary. Joseph in his humility wishes to withdraw from the scene. The angel accordingly admonishes him not to withdraw *on this score* of his surmise of the miraculous conception.

As for the "divorce" mentioned in Matthew, Leon-Dufour wonders whether this word would have for Joseph a sense of freeing Mary for God and not for another man. His reason for such a query lies in the belief that the *privacy* of Joseph's intended plan would nullify the legal purpose of freeing the divorced woman for remarriage.¹⁴ Joseph's justice, mentioned so explicitly in Matthew's text as some sort of occasion or cause for Joseph's conduct, would *not*, therefore, be manifested in his zeal

to obey the law concerning adultery; *nor* in his kindness in relaxing the rigors of the law; *nor* in the justice which he owed to an innocent woman. It *would* be shown in the fact that Joseph did not wish to appear to be the natural father of a divine child. ¹⁵

None the less, despite the scholarship and careful thought behind this and the preceding Rahner theory, we believe that neither of them has succeeded in dislodging the common opinion from its place of preference. Two difficulties continue to recur in the Leon-Dufour hypothesis, which are to be added to the other problems we mentioned concerning the Rahner theory. First, if Joseph wishes to withdraw from Mary out of a sense of humility, then why does Matthew tell us that Joseph as a just man planned to give her a private divorce *because he did not wish to expose her to reproach*? Closely connected to this obstacle is the second problem of postulating a false, cowardly humility in St. Joseph. Here is a man who suddenly (in the supposition) finds that his wife is the mother of the Messiah by divine intervention. No matter how humble and unworthy such a husband would be, can we claim that a man of such humility would be also a man of such callous, imprudent and ultimately selfish zeal as to divorce an espoused wife, and to let her shift for herself? Would not his love lead him to offer himself to her as her slave of slaves, as far as his respect for her is concerned; but also as her most devoted protector and guardian, while recognizing inwardly in God's sight that he was profoundly un-

worthy in every cell of his body to be such a guardian and protector? All these references to Joseph's humility seem to fail to consider Joseph's love of God and his love of Mary. For Joseph to cast Mary off, in a civilization where the single woman had no formal position as such, would seem to be a form of heartlessness which all the motives of apparent humility could never justify.

To us, therefore, the correct interpretation of St. Joseph's doubt appears to lie in neither of the two extreme solutions. Joseph never doubted Mary's purity, nor on the other hand did he learn of the supernatural mystery of Mary's conception until the angel revealed it to him. He could merely act on the knowledge he possessed—an unwavering conviction of our Lady's purity together with the knowledge of her approaching motherhood. Psychologically, he felt the opposing forces that we ourselves can feel in cases of extreme doubt: one or two principles are absolutely clear, but all else remains obscure. So in Joseph's case. He would have been absolutely certain that Mary had not sinned, but he was completely ignorant of whatever else had happened. Joseph hardly could have learned of Mary's condition from her external appearance. The virgin most prudent was the virgin most just. She would never have permitted an injustice to be perpetrated against her husband, in that he would not know she was pregnant, but others might have been able to notice the pregnancy before it came to his attention. But again, as we mentioned earlier, we do not know

and we have no way of deducing whether Mary herself did tell Joseph. It is merely suggested here as a possible answer that Mary did inform Joseph that she was pregnant, but that she felt unable to tell him the cause of her pregnancy, on the grounds that God had not indicated to her any authorization to share the secret of the Incarnation even with her husband.

But God sweetens a heavy burden with equally great and even greater consolation. There must have been an ocean of joy and peace that inundated the souls of Joseph and Mary after the angel appeared to Joseph and removed the harrowing anxiety with the words, "Do not be afraid, Joseph, Son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit."

PART IV

ST. JOSEPH'S FATHERHOOD

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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CHAPTER
TEN

THE GOSPEL TEXTS
AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Before considering the gospel texts insofar as they refer to St. Joseph as father of Jesus, it is imperative that we clarify the confused terminology referring to the concept of fatherhood. Little would be gained, so it seems, were we to analyze the saint's position regarding Jesus without determining phrases and words to describe it satisfactorily. This lack of consistent and adequate terminology regarding St. Joseph has contributed to the creation of thorny problems. Exactly what was Joseph's office with relation to our Lord? To say that he was father in no sense at all is incorrect since it contradicts the implicit and explicit testimony of the

gospels as well as commonly accepted interpretation. Yet the saint has also been called putative, adoptive, legal, and foster father; or father in the real sense, father in a full sense, matrimonial father, stepfather, spiritual father, virginal father, "not the real father." What judgment is to be passed on these titles, and how are they to be understood, and when may they be used?

Certainly we cannot agree with Macabiau in glossing over the need for this clarification, when in his own book he makes the following statement: "Everyone possesses a sufficient idea of fatherhood, and in the course of our demonstration it will become increasingly clear."¹ Evidently this author takes it for granted that his readers will have a clear concept not only of fatherhood in general, but also of the fatherhood belonging to St. Joseph.

It seems correct to assume that the popular concept rightly equates natural fatherhood with generation, but it does not seem correct to assume that analogous fatherhood will be rightly understood, particularly in the singular instance of St. Joseph, unless an author gives a scrupulously consistent explanation of his exact meaning. A misunderstanding of St. Joseph's fatherhood can easily give the impression of endangering such primary dogmas as the divine natural sonship of our Lord, and the perpetual virginity of our Lady. Actually, a right concept must veer to neither extreme, neither exaggerating Joseph's relationship in the direction of natural human fatherhood, nor reducing it

to a fraction of its reality, as an extrinsic title stripped of almost all its meaning. First of all, then, the concept should be correct; secondly, it ought to be expressed in terminology that is as unambiguous as possible. For the present we must discuss terminology in order to determine the wording that will be used throughout the following pages. Obviously, nothing can be done to control or to make consistent the terms adopted by various authors. In these circumstances the only logical choice is the usage that seems to be most common. It is imperative that our subsequent terminology be accepted according to the technical meaning given it at this point.

Usually, fatherhood in the *proper* (or *strict*) sense is limited to mean fatherhood by physical generation. Therefore, "fatherhood according to the proper sense" does not refer to St. Joseph. That is the wording also adopted here. Hence, the communication of nature by the father's generation of the son is understood to give to the parent *physical* fatherhood, *natural* fatherhood, and fatherhood *in the proper sense*. There exists, however, a mutual moral bond between father and son that arises out of physical generation. This bond can also be present in cases where physical generation has not taken place, and such cases are examples of fatherhood in an *analogous* and *improper* (or *wide*) sense, but still a true fatherhood in the moral order. The case of human adoption is an instance of fatherly love and care bestowed on a child who was not generated by his adoptive parent. God as Creator is our true Father in heaven. Souls in sanctifying grace

share in the true although adoptive sonship which God has bestowed. "Fatherhood in a true sense," then, does not necessarily mean "proper" fatherhood, as these examples of divine and human adoption sufficiently indicate. In all cases of "fatherhood in a true sense," *either* generation and its complementary moral bond are present, *or*, in the instances where generation has not occurred, at least a reasonably close similarity exists by reason of a moral bond of paternity. When even this bond is absent, then fatherhood does not deserve to be called "true." In such a case we are applying the word very figuratively, as to an inventor or artist with respect to the products which his genius created. Accordingly, we shall speak of St. Joseph's relationship to Jesus as a fatherhood in the improper sense, but nonetheless a true paternity in the moral order.

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The gospel texts which directly concern St. Joseph indicate that he is father of Jesus in some sense, although not physically. He first appears in the genealogy given by Matthew. Here he ends the list of the names mentioned in the ancestry of our Lord: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Mt. 1: 16). In the genealogy presented by Luke, the order is reversed. Joseph heads the list as it is traced back from Christ: "And Jesus Himself, when He began His work was about thirty years of age, being—as was supposed—the son of Joseph" (Lk. 3:23). Both

Matthew and Luke make it evident that Joseph is not the physical ancestor of Jesus; but their mention of the saint in their respective genealogies implies a juridical ancestry that can hardly be anything but paternal, for the heredity is evidently traced through one who is father in the sight of the law. Thus, the genealogies do not actually constitute the basis of a fatherhood of St. Joseph. Instead, they recognize a fatherhood as already existing.

Joseph's authority as father is marked out even more clearly. Like Mary, who is without any doubt the true mother of Jesus, the saint is told by the angel to impose the Child's name, and does so: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus" (Mt. 1:21); "he called His name Jesus" (Mt. 1:25); "His name was called Jesus" (Lk. 2:21). To name a child is certainly within the jurisdiction of the parent; hence, the parallel that appears between the parental authority of Mary, and the parental, and therefore paternal, authority of Joseph. The angel who appeared to Joseph recognized this jurisdiction of the saint. We might wonder whether the saint's jurisdiction began to exist only at the moment, conferred upon him, as it were, by the angel. The question cannot be answered immediately from the gospel text, but must await later treatment.

In addition to the imposition of Christ's name, the gospels show how Joseph governs the Child together with Mary: "They took Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord" (Lk. 2:22); "So

he [Joseph] arose, and took the Child and His mother by night and withdrew into Egypt So he arose and took the Child and His mother and went into the land of Israel . . . and being warned in a dream . . . he went and settled in a town called Nazareth" (Mt. 2:14, 21-23). The saint's position as superior is recognized by the angel: "An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph . . . being warned in a dream" (Mt. 2:13, 19, 22). Jesus pays obedience to Joseph just as He does to Mary: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Lk. 2:51). These various references to the authoritative position of St. Joseph lead to the conclusion that he exercises over Jesus a certain right as a father. Even if we had no further indication of his position, this authority could not appear other than paternal, due to Joseph's marriage with our Lady, who was the mother of our Lord.

Moreover, Joseph is called the father of Jesus not only by the people, who are unaware of the miraculous conception of Jesus, but also by Luke and by Mary herself, both of whom fully realized that Joseph had no part in the physical procreation of Jesus. Joseph's neighbors had questioned, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Mt. 13:55) "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (Jn. 6:42) "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Lk. 4:22) The disciples gave Christ the same title: "We have found . . . Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth" (Jn. 1:45). Yet Luke repeatedly calls Jo-

seph parent and father: "His parents brought in the Child Jesus" (Lk. 2:27); His father and mother were marvelling" (Lk. 2:33); "His parents were wont to go every year to Jerusalem" (Lk. 2:41); "The boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it" (Lk. 2:43). Finally, we have the words of Mary herself, so pregnant with meaning: "Son, why has thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have been seeking Thee sorrowing" (Lk. 2:48).

In these passages Luke's use of the words "parent" and "father" might conceivably be explained as an accommodation to public opinion, but one looks in vain for the slightest hint of such intention on his part. However, if by means of tradition we determine Luke's usage from the parallel usage of Mary, we arrive at the conclusion that the evangelist considered Joseph as father of Jesus in some true sense short only of natural fatherhood.

Mary's linking of St. Joseph with herself as "Thy father and I" affords the strongest evidence. Mary addressed Jesus as His true mother, using words both of love and of authority. In doing this she made it clear that she was also speaking for St. Joseph. She could just as easily have referred to her own sorrow alone, not mentioning the sorrow of Joseph. Of all mortals she knew that the saint was not the natural father of her son, yet she appealed to Jesus to realize the grief not only of her mother's heart but the grief to Christ's "father"—

Joseph—as well. In her gentle remonstrance she included the saint's paternal rights as well as her own. The phrasing of her question is most evident: "Son, why hast thou done so to *us*?" Because of the loss of the Child, Joseph and she have been sorrowing together. We note that Jesus thereupon ceded to Mary's entreaty at once, first citing His prior duty to His Father in heaven, but then showing submission to His father on earth as well. This He did by "going down" with His "parents" and being "subject to them."

Do these considerations suggest a "fatherhood by right of marriage"? In other words, would Mary have linked Joseph's name so intimately with her own name if Joseph had been merely a foster father and merely the father of Jesus by law? Our Lady, knowing fully that Joseph did not generate Jesus, accorded him the respect that belongs to a true father. Hence, it might seem justifiable to look for a deeper basis of Joseph's relationship to Jesus. Since physical generation is absent, a moral bond of fatherhood might have arisen from the marriage that joined St. Joseph and Christ's virgin mother. However, this conclusion of "fatherhood by right of marriage" does not seem altogether warranted if we interpret the gospel texts apart from the analysis made of them by later tradition. Certainly, "fatherhood by right of marriage" is founded on scriptural evidence; but it remains an open question whether one would arrive at this conclusion solely from reading the gospel texts.

These, then represent all the direct gospel references to St. Joseph's fatherhood. If we accept them together with the texts concerning the marriage, we can summarize their content as follows:

(a) Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary in a genuine marriage, is not the natural father of Jesus.

(b) Joseph is thought by the people to be the natural father of Jesus, and in this way he shields Christ from being suspected as illegitimate. He also protects Mary from being suspected of fornication. However, the fact that in the public estimation the saint was the physical father of our Lord does not of itself give Joseph any sort of true fatherly relationship to Jesus. It merely shows that he served a noble purpose in protecting the reputation of mother and son.

(c) According to the custom of the times, the genealogy is traced through the father, not through the mother of Jesus. This indicates that legally Joseph is the direct ancestor of Christ, so that the hereditary rights of the saint would pass to Jesus. According to the presupposition Joseph is the legal father of our Lord.

(d) By his actions Joseph protects and supports both Mary and Jesus. He is the head of their household, and his authority is recognized as such.

(e) Is Joseph the father of Jesus in some additional way short of physical paternity? Both Luke and Mary by their words imply a reality more profound than that of a fatherhood exclusively according to law and hereditary right, or according to care,

protection, and love of Jesus—so it might seem. If so, the gospel account would implicitly suppose a basic fatherly relationship that could come to St. Joseph only through his marriage. Perhaps it is best to say that *all* the gospel texts concerning Joseph's fatherly position, in addition to the texts concerning the valid marriage, might constitute, taken together, an implicit teaching of "fatherhood by right of marriage."

CHAPTER
ELEVEN

PATRISTIC REFERENCES
TO THE FATHERHOOD

What the Fathers of the Church have to say concerning St. Joseph can roughly be classified under three headings: Joseph's personal virtue, his position with respect to our Lady, and his position with respect to our Lord. For the present, we are primarily interested in the last and probably least-known topic—the Fathers' opinion of the relationship between Joseph and Jesus. We should note, however, that many of the texts concerning Joseph's marriage also refer in some way or other to Joseph's fatherhood, and vice versa. Hence, some of the texts that will follow in these pages are repeated from earlier quotations where they appeared in reference

to the marriage. And again, reciprocally the following texts on the fatherhood can in most cases be used as additional evidence for the Fathers' opinions concerning the marriage, even though they were not used in Chapter 8 because they might have been needlessly repetitive in an argument already well established.

One preliminary question always recurs concerning the paucity of these references of the Fathers to St. Joseph. Why are they so relatively few? The answer is found in the unusual nature of the history of the devotion to the saint. If the devotion had developed as other devotions in the Church have done, we would undoubtedly have been provided with copious material from patristic times. But in actual fact strong reasons existed which compelled an almost unbroken silence, relatively speaking, on the part of the Fathers. We must briefly consider these reasons here if we are to evaluate properly the scant attention which St. Joseph received in patristic times.

It was, of course, the vocation of Joseph to protect the honor of Mary and of Jesus, and to support them during the years which preceded the public life of our Lord. When the time came for Jesus to begin His teaching before the eyes of the world, Joseph had to fade into the background. If Joseph had been given special prominence, Jesus in His public life would have experienced additional difficulty in proving that His divine sonship was natural sonship. Therefore, according to the plans

of God, Joseph had to remain obscure. The Saint's position as the supposed natural father of Jesus possessed a usefulness that was eventually outlived.

If this was the situation during the years of our Lord's apostolate, the same situation persisted perhaps to a greater extent during the first five hundred years of the Church. Implicitly, it seems, the Fathers felt that Joseph's singular relationship to Jesus could not be emphasized without danger to the dogmas of the faith. However, two more reasons for the Fathers' reticence also existed, although these were not equally cogent. The early Church was a church of martyrs, and except for the veneration of the Blessed Virgin, the martyrs were the ones who received religious honors from the faithful. Moreover, the pressures from contemporary heresies attacked the bed-rock doctrines of Christianity: the divinity of Christ, and the true nature of the Trinity. All the energies of the Fathers were absorbed in warding off these onslaughts against the very core of the Faith. To use a comparison, there could be no thought of guarding St. Joseph, the ornate frame of the portrait, as long as the safety was threatened of Jesus Christ and of our Lady, the persons who constituted the priceless masterpiece itself. Nevertheless, we must remember that in common with the faithful of all ages and of all places in the Church, the Fathers as a group never refused to grant Joseph his place as "husband" of Mary and "father" of Jesus; but Joseph's position

was rarely singled out. For many centuries the danger seemed ever present that emphasis on St. Joseph would imperil the dogmas of Mary's perpetual virginity and of the divine origin of Jesus.

In Chapter 8 we mentioned a warning that the words of the Fathers concerning Joseph's marriage should not necessarily be taken at their face value, if the context dictated otherwise. The reasons given there for these patristic comments on the marriage are the same reasons for a parallel caution concerning statements of the Fathers concerning St. Joseph's relationship to Jesus. In each case we must think of the intention of the particular writer: Is this man attempting to analyze the exact position of St. Joseph as father of Jesus, or is he pursuing a different course—that of making sure that no physical human fatherhood is ascribed to the saint? The parallel drawn between the Fathers' treatment of Joseph's marriage and their treatment of Joseph's fatherhood can afford a new norm for interpreting these references to the fatherhood at their actual value. Hence, an explicit defense of Joseph's paternal position, rare as it may be, should mean much more than several incidental comments that might be thought to diminish its meaning and its content. Particularly less significant are negations of Joseph's position which are uttered in the heat of polemics against heretical insinuations that Mary and Joseph together were the natural parents of Jesus.

Origen (*254)

The picture of St. Joseph presented in the centuries of the nascent Church is indefinite and scanty. It changes somewhat for the better when we page through the extensive works of Origen. Since Origen was among the first to subject scripture to a systematic investigation, we would logically expect that certain scriptural texts concerning St. Joseph would give him occasion for comment. In speaking of Paul's epistle to the Romans, Origen refers to the gospel genealogies and thence to Joseph. He particularly lingers on the difficulty that Joseph *appeared* to be the natural father of Jesus and in accordance with the trend of the Alexandrian school of exegesis adds, "For us, however, these [words of the gospel] are rather to be understood in a spiritual or allegorical sense according to which there is no difficulty even in the fact that Joseph is called father, since he is not His father at all."¹

Our chief obstacle to an accurate analysis here is the "poor translation of Rufinus"²—our only vehicle of Origen's thought. Nonetheless, it would seem that Origen is thinking only of denying natural fatherhood to St. Joseph without entering into the question further. This supposition is confirmed by the comparison which Origen straightway makes. The genealogy offered by Matthew, he says, contradicts the Fourth Book of Kings,³ for it ascribes Ozias as a son of Joram, and it omits three intermediary generations. Accordingly, "It is enough for

us to reply to our adversaries that just as Jesus is called the son of Joseph, by whom He was not generated; and just as Ozias was said to be begotten of Joram, of whom he was not begotten, so also Christ can be accepted as of the seed of David according to the flesh.”⁴ Origen’s parallel is quite evident. Just as Joram is the juridical father of Ozias, so is St. Joseph the legal father of Jesus. In both these instances physical generation has not taken place.

Elsewhere Origen emphasizes the fact that Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus, for any man who thinks that Jesus is born of Joseph and Mary has lost the faith.⁵ His reason is transparent. He is arguing against heresy, and his effort is to deny any physical human paternity of Christ, just as his doctrine concerning the espousal of our Lady is directed to safeguard her virginity and her reputation.⁶ He himself states that in order to protect our Lady, the “brethren of the Lord” (as we have noted earlier) are by some ascribed to Joseph as sons of a former marriage.⁷

It is probable that Origen was the first to call Joseph “foster father,” on the grounds that the saint reared our Lord. He wrote, “What reason was there that (the Holy Spirit) should call him father who was not the father? Whoever is satisfied with a simple explanation says, ‘The Holy Spirit honored him with the title of father because he supported the Savior.’ But if something more profound is to be suggested, we will say: ‘Since the genealogy

traced the ancestry of Joseph from David, in order that it might not seem meaningless in coming down to Joseph, since Joseph did not generate the Savior, and in order that it might find a suitable explanation, he is called the father of the Lord.'”⁸

If we were to judge by this comment alone, Origen does not look on the gospels as indicating a legal fatherhood of St. Joseph. He seems to think that the saint's fatherhood is mentioned merely in order to coincide with the fact that Joseph is listed as one of Christ's juridical ancestors. Nonetheless, contrary to such an interpretation, the parallel which Origen drew between Joseph and Joram shows, as previously remarked, that he does consider some sort of legal fatherhood as the basis for Joseph's inclusion in the genealogy of Christ.

Ephrem (*379)

St. Ephrem, the Syrian poet and Doctor of the Church, offers numerous comments on the fatherhood which deserve much wider notice than they have received. Probably because he was as a Syrian out of the traditions of the Latin and Greek Fathers, he has been coming into his own much later than the other Fathers of his times. Bover finds in Ephrem two series of ideas which, as we shall see, appear concurrently:

(a) Jesus is the natural Son of the Eternal Father, but a fatherhood more noble and true than that of an ordinary adoptive father belongs to St. Joseph.

(b) The juridical descent from David, and consequently the dignity of Christ Jesus as a member of this kingly line are transmitted through St. Joseph in his capacity as father. ⁹

We must, therefore, study Ephrem's contributions as a whole, rather than analyze them piecemeal, for each of them presents the same general concept of St. Joseph in varying detail. Thus, in the virginal conception of our Lord, Ephrem says, Christ was received by Mary as her own son; Joseph's relationship to our Lord comes through Mary: "For if otherwise, she would have been a nurse and not His mother; the caretaker of one entrusted to her charge, and not the source of that most exalted procreation of a son. The gospel calls her mother, and not a nurse. But it also calls Joseph father, although he had no part in that generation. For not because of Christ is he called father, but because of the Virgin, lest she be thought to have conceived by fornication, as the Jews dared to say." ¹⁰

This is still a very incomplete picture of the fatherhood. Ephrem says that Joseph is not called father of Christ because he generated Him. Instead, the saint's position as putative father protected Mary, and, of course, protected Jesus as well. But was the fatherhood merely putative? Or was even Joseph's union with our Lady, by which he shielded her, a true marriage? Could it simply have been *thought* to be a marriage? Here Ephrem carries his thought further, in a passage we have already seen in connection with the genuinity of the marriage:

“A name does not impart a reality, for we ourselves frequently call men fathers who are not indeed progenitors but are outstanding for their advanced age. On the contrary, reality itself gave Joseph his name . . . because the espousal pledges of the Virgin and of Joseph brought about their name as spouses and also effected that he who had not generated should be called father.”¹¹

The union of Joseph and Mary can hardly, then, be considered merely a putative marriage, and parallel to this logic, Ephrem teaches that the fatherhood is far more than merely putative. The simple title of father would indicate, not create, a paternal relationship. Ephrem therefore sees clearly that some underlying reason had to exist to *make* Joseph a father, so that the saint could be *called* father of Jesus even though he did not generate our Lord. Hence, he says, “the espousal pledges . . . effected that he who had not generated should be called father.”

Ephrem is original in applying the simile of the palm tree to typify Joseph’s part in the Incarnation—a comparison that will be adopted many centuries later by St. Francis de Sales. Ephrem’s idea is based on the legend that male palms are said to make female palm trees fruitful not by contact or by sharing of their substance, but by their mere shadow. “Thus, in the same way that they are called fathers although they do not generate, so is Joseph called father although he is not the husband of the Virgin.”¹² Actually, this is an implicit description of

how Joseph cooperated in the Incarnation. Like the palm tree's shadow, Joseph's "shadow" was necessary in God's plans. By the parallel between "palms do not generate" and Joseph as "husband," Ephrem is not so much denying the existence of the marriage but is rather reasserting the fact that Joseph did not have conjugal relations with our Lady.

In another text he further indicates his concept of the fatherhood in words he gives to Mary as she addresses her Lord. Joseph is not the physical father; nonetheless, due to his marriage he is linked to Mary and to Jesus as their protector. In the words of Mary, Ephrem says, "I do not understand by what name I should address You, O Son of the Living One; for I would not dare to call You the son of Joseph. My ear shrinks from the sound, and in truth You are not his blood. On the other hand, it is not safe for me to suppress the name of him to whom I am espoused."¹³

If we can rely on the translation from the Syriac, Ephrem on one occasion uses the term "adoptive father" to describe St. Joseph.¹⁴ Much more striking, and incidentally, theologically correct, is his phrase, "father of God," occurring in a recently discovered commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. "Shmavon the Zealot is by Matthew and Mark called Simon the Cananean. Perhaps in Hebrew he was called literally zealot; and it is affirmed by many that he was son of Joseph, the father of God, and brother of the Lord."¹⁵ This phrase, "father of God," follows the rules of the *communi-*

catio idiomatum—a “sharing of properties” which consists in this: Divine properties are predicated of Christ designated by a name taken from His human nature (as, for example, “This man Jesus is Creator of the world”); and human properties are predicated of Christ designated by a name taken from His divine nature (as, for instance, “God died on the cross on Calvary at three o’clock,” or “Mary is the Mother of God” because she is the mother of Him who is God). As a result, there are attributed to the one and same Christ both human and divine qualities. It is a sage caution that this usage should not be unduly extended concerning St. Joseph’s fatherhood, since there is a danger that it might be misunderstood as a fatherhood in the proper sense. Nonetheless, taken with the ensemble of Ephrem’s thought, this use of the *communicatio idiomatum* is certainly justified and prudent. It shows us that the Syrian Doctor considered Joseph as father of Christ in some true sense, even though analogous and improper; but since Jesus is God, therefore, Joseph is “father of God” in this analogous wide sense.

In our concluding texts we see how Ephrem repeatedly bases the existence of the fatherhood on the fact of the marriage and on the legal ancestry which St. Joseph possessed, as the gospel genealogies describe it. The legal fatherhood appears more clearly in these words which Ephrem represents Joseph as saying: “Who has made me worthy of so tremendous an honor that the Son of the Most High should be a son to me? David my forefather bore a

diadem; but I, thrown down from that honor, have come upon utmost contempt; and him whom lineage destined to be a king, chance has made a carpenter. But now the crown that was snatched away has returned after Thou, the King of kings, hast come into my arms.”¹⁶

In another sermon Ephrem pursues the same thought, discussing a true parenthood since Joseph is said to have a “child without his seed,” who was “also” the child of Mary the Virgin. Logically, we would think, Ephrem is juxtaposing the parenthood of Mary with that of Joseph although on different levels. In Ephrem’s words, “Joseph the son of David was espoused to a daughter of David, from whom he had a child without his seed. This child was also the child of Mary, although she never knew man; and thus it was that from each spouse their tribe was enriched with the most august offspring who is fitly named the Son of David in the praiseworthy genealogy of kings.”¹⁷

“A son of Joseph was born without Joseph, who was at one and the same time a son of David and a father.”¹⁸

“When Moses [sic] came to speak of this sublime mystery, he called the betrothed virgin spouse by the name of wife; but he called her spouse, who conscientiously abstained from her, a husband lest anyone should think that the line of David had become extinct. Without a husband how could it have happened that Christ be considered a son of David? That is why it was fitting for the spouse of the Vir-

gin to bear the person of a husband. The Lord Himself declared that He was born of the ancestry of David when He did not refuse to be called his son.”¹⁹

It seems justifiable, then, to discern the following ideas in Ephrem’s references to St. Joseph:

(a) Despite a reluctant use of the words “husband” and “father” at times when they might bear a possible connotation against Mary’s virginity and our Lord’s divine sonship, Ephrem attributes to St. Joseph the position of a true father.

(b) Joseph receives his position by reason of his marriage to our Lady.

(c) Joseph serves and protects Jesus, and legally is father of the Child. The juridical kingly ancestry of Christ is traced directly through him.

Ambrose (*397)

Ambrose, a contemporary of Ephrem, does not specifically discuss the fatherhood of St. Joseph, but is important, as we have seen, for his enunciation of classic principles concerning the marriage. One passage in particular concerns our study. From it we learn that Ambrose sees a close connection between Joseph’s marriage and Joseph’s fatherhood: “No one should be surprised at the text, ‘who was thought to be the son of Joseph.’ For rightly was this just a supposition, because by birth [Christ] was not [the son of Joseph]; but the supposition existed because Mary, who had brought Him forth, was espoused to ‘Joseph her husband.’”²⁰

John Chrysostom (*407)

Chrysostom is particularly notable for his long tributes to the faith, the justice, and the magnanimity of St. Joseph. His best known reference to the fatherhood occurs in the following passage, which he puts into the mouth of the angel addressing St. Joseph: "Mary will bring forth a son, and you will call His name Jesus. For you must not think that because He is of the Holy Spirit you are thereby excluded from co-operating in this plan. Even though you contributed nothing to His generation and the Virgin remained inviolate, nevertheless, what belongs to a father without destroying the dignity of virginity, that I bestow on you, that you name the Child. 'You indeed will name Him.' Even though He is not your physical offspring, nonetheless you will act as a father toward Him. Therefore, from the time of the imposition of His name, I straightway place you in close relationship to the Child." Certainly a wonderful tribute! Then Chrysostom himself adds, "Lest on the other hand anyone should conclude that he is the father, hear how accurately [the angel] sets forth what follows: 'She shall bring forth,' he says, 'a son'; he does not say, 'She shall bring forth to you,' but he leaves the matter undetermined, for she did not bring forth for him [Joseph], but for the entire world."²¹

Chrysostom's meaning is the easier to find because of the fact that he understands "father" exclusively in the proper or strict sense, connoting generation. The angel is said to confer on St. Joseph

the authority of a father, which is not incompatible with the virginity of *Mary*. (The question of St. Joseph's virginity is completely out of the discussion.) Again, in this text Jesus is not Joseph's son; Joseph is merely to act *like* a father toward our Lord; and no one is to think that he is the father. This consistency of Chrysostom's wording shows that he is excluding fatherhood only in the proper sense when he is speaking of the saint.

On the other hand, the angel is made to tell Joseph that he is intimately included in the Incarnation, and that he has been chosen by God to be a close co-operator in the work of the Redemption as it will be here begun with Christ's coming on this earth. Apart from physical generation, Joseph is to possess true paternal authority over Christ. It is in the interpretation of this idea that some exaggeration of Chrysostom's thought seems to have crept into the literature on the fatherhood of St. Joseph. Instead of saying that Chrysostom depicted Joseph as father in *some* respect short of natural fatherhood, writers have concluded that Joseph is said to be father in *every* respect compatible with the virginity of Mary and the divine natural sonship of Jesus. This interpretation seems to have originated with Bossuet in the seventeenth century: "It was, says Chrysostom, a plan of God to give to great St. Joseph 'all that which can belong to a father without damaging virginity.'" ²²

Even Michel's authoritative article on St. Joseph appears to have followed the lead of Bossuet

in translating Chrysostom's wording.²³ One can certainly defend the thesis that St. Joseph possessed all that belongs to a father outside the proper act of marriage; but it seems to be an undue extension of Chrysostom's language to say that Chrysostom attributed fatherhood to St. Joseph in *every* respect save that of physical generation. Such a doctrine does not seem to be expressed or even implied by him.

For example, we can readily perceive that Chrysostom's concept does not have the fulness we shall soon see in Augustine. He seems to place the foundation of Joseph's fatherhood on a positive precept of the angel acting as God's messenger. He is most clear, of course, in his grasp of the paternal duty and paternal right connected with the naming of Jesus by St. Joseph, but beyond this point he does not advance. Joseph is not pictured as an organic member of the Holy Family so that the angel might say that the Child was brought forth "to him" as well as to Mary. In fairness to Chrysostom we note that he is preoccupied with the idea that Christ has come for the whole world, and Mary has brought forth Christ in order to give Him to everyone, everywhere. Perhaps this emphasis on the universality of the Redemption means no derogation to St. Joseph's fatherhood, but the context would seem to indicate otherwise.

We believe, then, that according to Chrysostom, the angel confers on Joseph an extrinsic paternal authority, a fatherhood in some sense, signified by the divine mandate to name the child Jesus.

Jerome (*420)

The special contribution of Jerome is the defense of St. Joseph's virginity which we have already given on p. 93, which ties in with his explicit statement that Joseph's fatherly rights came to him because of the marriage. Jerome's pertinent expressions are in the following sentences: "You say that Mary did not remain a virgin. Even more do I claim that Joseph also was virginal through Mary in order that from a virginal marriage a virginal son might be born. For if the charge of fornication does not fall on this holy man . . . and if he was more a protector than a husband of Mary, whom he was thought to have [as his wife], it remains to assert that he who merited to be called the father of the Lord remained virginal with her." ²⁴

Joseph's marriage is not contested here when Jerome calls the saint "more a protector than a husband." As Aquinas says in reference to the passage, "Jerome uses the term 'husband' with respect to a consummated marriage." ²⁵ In context, Jerome is refuting the accusations of Helvidius against the perpetual virginity of our Lady. He is also contesting the apocryphal "ravings" in their claims that Joseph was a widower and father of many children. One sentence is of capital importance: "Joseph also was virginal through Mary in order that from a virginal marriage a virginal son may be born."

We might ask why Jerome describes the saint as virginal *through* Mary. There seems to be but one logical answer, implied in Jerome's thought.

According to the plan of God, Jesus was to be born of a virgin mother within marriage. Hence, such a marriage must have been virginal. Since Joseph was the husband in that marriage, he, too, was a virgin. Thus, whether in his role as Mary's husband or in his role as protector of Mary's virginity, Joseph was virginal *through* or *because of* our Lady.

Jerome's following words expertly condense the ultimate basis of St. Joseph's fatherhood: "in order that from a virginal marriage a virginal son might be born." This is the thought which Augustine, Aquinas, and Suarez will expand. In God's design Jesus was to have no human natural father, and the virginal marriage of Joseph and our Lady was essentially directed toward receiving and rearing Jesus Christ. In this manner Christ was given not only to Mary, the virgin wife and mother, but through her and through her marriage to Joseph, the virginal husband, as well. These ideas are not explicitly asserted by Jerome, but in general they seem to be implied and required by the full thought behind his words.

Finally, although he says nothing of an agreement between Joseph and Mary to live together virginally, Jerome's description of the saint's virginity as dependent on that of Mary at least suggests the idea brought forward by theologians of later centuries, that the saint's voluntary relinquishing of the use of his marriage rights made him truly cooperate in preparing with our Lady for Christ's coming into the world.

Augustine (*430)

Relatively so much has been written by St. Augustine on the subject of St. Joseph's fatherhood that one would be inclined to abridge and condense his thought. Yet Augustine's insight is so penetrating that the completeness of our discussion would be seriously damaged were we to neglect to bring forward his views in the detail which they deserve. It can be said in all justice that Augustine presents the entire doctrine on Joseph's fatherhood, although he does not develop it in full. The appreciation of St. Joseph in later centuries can always invoke the authority of this "greatest mind of the Western Church" who was so far ahead of his times in discerning the true position of St. Joseph.

The fact of the marriage is always for Augustine the foundation of the fatherhood of St. Joseph. We again quote his classic justification: "Every good of marriage was fulfilled in the parents of Christ: offspring, loyalty, and the sacrament. We recognize the offspring in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; the loyalty, in that no adultery occurred; and the sacrament [that is, the indissolubility]. because of no divorce. Only conjugal intercourse did not take place." ²⁶

No one should be surprised that Augustine points out at least two of the characteristics of a genuine marriage—loyalty and indissolubility—as they existed for Joseph and Mary. The striking fact is his calling attention to the third characteristic, the fruitfulness of an admittedly virginal union. He

does not merely say all marriages are oriented toward the propagation of the human race, and therefore that the marriage of Joseph and our Lady was *potentially* fruitful; he boldly and unhesitatingly asserts that this marriage was *actually* fruitful in the child Jesus Christ. Equivalently, Christ is the first of the three actual "goods" of this marriage, understanding "good" as a property or blessing. Augustine's reasoning at its fullest means that in the marriage of Joseph and our Lady, the divine Child somehow drew His origin from the union; otherwise, He would not be called its *bonum prolis*, its "good of offspring." However, since "conjugal intercourse did not take place," the origin of Jesus was influenced not indeed in the physical order but exclusively in the moral order. Augustine does not elaborate on the type of causality here involved. His wording sufficiently indicates that *God gave Jesus to this marriage*—namely, to Joseph as well as to Mary; to Joseph united to Mary; and to Joseph because of, and through, Mary. Joseph's position thus becomes that of a father in some sense or other. However because the conjugal relationship did not occur, his fatherhood does not exist in the physical order but in the moral order alone.

The same development of ideas recurs almost as a theme in Augustine's *Sermon 51*, which in great measure is devoted to the fatherhood of St. Joseph and represents the lengthiest treatment of the saint to be found among the Fathers of the Church. Augustine begins, "Here is another of [the heretics']

calumnies. 'Through Joseph,' they say, 'the generations of Christ are counted, and not through Mary. This should not have been through Joseph,' they say. Why not through Joseph? Was not Joseph Mary's husband? 'No,' they say. Who says so? For scripture says on the authority of an angel that he was her husband."²⁷

Thus Augustine argues that because of Joseph's marriage with the Mother of God, Joseph becomes juridically the father of Jesus even though he did not generate Him. The ancestry of St. Joseph accordingly becomes the legal ancestry of Jesus, and this would be equivalent to a legal fatherhood. In Augustine's words, "To him also was the command given to bestow the name on the Child, although the Child was not born of his seed. . . . This is what scripture means, that the Child was not born of Joseph's seed, when, while wondering how Mary became pregnant, he is told, 'It is of the Holy Spirit.' Nonetheless, paternal authority is not taken away from him, for he is commanded to name the Child. Finally, the Virgin Mary herself . . . calls him father of Christ."²⁸ In general this is the same idea which we have already seen in Chrysostom's commentary: children are named by their fathers. A notable difference, however, exists. Augustine does not look on the angel's command to Joseph to name the Child as marking the moment when paternal authority is conferred. Instead, Joseph's marriage to the virgin mother has already given the saint his authority "which is not taken away from him."

Moreover, Joseph's position in no way derogates from the natural fatherhood of the Eternal Father, Augustine says. "When Mary had said, 'Thy Father and I have been seeking Thee sorrowing,' Jesus replied, 'Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' For He did not wish to be their son in such wise that He would not be understood to be the Son of God. The Son of God is for eternity the Son of God, having created these [His parents]. But the Son of Man in time, born from the Virgin without the husband's seed had each of them for His parent. How do we prove this? Mary has already told us, 'Thy Father and I have been seeking Thee sorrowing.'" ²⁹

This gospel text and the succeeding ones are for Augustine the most revealing words of scripture to show us Joseph's true position. "The fact of our Lord's words, 'I must be about My Father's business,' does not mean that God is His Father in such a way that He denies Joseph to be His father. How do we prove this? From scripture, which reads thus: '... and when He went down with them, He came to Nazareth, and He was subject to them. It did not say, 'He was subject to His mother' or 'He was subject to her,' but 'He was,' it says, 'subject to them.' To whom was He subject? Was it not to His parents? Both were parents to whom He was subject with that condescension by which He was the Son of Man." ³⁰

Since God is not Christ's Father "in such a way that He denies Joseph to be His father," per-

haps one might conclude that Augustine would consider Joseph's fatherhood as a sharing in that of the Eternal Father. Of this, however, we cannot be certain; it is at best implied. Yet such doubt cannot be entertained about Joseph's parenthood as compared to that of Mary. For Augustine, the subjection of Jesus to *both* Mary and Joseph shows the genuine paternal authority of the saint.

A new thought now begins to appear in this sermon. No longer just the fact of the marriage, but its virginity as well is emphasized. We group here several selections, all presenting the same idea: "Just as this was a marriage without deordination, should not the husband have accepted virginally what the wife virginally brought forth? For just as she was virginally the wife, so was he virginally the husband; and just as she was virginally the mother, so was he virginally the father."³¹

"Just as she was mother without any fleshly intercourse, so was he father without physical intercourse. . . . We should not segregate him because [in his case] carnal concupiscence was absent."³²

"Let his greater purity confirm his fatherhood. . . . We should count through Joseph, because as he was virginally the husband, so was he virginally the father. . . . If we were to remove him and put her in his place, he would speak out and rightly ask, 'Why have you set me aside? Why does the genealogy neither ascend nor descend through me?' Would our reply be, 'Because you have not been father by an act of your flesh'? To that he would respond, 'Did she conceive by an act of her flesh?'

... Why was Joseph father? Because the certainty of his fatherhood is in proportion to his virginity.”³³

We feel it necessary to repeat here what we have already explained in indicating why the Latin word *castus*, which is ordinarily translated as “chaste,” is here given the meaning of “virginal.” Augustine’s context shows that *castus* should be translated so that it will describe the special factor in which the marriage of Joseph and Mary differed from other Christian marriages—certainly admittedly “chaste”—which were consummated. That unique factor for Joseph and Mary was the virginity of their marriage.

It is imperative to realize that in making these comparisons Augustine is not puritanically condemning the use of the marriage act. He recognizes that the marriage act is good in itself, but he is thinking of the fact that in the state of fallen human nature it is accompanied by concupiscence. Moreover, he had been the staunchest defender of marriage against the errors of heretics whose exaggerated asceticism rejected marriage as something intrinsically evil. In carrying out this defense he had studied the moral side of the relationship in contradistinction to the earlier writers who had considered only its physical aspects. Hence, in the case of Joseph and our Lady, he was constantly reiterating the theme that their bond of *complete spiritual union* effected a true marriage between them. and that the spirituality of this link made their marriage all the more perfect. In fact, the greater perfection

of their marriage (its virginity) indicated some sort of relationship between the marriage and the child it miraculously received. Accordingly, since concupiscence was absent from the marriage because of its virginal nature, Joseph's love of our Lord was the perfect spiritual love of a father for his son.

It is in the texts just quoted that Augustine put his authority behind the elements of the title, "virginal father." We must attempt to find, as far as possible, the meaning which he attached to these expressions. In the first place, as a minimum, did he believe that Joseph lived a virginal life? As we have already mentioned in chapter 7 concerning the question of Joseph's supposed earlier marriage, St. Augustine's true opinion is not always clearly expressed. Nowhere does he openly espouse the legend of Joseph's earlier union. The farthest he goes in that direction is to quote the opinion as possible. On the other hand, he so clearly praises the importance of virginity in our Lady's marriage, and he so explicitly praises the perfect continence of Joseph and Mary in their married life together, that he logically must have thought that in Joseph's case, just as with Mary, this continence was lifelong.

In this minimum sense, then, Augustine would mean that "Joseph, who was a virgin, obtained the rights of a father over the son of Mary his wife." But would Augustine further believe that Joseph's virginity somehow influenced Christ's coming into this world? For instance, Joseph's free consent was necessary in order that the marriage could be

virginal—this same virginal marriage within which God willed to send His Son. Mary could not have been a virgin wife unless Joseph had freely agreed not to request the marriage debt and privilege. It is a fact that this consent of St. Joseph must have existed. Does Augustine have this in mind when he speaks of Joseph with the words, "The certainty of his fatherhood is in proportion to his virginity"? It is a tantalizing oversimplification that cannot be accepted.

The true answer is that (for Augustine) Joseph co-operated in another way, namely, he received our Lord as his son, with a spiritual love which was completely free from all blemish of concupiscence. This concupiscence was absent because he lived virginally with our Lady. Augustine seems to emphasize that fact by the parallels drawn between Joseph and Mary. They are virgin wife and virginal husband; virgin mother and virginal father—the Latin expressions are perfect parallels; Mary, mother of Christ "without an act of her flesh," that is, without the use of marriage rights; and Joseph, father of Christ, "without an act of his flesh."

This interpretation of Augustine's meaning of "virginal father" seems to be borne out by further comments in the sermon. "Whoever says, 'He should not have been called father because he did not generate the son,' is thinking of lust in the procreation of children, not the feeling of love."³⁴ "See, my brethren, see the rights of adoption, how a man be-

comes a son of him who has not physically begotten him, so that the will of the adopter comes into play more than the natural drive of one who generates. Therefore, not only must Joseph have been father, but in a very special way he must have been so.”³⁵

Augustine's exact wording has been somewhat amplified in this translation, since the passage is elliptical and is difficult to understand out of context. It means that in Joseph's acceptance of Christ as his son, Joseph's paternal love and his will to act as Christ's father took the place of the bond that arises from physical generation, which in the present arrangement is accompanied by concupiscence. Hence, Augustine reasons, Joseph's fatherhood is all the more perfect and spiritual because it has come to him free from all concupiscence. As for the "adoption" mentioned, Augustine himself elsewhere will make it clear that Joseph's "adoption" of Jesus is not truly so, since Jesus belongs to Joseph's own family. The essential point always in the forefront here is the *will* of Joseph in accepting Jesus as his own, within the family of Joseph to which Jesus was given as its own. The idea often recurs:

"Now we have already sufficiently explained why there should be no surprise at the genealogy as traced through Joseph and not through Mary; for just as she was mother without any fleshly concupiscence, so was he father without physical intercourse. . . . It is also said, 'And she brought forth for him a son,' according to a relationship in which

the father is established not by the flesh but by love.”³⁶ Augustine’s quotation of Matthew 1:25 does not agree with our modern accepted text, “She brought forth her firstborn son.” His wording is to be explained either as a quotation from a manuscript with a variant reading, or as a quotation from memory according to the sense of the passage.

In another text, Augustine continues, “He was thought to be the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to be just like other fathers by physical generation, who do not receive their children solely by spiritual love. Luke has this statement, ‘who was thought to be the father of Jesus.’”³⁷ Why was Joseph so considered? Because human supposition and opinion were based on the customary actions of man. The Lord, however, was not of the seed of Joseph although this was thought to be the case. Nonetheless, a son was born of the Virgin Mary to the piety and love of Joseph, and that son was the Son of God.”³⁸ Again, Augustine’s quotation from the gospel does not square with the correct reading, in this case from Luke 3:23, that Jesus was thought to be the son of Joseph—not *vice versa*, that Joseph was taken to be the father of Jesus. And again, a likely answer to the difficulty is that Augustine quotes from memory and the sense of the passage.

To this point, he has described St. Joseph as father of Jesus not physically, but in the moral order by reason of his marriage to our Lady, the mother of Christ; by reason of a legal fatherhood; and by

reason of the spiritual paternal love with which he received Jesus. All this indicates a species of adoption completely without parallel or equal in ordinary human relationships. "Joseph," he says, "is not to be denied as father of Christ under the pretext that he had not generated Him, for Joseph would rightly be father even of a son whom he had not generated from his wife if he had adopted him from outside [his marriage.]"³⁹ "Luke did not call Mary [Christ's] sole parent; he had no hesitation in calling both His parents. . . . When, then, he records that Christ was born not of the act of Joseph but of Mary the Virgin, on what grounds does he call Joseph father unless we correctly understand that this was by the very bond of marriage. . . . ? Was it not for another reason, namely, that Joseph was the father of Christ, who had been born of his wife—father so much more intimately than if He had been adopted from outside the marriage?"⁴⁰

These passages have special interest inasmuch as they come from a work other than *Sermon 51*, yet they reflect exactly the same doctrine. They are also valuable for their *a fortiori* comparison with adoptive fatherhood. This comparison, in fact, repeats in different language what Augustine has already said of St. Joseph's fatherhood "by right of marriage." Positively, Augustine had written that Jesus was the fruit of the marriage, that He came miraculously from within the marriage. Now Augustine gives the same argument from a negative viewpoint: Christ is not an adopted son of St. Joseph be-

cause He has not come from outside the marriage. We might paraphrase his reasoning as follows: There is really no valid reason to be surprised at the fact that Joseph is truly the father in the moral order of a son whom he did not generate. After all, an ordinary adoptive father receives paternal rights over a child he has not generated—a child, moreover, who is not the fruit of his own marriage. *A fortiori*, that is, by a stronger line of reasoning, Joseph must be a true father because in his case the Son was miraculously given by God to his virgin wife, and hence belongs to his marriage. Joseph's relationship to Jesus thus becomes something that far surpasses adoptive fatherhood, that is, in fact, a different kind of fatherhood.

We can conclude our study of Augustine with selections from two other works, each indicating the spiritual fatherhood of the saint, due to the marriage with Christ's mother. Certainly, one cannot reasonably entertain doubt of the mind of Augustine in the face of evidence of the same doctrine appearing in so many of his works. "On account of this loyal marriage," he writes, "both merited to be called the parents of Christ, and not only she as mother but he as His father and as her husband; and both of them in the spirit and not in the flesh. But whether he be the father in spirit only, or she be mother also according to the flesh, both nevertheless are parents of His lowliness, not His exaltation; parents of His weakness and not of His godhead."⁴¹

“To show that He had a Father in addition to them, One who generated Him in addition to His mother, He replied to them, ‘What reason did you have to seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’ And again, lest by this statement He would be thought to have denied them as parents, the evangelist added, ‘And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.’ ”⁴² “Because of this holy and virginal marriage with Christ’s mother, Joseph merited to be called the very father of Christ.”⁴³

By way of summary we can tabulate the following ideas which, we believe, are directly expressed or clearly implied in Augustine’s doctrine on the fatherhood and which have been described in the preceding passages:

- a) Joseph is not the natural father of Jesus.
- b) Joseph receives from God the rights of a father. This is evident at least by the command of the angel that Joseph bestow Christ’s name.
- c) Joseph receives his position as father ultimately because he is the true husband of Mary, who is the mother of Jesus.
- d) Joseph is likewise the father of Jesus by reason of the spiritual affection with which he accepts Christ as his son.
- e) Since Jesus was conceived within the marriage of Joseph, although not by the seed of Joseph, the saint is far more than an ordinary adoptive father.

f) Jesus receives His juridical human ancestry and His human hereditary rights through Joseph.

g) The Child Jesus is given to Joseph as well as to Mary, but to Joseph through Mary.

h) The true fatherhood in the moral order which Joseph exercises over our Lord does not encroach on the natural fatherhood in the proper sense of the word, as possessed by the Eternal Father over the Second Person of the Trinity. On the other hand, the divine origin of Christ does not in its turn take away Joseph's special fatherly relationship.

i) Augustine calls Joseph "virginal father" of Jesus, signifying that Joseph himself was a virgin, and that he received Christ within his virginal marriage with the most selfless paternal love, free of all concupiscence.

Pseudo-Patristic Works

There is little more to be said concerning the views of the Fathers of the Church on St. Joseph's fatherhood. The Fathers after Augustine who mention the saint are usually not interested in discussing Joseph's relationship to Jesus, and when they do happen to speak of subjects related to him, they follow a typical conservative pattern quite closely.

However, in addition to genuine patristic works, there exist other compositions which were spurious although not legendary. These pseudo-patristic essays often offer a keen theological appraisal under the name of some great Father. Some of these counterfeits, because of their supposed

origin, reached great prominence in succeeding ages, and actually exercised a powerful influence on the popular concept of St. Joseph. Three of them are of special interest.

Pseudo-Augustine beautifully portrays the virginity as well as the fatherly care of St. Joseph. He faithfully reflects the genuine Augustinian idea that Joseph's fatherhood depends somehow on the marriage. "Rejoice, then, Joseph," he writes, "and be greatly happy over the virginity of Mary, for you alone have merited to possess a virginal marriage. . . . Preserve, O Joseph, together with Mary your wife the virginity of your members, for out of virginal members is begotten the power of angels. Let Mary be the spouse of Christ in the flesh by keeping her virginity intact. You, however, are to be the father of Christ by safeguarding her chastity and honor."⁴⁴

Pseudo-Justin offers an interesting allusion to the double ancestry of Joseph according to the genealogies give in Luke and in Matthew. He assumes that the two genealogies are to be explained because of a levirate marriage occurring in Joseph's line. He draws a parallel between the legal fatherhood of Heli and the legal fatherhood of Joseph; but his analysis of Joseph's relationship goes much deeper than this. Particularly striking is the fact that he presents Christ as the son of *both* Joseph and Mary, given by God to their marriage. For Pseudo-Justin, then, Joseph would possess a true fatherhood in the moral order. "Just as Joseph

was called the son of Heli but was not begotten by Heli because it so pleased the divine law to give Heli a son out of his wife; so did it seem fitting to God to give Joseph a son out of the wife of Joseph, a son who according to nature was not generated by him. For that which is begotten of woman, except through violence and fornication, is necessarily the son of both husband and wife, according to any method by which God might wish to bestow a son on the husband—with or without fleshly union.”⁴⁵

We have already seen the references to St. Joseph in the homily spuriously attributed to Origen and widely used in the Church for many centuries. Pseudo-Origen's comments are actually more apropos with regard to the genuinity of Joseph's marriage than specifically with regard to the fatherhood, and they were discussed in Chapter 8 for this reason. Their apparent denial of the genuinity of the marriage is the recurrent denial of consummation. Pseudo-Origen presents St. Joseph merely in the sense that the saint is the fosterer who is to care for and protect both Jesus and Mary. Beyond this concept he does not investigate Joseph's position more profoundly. In this attitude he will be closely followed by Bernard of Clairvaux.

The Late Patristic Period in the East

When we consider the fatherhood in writings after the seventh century, we must make a careful distinction between those of the West and those of

the East, inasmuch as certain widely divergent trends manifested themselves in the two groups. Augustine and Jerome influenced the Latins, while in the East, the Greeks were influenced not only by John Chrysostom but perhaps equally or more so by a host of spurious writings which claimed patristic origin and borrowed generously from the apocryphal legends. Seitz gauges the situation thus: "For the scripture commentators the text of scripture would offer occasion to consider St. Joseph in more detail; but since they gave him only incidental treatment, it is easily understandable that the Church preachers, who in their praise of Mary often mentioned his name, gave him no more attention than did the apocryphal legends from which they drew most of their material."⁴⁶

Because of the slavish imitation that appeared in these Greek writers we can sufficiently appreciate their appraisal of the saint by evaluating a source from which they copied so uncritically. This is a supposed homily of St. John Chrysostom, which drew far more attention than it ever deserved. Here, apparently for the first time we meet a reference to St. Joseph that later became very common among Greek writers: Joseph is the man described by the prophet Isaiah, who, knowing how to read (having been already married), cannot read the book of God (the Blessed Virgin), and hence is not her true husband. The Isaian text referred to is as follows: "For you the revelation of all this has become like the words of a sealed scroll. When it is handed to one who can read, with the request, 'Read this,' he

replies, 'I cannot; it is sealed!' When it is handed to one who cannot read, with the request, 'Read this,' he replies, 'I cannot read' " (Isaiah 29:11, 12). It is immediately evident that Pseudo-Chrysostom has taken only the first sentence, and has interpreted it accordingly completely out of the context, which showed that Jerusalem obstinately would proffer any excuse in order to reject God's word. We can readily understand that on this basis Pseudo-Chrysostom and the tradition that followed him would have little or nothing of value concerning the fatherhood of St. Joseph.⁴⁷

St. John Damascene (*749), Father and Doctor of the Church, helped perpetuate this theme with the weight of his authority. He has been characterized as accepting from the apocryphal legends only those elements which did not clash with a most exalted portrayal of Mary's parents and her spouse. Damascene does not bring forward Joseph's role in the Incarnation. In one comment he notes, "Joseph neither knew Mary nor did he know the power of the mystery itself."⁴⁸

The one instance in Greek literature of this period that gives Joseph any prominence is the hymn written for the Greek feast of St. Joseph—a feast which was actually a prolongation of the solemnities of Christmas. The authorship of this hymn (and hence the date of its origin) have been strongly disputed, but most probably it was written by a monk of the Greek monastery of Grottaferrata in Italy. Although certain characteristic Western

touches appear in parts of the hymn, the specific ideas of Joseph's true marriage and his lifelong virginity as well, are missing, as we remarked in an earlier chapter. As far as the fatherhood of St. Joseph is concerned, the high esteem manifested for the saint shows itself in terms best described as "foster father." Throughout, Joseph is portrayed as the protector of the Mother and her Child.⁴⁹

The Late Patristic Period in the West

In the West the representative writers of the period before 1000 are Bede (*735), Haymo of Halberstadt (*835), Rabanus Maurus of Fulda (*856), Walafried Strabo (*849), Paschasius Radbertus (*860), and Remigius of Autun (* c. 900). Quite generally, they were commentators who followed a rigid plan founded on Jerome's commentary on Matthew. As far as St. Joseph was concerned, they considered the usual questions of his double genealogy, his relationship to Mary, the reasons for his espousal, the doubt he entertained concerning Mary, his obedience and justice, and finally, his relationship to Jesus.

A careful examination of the pertinent passages in these writers shows little of importance concerning the fatherhood. St. Joseph is always treated with deepest respect, but his position is pictured as that of putative father or, at most, foster father. The only exceptions to this rule occur when Augustine and Jerome are copied literally—often enough with no acknowledgment of the fact whatsoever.

Taking into consideration this sometimes slavish imitation of Augustine and of Jerome, it is a pleasant surprise to read Haymo of Halberstadt. Haymo analyzes Joseph's fatherhood much more deeply than his contemporaries, and comes much closer to reaching its essence. "Joseph was called Christ's father," he writes, "although he did not generate Him, in the same way that he was called the husband of Mary although he did not know her; wherein we can add this: Even more explicitly and deliberately could Joseph be called the father of Him whom he knew was born of his virgin spouse than if Christ had been adopted extraneously."⁵⁰

Although Haymo verbally draws a parallel between Joseph's putative fatherhood and the marriage, he shows that this actually is equivalent to a denial of consummation. By the very fact that Joseph can be called the father of Christ "more explicitly . . . than if Christ had been adopted extraneously," Haymo assumes the presence of a stable bond between Joseph and Mary. Thus, according to his parallel, some real fatherhood existed for St. Joseph even though the saint's contemporaries were mistaken in thinking that his fatherhood was of the physical order. Similarly, a real marriage existed for Joseph and Mary even though the people were mistaken in thinking that Joseph and Mary exercised their marital rights. Haymo clearly perceives that Joseph's adoption of Jesus is far more than ordinary human adoption. He develops this idea further with a contribution of his own, saying,

“Since the public laws permit an extraneous son, assumed as adopted, to claim for himself all the property of his supposed father, just as if he were his natural son, so, much more intimately can Christ be called the son of Joseph, He who was born of Joseph’s virginal spouse.”⁵¹ Haymo concludes with a tribute to Joseph’s fatherly love for Christ. “We usually give fosterers and guardians the title of father not because they are fathers according to the flesh but because by their care they show forth fatherly love.”⁵² Thus, he had catalogued most of the important elements of the fatherhood. It is not physical, but it depends on Joseph’s marriage with our Lady. Christ is not extraneous to Joseph’s marriage; Jesus is therefore more intimately linked to Joseph than if He had been an ordinary adopted son. Joseph is foster father because of his protection and care for Christ, and he is, finally, the father of Jesus because of his spiritual paternal love.

Detailed consideration of other authors of this period is without value, since, as has been noted, they offer at best direct plagiarisms from Augustine and Jerome. It is not until Rupert of Deutz (*1135) that we meet independent treatment of St. Joseph. Rupert’s allegorical interpretation of the gospel genealogies has already been seen in Chapter 3. His comparisons of them as fishermen’s lines and as ladders leading to heaven and his evident respect for St. Joseph all give him occasion to speak at some length of the saint.

In the simile of the ladder, Rupert pictures St. Joseph as the foster father of Jesus because of his service and love. "The highest rung of this ladder on which God rests, is blessed Joseph, the husband of Mary from whom Jesus was born. But how does the Lord and God rest on him? . . . As the ward rests on the guardian, to wit, as he who is born into this world without a father. Thus does he rest on this blessed Joseph so that Joseph is to the Child as the best of fathers, and through his paternal care is to support the boy as well as His virgin mother."⁵³ Strikingly, Rupert sees the connection between the marriage and the fatherhood: "When [the evangelist] calls him the husband of Mary, he attributes a great and true name to blessed Joseph, because if he is the husband of Mary, he is also the father of the Lord."⁵⁴

Rupert considers the espousal as a valid marriage. "For does not the law pronounce that she who is espoused is already a wife?"⁵⁵

In his second simile he describes Joseph as legally the father of Christ. "The genealogy is like a long line of a fisherman which is thrown into the sea of this world and at its end carries an iron hook with bait, that is, the true God in true flesh, in order to ensnare the leviathan, that great serpent who devours the souls of men like little fish. The ancestry of the Savior which we have mentioned so often does not lead to Mary according to His fleshly descent but to Joseph according to his divine relationship."⁵⁶

Rupert's contemporary, Bernard of Clairvaux (*1153), devotes large sections of his second homily on the gospel of the Annunciation to tributes to St. Joseph that have become classic. Some of these tributes were included in the Divine Office as Lessons in feasts of St. Joseph. Bernard explicitly states that he is following patristic opinion. As for the fatherhood, it is not difficult to select from his text certain ideas which we have already seen in Fathers such as Origen and Pseudo-Origen. Bernard follows the custom of referring to the marriage of Joseph and our Lady as if it were not genuine, although he intends merely to assert its virginal nature. Joseph, too, he says, is simply to be *called* the father of Jesus, and the saint is a watchful guardian of Jesus and His mother—a foster father who faithfully serves Christ and supplies His needs. Beyond this, Bernard does not attempt to find the ultimate basis of Joseph's fatherhood.⁵⁷

CHAPTER
TWELVE

MEDIEVAL THEOLOGIANS
AND THE FATHERHOOD

Albert the Great (*1280)

The comments of St. Albert the Great occur in two connections: first, in a rather brief description of the fatherhood; and second, at much greater length in reference to St. Joseph's virginal marriage, and through it, Joseph's relationship to Christ. In the general description of the fatherhood, Albert writes, "It was not fitting that Joseph should be pre-figured [in the Old Testament] by anyone who was a husband in union of the flesh since without fleshly union he entered upon a more holy marriage through his marriage contract. As a virginal husband he guarded his virginal wife; and in rendering

proper ministry to both Mother and Son, he was inseparably linked to them by fatherly affection. . . . [His was], as was supposed, a divine fatherhood.”¹

Here Albert speaks of Joseph as the “virginal husband” of our Lady, but does not enter into the question of Joseph’s consent to the virginal marriage. He then describes Joseph as foster father (“rendering proper ministry,” and “linked by fatherly affection”)—the man who in the public eye was thought to be the father of Him who was God. Moreover, Joseph’s bond of union with Mary and Jesus was so strong and so intimate that he was “inseparably” linked to them by his fatherly love.

Where other commentators had discerned an indication of paternal authority in the command to Joseph to name the child Jesus, Albert seems to bring forward a more limited interpretation. The command was given to the putative father because by custom fathers were to name their sons.² Actually, Albert’s concept is much deeper than this. He supposes that the following thoughts underlie the angel’s words to Joseph, as if the angel intended to say, “Although you are not necessary for the [Christ’s] conception and birth, nevertheless you will be necessary for [His] sustenance; and your first care will concern His name.”³ In these words Albert’s denial evidently concerns such co-operation as would have meant physical fatherhood. He directly affirms the existence of a fatherhood of education in St. Joseph, an office which carries with it the responsibility of providing for the “sustenance”

of our Lord. The naming of Jesus will represent Joseph's first great exercise of the fatherhood.

Albert's description of the marriage between Joseph and Mary calls for special analysis. His ideas, moreover, recur in Thomas Aquinas, so that the study of them in the present context will help us better understand their use by Aquinas. As we have often emphasized, while the study of the marriage and of the fatherhood represents two theoretically distinct subjects, in the practical order the one will merge into the other.

Both Albert and Aquinas teach unequivocally that Jesus was the *bonum prolis*, the good of offspring of the marriage of Joseph and of our Lady. As a foundation for this, St. Joseph must have received, together with Mary, a parenthood in which the saint was to care for the upbringing of Christ. Now, precisely *how* and *why* can it be said that Jesus belonged to the marriage of Joseph and Mary, and not simply to Mary alone? The following two passages are pertinent.

"Two things constitute the good of marriage, namely, the reception of offspring by means of generation, and its upbringing. We say, therefore, that Christ had this second element expressly because He was reared by the goodness of His parents, and He was presented to His Father in the temple . . . ; and in place of the first element He had the fact that He was received within this marriage although not by means of it. Hence, He is called a good of the marriage, but not completely as other children."⁴

“In order that offspring can be called the good of marriage, several things are required, namely, that the child be received and religiously educated in the marriage according to the fear of God, and that in him the divine service stand out as it did in his parents. . . . Certain of these qualities were in Christ by reason of which He is called the good of offspring of the marriage. He was received within it although not from it but from the Holy Spirit; and in it He was supported and reared, ‘subject to them’; and the religion of His parents not only remained in Him, but also all religion which had perished had a reawakening.”⁵

We have already seen in Albert the recurrence of the Augustinian theme that the union of Joseph and Mary was spiritual, and that their marriage contract made up the essence of their union. Now he adds the fact that Jesus belongs to the marriage not accidentally but as its good of offspring—“received within it although not from or by means of it but from the Holy Spirit.” Albert himself says elsewhere, “Christ is not someone’s adopted son, but is the natural son of His mother; and through her He belongs to her marriage.”⁶ In this Albert is repeating Augustine’s *proles, fides, sacramentum*, the three goods or blessings of offspring, loyalty, and indissolubility that should be present in every marriage and which were present in that of St. Joseph. Albert is not discussing now the loyalty and the indissolubility; only the blessing of offspring is under scrutiny.

This good of marriage, offspring, he says, exists when the child has been received within the marriage and when the child has been educated religiously within it. We note immediately that Christ was *reared* within the union of Joseph and our Lady, but how can we say that He was *received* within it? If He were received *into* the marriage from outside, He would be an adopted son and would not belong to the marriage which was rearing Him. In the actual case, however, Jesus is *not* an adopted son, and He *does* belong to His parents' marriage. Moreover, He has not been "received within it by means of generation." In what other way can He belong to it?

Probably the heart of the answer to this question lies in the meaning Albert attaches to the word "receive"—*susceptio* in Latin. We do not claim that Albert uses the word in any particular classical meaning, but it is intriguing to recall that in Roman times the *susceptio* described the action of a father who would lift his newborn infant off the ground and thus accept it as his own. The father had truly generated the child, which had been born of his wife. Yet, only after he had "received" it did the child actually belong to him. In other words, it would seem that the legal bond was distinct from the physical bond of generation, even though dependent on it.

We can find another clue to Albert's meaning by referring to Peter Lombard, whose text is the subject of Albert's (and later Aquinas') commen-

tary. There, concerning marriage in general without any specific application to Joseph and Mary we read, "There are mainly three goods of marriage . . . Concerning offspring, the idea is that the child be lovingly received, that it be religiously reared. . . . We must realize that marriage is entered into by some persons in whose union these three goods are not present. For the good of offspring is not called the child itself, . . . but is the hope and desire by which the child is sought, for the purpose that it be trained in religion. Many people, therefore, have a child, who however lack the good of offspring."⁷

Lombard understands that normally the generation of a child gives a marriage its "good," provided that the child is "lovingly received," and "is hoped for and desired," all for the ultimate purpose of an upbringing that will follow the law of God. The "receiving" accordingly indicates the parents' loving acceptance of the child as their own. This acceptance constitutes the moral bond by which the child belongs to the marriage of its parents.

To return to St. Albert. Normally, he says, children are received because of generation. *After and by means of* generation they belong to their parents' union; hence, they can truly be called the good of offspring if their parents receive them as such. However, in Christ's case Jesus was *not* received in this way, namely, "after and by means of generation." It is because He came to Joseph and to Mary miraculously "from the Holy Spirit" that He could become the good of offspring. There exists a very

close parallelism between His reception and the reception of ordinary children. In the ordinary case the moral bond follows upon the husband's physical generation of the mother's child, and therefore the child belongs to their marriage and can become its good. In Christ's case such generation did not occur. The moral bond came into existence because Christ, as the miraculous natural son of His mother, "through her . . . belonged to her marriage." For this reason Jesus is called a good of this marriage, though "not in every way as other children," since His parents' reception of Him did not follow upon physical generation by the husband, St. Joseph.

By such reasoning Albert once again repeats the Augustinian tradition of St. Joseph's fatherhood by right of marriage. Jesus belonged not simply to Mary, but rather to Mary as Joseph's virginal wife, and therefore to Joseph's marriage and to Joseph himself. Equivalently, this gave St. Joseph a fatherly relationship that existed exclusively in the moral order. Albert's treatment of Joseph as parallel to Mary in the rearing of our Lord makes his thought on this subject unmistakable. For him this is a spiritual union which has never been equaled.⁸

Interestingly enough, he presents a very explicit defense of the opinion that the espousal of Joseph and Mary bestowed on them their rights as husband and wife. For Albert this means that Jesus was not only born but was also conceived within Joseph's marriage. "The gospel does not say that He was conceived before the marriage pact. It

implies that conception occurred later, when it states, 'When she had been betrothed.' Whatever happens after the marriage agreement which is there called a betrothal, pertains in its entirety to marriage."⁹

Thomas Aquinas (*1274)

It is in the writings of Albert's famed pupil, Thomas Aquinas, that we find the principles for the full understanding of St. Joseph's fatherhood. Modern theologians rightly base their explanations of the fatherhood on these texts of Aquinas. Yet we must not look for a highly developed presentation in St. Thomas. Rather, the principles which Augustine used recur here with greater preciseness in Aquinas.

One of the most important texts, fundamental to all that Aquinas will say regarding the fatherhood, concerns the proof and explanation for the genuinity of St. Joseph's marriage to our Lady. We have already quoted it at length in Chapter 8, and will not repeat it here, except by way of summary to tie it in with the rest of St. Thomas' thought. Aquinas answered two distinct questions: Was the marriage of Joseph and our Lady a genuine marriage? Was the end of marriage realized in their union? He clearly taught that the marriage was truly genuine because of the marriage contract that existed between Joseph and Mary. He also taught that the marriage did obtain its purpose as far as the rearing of Christ within it was concerned; but for what concerns the begetting of Christ, this pur-

pose of the marriage was not attained "if this is referred to carnal intercourse." Actually, in another passage St. Thomas describes Jesus as the good of the marriage, not indeed by generation but by Christ's reception and rearing within it. By this fact the marriage's purpose *even as to its fruitfulness* was fulfilled, albeit miraculously. This is an extremely important quotation:

"Offspring is not called the good of marriage only in so far as it is generated by means of marriage; but also in so far as it is received within the marriage and is there reared. Consequently, the good of this marriage was the Child, but not in the first fashion [by means of human generation]. Neither a child born in adultery nor an adoptive son reared in marriage is its good, since marriage is not directed to rear such; but the marriage [of Joseph and our Lady] was specially ordained for this purpose, that the Child should be received and brought up within it."¹⁰

We notice first of all how closely St. Thomas follows the thought of St. Albert. Both explain how our Lord belongs to the marriage as its good of offspring, according to Augustine's expression used centuries before. But since Aquinas is speaking of good of offspring in the technical sense mentioned by Peter Lombard, he implicitly states that Jesus must have *belonged* to the marriage of Joseph and our Lady before His parents received Him within it. The ordinary child belongs to the marriage of his parents because of physical generation, and

only in this supposition of "belonging" can his parents accept him as the good of offspring. Christ, however, belonged to the marriage of Joseph and Mary for a reason other than physical generation. This reason was God's miraculous bestowal. Hence, again in this supposition of "belonging," our Lord's parents accepted Jesus as the good of offspring of their marriage.

Aquinas does not explicitly call Jesus the fruit of the marriage, but the idea implicitly appears in the fact of Christ's "belonging." We momentarily hesitate at its full implication. Why should the union of Joseph and Mary be given credit, as it were, for Christ's entrance into the world? Had not the Second Person of the Trinity existed from all eternity, generated by the Eternal Father? The marriage did not give Him His existence. Moreover, did not Jesus take flesh within the virginal womb of Mary, without the human seed of her husband? The husband in our Lady's marriage did not generate Mary's son. Accordingly, it would seem at first sight that the marriage concerned only the *upbringing* of Jesus; it did nothing with respect to the origin of His human nature. At most *Mary* should be called fruitful, not her *marriage* to St. Joseph.

Actually, Christ belongs to the marriage because God ordained that it should not only rear Him to manhood, but that it should receive Him in the first moment of His human life. Ordinary marriages have human fruitfulness as their perfection and as the realization of their purpose. This

marriage had divine fruitfulness—if we may use the expression—as the chief reason for its existence. By receiving Jesus within itself it attained its perfection and realized its purpose. By a divine decree that accorded with the natural law on the purpose of wedlock, the union of St. Joseph and Mary was not so much to produce but rather was to receive within itself a divine child. Mary, the mother of Jesus, received Jesus in her role as the virgin wife of St. Joseph.

We can recall here what was said earlier concerning St. Albert's use of the word *susceptio*. The "receiving" of Christ within Joseph's marriage (as Thomas uses the term) again seems to refer to the moral bond which made Jesus the good of offspring. In ordinary marriages, according to a law of God, children are generated and can thereby be received by their parents as good of offspring; but the union of Mary and Joseph existed according to an exceptional law of God—"was specially ordained for this purpose"—whereby Christ was to be linked to the holy couple's union as its very own—"that the Child should be received and brought up within it."

Aquinas evidently looks on the marriage as having existed from the moment of the espousal of Joseph and Mary, not from the time of their wedding. Otherwise, if the contract had become valid only with the wedding, Jesus (according to the divine ideal plan) would not and could not have been "received within" the marriage. He would have been living in Mary's womb at a time when

our Lady was not yet the wife of St. Joseph. Jesus would have taken on His human nature of an unmarried virgin mother, and this was contrary to God's manifold plan. (Later, in Chapter 15 we shall mention the reasons for this plan. They do not directly concern us here.)

The examples which St. Thomas gives, help further to illustrate his thought. A child born in adultery and an adoptive son, he says, are extrinsic to the marriages within which they are reared. Why? Because such marriages are "not directed" of their very nature "to rear them," for the reason that each marriage is directed to rear its own fruit. In other words, the physical parents of these children are not the parties to the marriages which educate the adopted or the illegitimate sons. But in the case of Joseph and our Lady, God "specially ordained their *marriage*" to receive Christ. Therefore, not just Mary alone but Mary and Joseph together, joined by the marriage bond, were to receive Jesus. By divine decree Jesus belongs to the marriage within which He is reared; therefore, the marriage that rears Him is the same marriage that links His parents. However, St. Joseph, unlike Mary, possesses absolutely no physical parenthood of Christ. Hence, Joseph's parenthood must be a fatherly bond in the moral order.

In addition to the explanations of the marriage that describe the fatherhood of the saint, we have other references of St. Thomas more explicitly relating to Joseph as husband and father. While never

entering into an exclusive study of the paternity, Aquinas speaks of it as "putative" or "adoptive"—"as some term it."¹¹ Elsewhere he replies to the objection that no child having father and mother is conceived by a virgin mother and clearly develops his thought along the traditional Augustinian model. "As Bede states concerning Luke 1:33, Joseph is called the father of the Savior not because he really was His father as the Photinians pretended; but because he was considered by men to be so, for the safeguarding of Mary's good name. [We may explain by way of parenthesis that the Photinians, followers of Photinus, a fourth-century heretic, argued that Jesus was not the natural Son of God.] According to Augustine, Joseph is called father of Christ, just as he is called the husband of Mary, without fleshly mingling and by the sole bond of marriage; being thereby united to Him much more closely than if He were adopted from another family. Consequently, that Christ was not begotten of Joseph by fleshly union is no reason why Joseph should not be called father, since he would be the father even of an adopted son not born of his wife."¹²

Here Aquinas has concisely set forth the main elements of the fatherhood. Joseph is not the physical father of Jesus, but is supposed to be the physical father in order to protect Mary's honor. Then St. Thomas explicitly takes over the thought of Augustine, referring to the spiritual bonds of the marriage and of the fatherhood. The fatherhood is fundamentally based on the fact of the marriage;

and since Christ has not come to Joseph from "another family" but from Joseph's own family, the saint is much more than a mere adoptive father.

In commenting on the gospel of St. Matthew, Aquinas mentions briefly Joseph's service as foster father. "'She shall bring forth a son.' Here is announced the service which Joseph will give to the Child after His birth, and this text does three things. First, it foretells the childbirth of the Virgin; second, it points out the service to be tendered the Child by Joseph; . . ." Then Aquinas reverts to the traditional analysis of Chrysostom and of Augustine concerning Joseph's paternal authority: "third, it reveals the name imposed on the Child when it says, 'Jesus.' It says, then, 'She shall bring forth' . . . but it does not say, 'to you,' because Joseph did not generate the Child. However, since Joseph could say, 'If she thus conceived of the Holy Spirit and will bring forth a child, what does that mean to me? In no respect am I needed by her,' the office of Joseph is added, 'You will call His name Jesus.'" ¹³ "Joseph was the special protector of the Virgin and also of the Savior in His infancy. He was thought to be His father." ¹⁴

To summarize, the key fact for St. Thomas is that our Lord belonged to the marriage of Joseph and our Lady because God directed that He be virginally received within it and there brought to His full human stature. Since, then, the reception and rearing of Jesus were an essential purpose of the marriage, Christ was not extraneously living within

it as an adopted child would have been. Equivalently, Joseph as the true husband of Mary became father not in the physical act of generation, but by the fact that Mary his wife miraculously conceived Jesus within his marriage. Because Jesus belonged to the marriage, Joseph and Mary were able to accept Him as its good of offspring.

*John Gerson (*1429)*

After the time of St. Thomas there appeared one of the most important and influential figures in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph—John Gerson. Gerson's cardinal position is due to the eight works in which he propagated at great length new ideas concerning St. Joseph.¹⁵ Of all his writings the best to illustrate his analysis of Joseph's fatherhood is his sermon at the Council of Constance on September 8, 1416.¹⁶ In rather quaint literary style Gerson presented his own deductions from ideas first suggested in the centuries that had preceded him. "Let us turn our attention," he said, "to see how Joseph was called father of Jesus Christ not just by the Jews who thought this and thought in carnal fashion, but by the Virgin Mother herself."¹⁷ Now follows a comprehensive tabulation that summarizes the ways in which Joseph possessed a true fatherhood:

"Joseph was the father of Jesus in public opinion. He was the father of Jesus in his care, because he fostered Him. He was, thirdly, father in the generation, not indeed his own, but that of Mary his wife, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit who

in a certain sense took the place of Joseph not with human seed but with mystic inspiration. Consequently, Joseph can with certainty be called not the natural but the legal father of the Child Jesus.”¹⁸

The following idea appears for the first time in the literature on the fatherhood. Gerson develops from the idea of “father by right of marriage” a comparison with property rights, to illustrate the single mutual ownership brought about by the marriage bond. “Jesus was born in the land or property of Joseph. . . . Why, therefore, does there not belong to Joseph a certain juridical right beyond that of other men, in the blessed formation of the Child Jesus, for He was born in the flesh and out of the flesh whose dominion was truly handed over to Joseph by the right of marriage?”¹⁹

The influence of Augustine continues to appear in Gerson’s explanation why Jesus belonged to Joseph as a son; but very strikingly there appears another new idea, that Christ came to Mary “with the true or interpretative consent” of St. Joseph. This evidently refers to Joseph’s marriage contract and all that followed from it. “The procreation of the Child Jesus occurred in you, Mary, by the Holy Spirit, with the true or interpretative consent of your husband Joseph. For he wished that the will of God should be accomplished in all things, ‘being a just man.’ We make this statement in order to exclude wives’ adulterous children, to whom the husbands do not consent or cannot rationally do so. On such a basis these husbands cannot claim any

right of fatherhood, even though the children have been born in their property.”²⁰

Modern theologians have followed the pioneering concept of Gerson indicated in this passage. Joseph's consent was necessary if Jesus were to be born of a virgin wife; but it was not necessary that Joseph know in advance explicitly what God had in store for him. Gerson emphasizes the critical importance of Joseph's consent by instancing adulterous children, who simply cannot be received as sons by the husbands of their unfaithful mothers. Mary belonged to St. Joseph by right of their marriage, Mary's son Jesus came to St. Joseph within their marriage, and the saint accepted Him as such. This acceptance was not made explicitly, since Joseph as well as Mary was kept in ignorance of the impending Incarnation. Rather, Gerson says, the acceptance was made implicitly in Joseph's absolute conformity to God's good pleasure.

Considering the volume of Gerson's writings on St. Joseph, it might seem surprising that he devoted relatively so little attention to the study of the fatherhood. The reason is that his interests were diverted into numerous other channels. Directly, he was agitating for the institution of a feast of the Espousals, to celebrate the marriage of Joseph and Mary. Then, too, he wrote about the facts of the saint's life as they appeared in the gospels. In doing so he took much space to denounce and refute the claims of the apocryphal legends. Still more, he was interested in speculations on possible privi-

leges of St. Joseph such as sanctification in the womb, repression of concupiscence, and an assumption into heaven, body and soul. In these circumstances the fatherhood took a subordinate role.

Peter d'Ailly (*1420)

Gerson's activity led Cardinal Peter d'Ailly to compose his *Tractate on the Twelve Honors of St. Joseph*.²¹ Somewhat milder in its claims for St. Joseph than Gerson's writings had been, the *Tractate* in its time exercised notable influence. D'Ailly listed twelve "honors" of St. Joseph, closely following the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke. These twelve honors were Joseph's kingly ancestry; his blood-relationship with Mary and therefore with Jesus; his true marriage to our Lady; his virginity; his selection for the service of Mary and of Jesus; his initiation into divine mysteries; his justice through faith; his naming of the Child Jesus; his presence at the great mysteries of Christ's childhood; his instruction by Simeon and Anna; his instruction by angels; and the obedience which was tendered to him by Christ.

To put d'Ailly's description into modern terminology, he pictures Joseph as putative father, foster father, and father by right of marriage. One of his reflections on Christ's genealogy represents a new contribution. Instead of extracting from the genealogies the proof of Joseph's status as legal father of Jesus, d'Ailly argues that the common descent of Mary and Joseph from David indicates

that Joseph himself is a blood relative of our Lord. The Cardinal clearly shows Joseph's fatherly service and fatherly affection in words like these: "Not only the mother but also the Son of this mother and virgin was sustained by the consolation of this spouse, and cherished by his service. O wonderful event! Joseph supports and cherishes by his aid Him who supports and cherishes all things and governs the whole world! This occurred not only when the Child Jesus was carried by the help of Joseph into Egypt and away from it; but also during the entire course of His infancy and childhood, when He was reared by Joseph as His father. That is why, as the evangelist bears witness, 'He was thought to be the son of Joseph.' And this, not only because Joseph was the husband of Mary, but also because it was clear that he manifested signs and actions of fatherly love." ²²

Finally, d'Ailly discerns Joseph's authority as coming to him through the marriage and according to the natural law itself. "Who was subject to whom? God and the Son of God. Certainly to Joseph and Mary, His parents; and principally to St. Joseph himself, to whom Mary as a humble wife was subject also. . . . Deservedly, by the law of nature Christ as man was subject to Joseph, by whom Christ as man was fed, by whom the necessities of human life were provided." ²³ Joseph's jurisdiction as father comes, to him through the marriage, therefore, which makes Jesus "principally" subject to him, since Christ's mother is "also subject," as a "humble wife." Christ's subjection is tendered St. Joseph be-

cause the "law of nature" gives authority to the head of the household, who acts as the breadwinner of his family.

Early Liturgical Prayers

The writings of Gerson and Peter d'Ailly in particular had a major influence on many of the early masses and offices of St. Joseph which were first composed in the fifteenth century.²⁴ To make any lengthy investigation of these numerous liturgical productions would lead us far afield. In general, they can be said to reflect rather closely the theological literature of their time. Careful examination of them indicates that their poetic titles of St. Joseph are equivalent to putative father, foster father, adoptive father, and father by love for Jesus.²⁵ A selection from perhaps the best of these offices—the Regensburg Carmelite office in 1434—exemplifies some of the doctrine that appears in their prayers. The following passage refers to the marriage of Joseph and Mary:

At the Magnificat:

Blest the marriage
 With loyalty and sacrament,
 Nor bereft of offspring,
 Yet virginity's flower retained.
 He in the stead of a father,
 She the virgin mother;
 He and she, the sinless one,
 With virginal honor and mutual love
 Mutually offer their service.²⁶

Augustine's triple blessing of marriage—offspring, loyalty, and the sacrament of indissolubility—is patently the model of these lines. We note, moreover, the emphasis on the virginity of Joseph no less than that of Mary. This might be due to the perception of Joseph's key role in preparing for the virginal marriage within which Christ was to be received. As to the phrase, "in the stead of a father," it is possible to understand this as a reference to the saint's position representing the Eternal Father. However, it is much more likely that the phrase has a limited meaning, namely, that Joseph publicly acted as an ordinary human father.

Bernardine of Siena (°1444)

Contemporaneously with Gerson and Peter d'Ailly, Bernardine of Siena wrote and preached on St. Joseph. As far as is known, Bernardine was not dependent on Gerson, yet the writings of the two men are remarkably similar. This coincidence can have an explanation in the fact that both Gerson and Bernardine based their conclusions on the same first principle: the marriage of Joseph and Mary was to be considered as the foundation of all the saint's distinctive dignity and grace.

Another reason, however, that is completely revolutionary as far as the history of the devotion to St. Joseph is concerned, may actually lead to the ultimate explanation. In Chapter 23 we shall present a summary of the startling evidence produced by Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M., which seems to prove

that a strong Franciscan tradition of devotion to St. Joseph began with St. Bonaventure. Thence, Peter Olivi crystallized and developed it in language which was taken over almost word for word by Ubertine of Casale and later by Bernardine of Siena, with still other material borrowed from Bartholomew of Pisa. One of the branches of this Franciscan tradition seems to lead to Fra Eximic, O.F.M., bishop of Perpignan (*1408), a contemporary of Gerson. Longpré, as we shall see in Chapter 23, notes that "it is imprudent to study John Gerson without comparing him to his contemporary, Fra Eximic."²⁷ The truth is that such a critical study has hardly begun, so that we do not have sufficient evidence to form judgments.

What relationship does this bear to the value of the writings of Bernardine of Siena? Historically, we must admit that we are actually reading the thought and usually the words of Bernardine's predecessors, Peter Olivi and Ubertine of Casale and Bartholomew of Pisa. Theologically, the question of the ultimate source of this material is less pressing if pressing at all. We should, however, note that Bernardine's sermon on St. Joseph was the popularizing channel by which these ideas were brought to theologians of future centuries and worked into the corpus of Josephology. Bernardine's tributes have become classic in their field. Selections from them were adopted by the Church as Lessons for the second Nocturn of the former feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph.

In his *Sermon on St. Joseph* Bernardine says that the genealogy of David is traced to Christ through Joseph for three reasons: first, the custom of the Jews of giving the ancestry on the male side of the family; second, the blood-relationship of Joseph and Mary, so that the genealogy of one becomes that of the other as well; and third, "in order to praise the sacrament of the marriage of the Virgin and of Joseph, in which Christ was born." Then follows the reference to Augustine, "who says that every good of marriage was fulfilled in these parents of Christ." In speaking of a juridical fatherhood, Bernardine adds, "Joseph was of such exalted nobility that in a certain fashion, if I may so speak, he gave temporal nobility to God in the Lord Jesus Christ."²⁸

Bernardine excels in his grasp of Joseph's love for the child Jesus, pointing out that this love indicated "true fatherly affection" in the saint: "The Blessed Virgin in a singular way calls him the father of Christ. We must note carefully that this is the only place where we read that the Virgin called Joseph the father of Jesus, for the sentiments of sorrow which he felt over the loss of Christ indicated true fatherly affection in him."²⁹

Following his Franciscan sources, Bernardine insists on the Augustinian theme that Joseph is more than an ordinary adoptive father. The reason? Because Jesus was born within Joseph's marriage, and because Joseph loved Christ as his son. "If according to divinely approved human laws an extraneous

person can adopt a son, the Son of God given to Joseph in his most holy spouse in the admirable sacrament of matrimony should much more be called his son and even be believed to be such, because in Joseph there was the feeling of fatherly love and sorrow with respect to his beloved Jesus. . . . Who, I ask, will deny that while Joseph held Christ in his arms as a father and spoke to Him as a father . . . He impressed ineffable joys upon him! O with what sweetness he heard the lisping Child call him father! With a love that transformed him, he was attracted to Him, as to his dearest son presented to him by the Holy Spirit in his virginal wife.”³⁰

Explicitly now, St. Joseph is described as exercising a participation in or a resemblance of the Eternal Father’s relationship to Christ: “This holy man had such towering dignity and glory that the Eternal Father most generously bestowed on him a likeness of His own primacy over His Son incarnate.”³¹ Here we meet an idea which later theologians will take up with increasing emphasis. Joseph is not only the father of Christ on earth because he was chosen to act as such; he is also father of Christ because the Eternal Father has given him the capacity to act as such. Bernardine notes that God took cognizance of Joseph’s superlative holiness—his “towering dignity and glory”—in choosing the saint for his position. Joseph’s fatherhood is a “likeness”; hence, we are reminded immediately of an analogy with the one natural fatherhood exercised over Christ.

Finally, Bernardine's sermon makes another contribution when he implies that the title of "putative father" must not be understood in a derogatory or deprecating meaning. The title is honorable, and it is not used in order to diminish Joseph's glory, but to protect the dogmas relating to Jesus and to Mary: "Holy Church has not made extensive arrangements for [Joseph's] solemnity, first, because he descended into limbo and pertained to the Old Testament; second, in order to avoid scandal to the heretics; and that is why the Church does not call him father except with a limitation, to wit, 'putative.'" ³²

To sum up, Bernardine looks on St. Joseph as possessing true fatherly rights over Jesus, because Jesus is born in the virginal marriage of which Joseph is husband. By reason of Joseph's service to the Child and his love for Him, the saint is a foster father above all others, for his fatherly heart gives our Lord love and protection. Above all else, Joseph is delegated for this charge by the Eternal Father Himself, and for it has been properly equipped.

Isidor de Isolani (*c. 1530)

After Bernardine's sermon, the next important and influential work on St. Joseph was the *Summa of the Gifts of St. Joseph*, published in 1522 by the Milanese Dominican, Isidor de Isolani. The book justly merits praise as the first essay toward a scholarly and comprehensive theology of St. Joseph. However, Isidor's doctrine on the fatherhood does

not represent any notable advance or striking synthesis. He catalogues the saint's several titles, although perhaps his terminology differs from that in present use. Thus, he describes Joseph's functions as putative father, the saint's fostering of our Lord, his paternal authority as manifested by the imposition of Jesus' name, his virginity, and his marriage with our Lady.³³ We can single out Isidor's description of Joseph's vicarious fatherhood, for it is a deeper appreciation of the fact this concept represents: "Joseph acted in the stead of the Heavenly Father. . . . It is men's custom that fathers have authority to name their sons. Jesus was the Son of God the Father. Thus, St. Joseph took the place of the Heavenly Father in this dignity. When kings' sons are baptized, who, I pray, reads out the name of the son to be baptized, in the stead of the regal parents? Is it not another king, or a legate of the king, or some other eminent personage?"³⁴ Two points stand out in this evaluation. First, Joseph in a certain sense takes the place of God the Father. Automatically, we would reason, this would place the saint far above any sort of human adoptive father who substitutes for a deceased parent. Secondly, Isidor has keenly discerned the dignity that must have been present in the man who acted figuratively as vicar of the First Person of the Trinity.

CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
OPINION OF THE
FATHERHOOD

William Estius (*1613)

In his commentary on Lombard's *Fourth Book of the Sentences*, William Estius, long chancellor of the University of Douai, devotes a special section to the fatherhood of St. Joseph.¹ We shall consider his views in some detail, for not only does he follow the thought of Augustine very closely; he also carries Augustine's principles to more extended conclusions and explains certain points which Augustine left undeveloped.

He firmly holds that Jesus was conceived within the marriage of Joseph inasmuch as the espousal,

he says, was equivalent to marriage. "According to the custom of Holy Scripture, a woman is called espoused who has been betrothed to a man by the marriage contract; namely, by words [that have their effect] in the present although the marriage has not yet been consummated."² Estius also believes that an angel revealed to our Lady that Joseph would not request the marriage debt; hence, Mary could validly pronounce a vow of virginity even while she foresaw her marriage to St. Joseph. However, in the case of the Saint, he thinks it less probable that Joseph also bound himself by vow, even though the Saint certainly consented to the virginal marriage.³

At greater length Estius treats of St. Joseph in the discussion of the fatherhood. The problem, he points out, is evident: how could Christ truly belong to the marriage of Joseph and Mary even though He was not begotten by Joseph? To answer this question, "Some have hitherto given the reply . . . that Christ was conceived and was born within the marriage while its essence remained unimpaired. This answer is true, but it does not give the full explanation. The explanation will be more complete if we say that Christ is called the good of the marriage because the generation of the Child received within the marriage, who was Christ the Son of God, not only belonged to the Mother, but by right of marriage also looked to Joseph, as the husband of the Virgin Mother of God. By this right Joseph was correctly styled 'father of Christ.'"⁴

In the explanation which Estius calls somewhat incomplete, Christ is merely *given* to the marriage; that is, Jesus comes to Mary when she is the wife of St. Joseph, and His miraculous conception within her in no way violates or breaks the bond linking her to Joseph. The chancellor, however, penetrates more deeply into the implications of this truth, and singles out the additional fact that Christ's *procreation* itself belonged to the marriage. Precisely what does this add? It singles out the fact that marriage is of its very nature directed toward the propagation of the human race, and therefore the procreative powers of the wife belong to the husband as well. Hence, even though Joseph did not generate Jesus, nonetheless Jesus belonged to Joseph because as a child of Mary He belonged to Mary's husband. One is reminded in this connection of the words of Pseudo-Justin, already discussed: "That which is begotten of woman, except through violence and fornication, is necessarily the son of both husband and wife, according to any method by which God might wish to bestow a son on the husband—with or without fleshly union." ⁵

Estius seems to be thinking of the natural law that children should come into the world within the bond of marriage; Mary begets forth Jesus to Joseph her husband, and Jesus belongs to the marriage of Joseph according to the natural law. In the general trend of his concept, the chancellor is obviously dependent on Augustine, for he calls attention to the variant Gospel reading which Augustine used, "And she brought forth for him a son."

Estius follows closely in the steps of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas in his interpretation of the "good of offspring" of the marriage. "The first good is offspring, that is, children to be received from one's legitimate wife. . . . And this is not to be understood of their mere procreation, but in a very special way of their education and of their religious and pious rearing." ⁶ In other words, children become the good of offspring if received within a marriage and if reared there. They would not be its good if they were simply brought forth into the world, but not reared by their parents.

Repeatedly he states that Joseph is "truly the father of Christ." As one defense of the fact, he answers a twofold objection: Luke is said to describe St. Joseph as merely the putative father of Jesus; Origen looks on the Saint simply as the foster father. Does this mean that Joseph is not the true father by right of the marriage? Replying to the first difficulty, Estius discusses the meaning of the title of "putative father." His thought is consistently modeled on Augustine. "When the Evangelist repeatedly called Joseph the father of Christ, he was not thinking of the opinion of the people, since first he spoke in his own name and later narrated the words of the Virgin Mother to her Son; but he called him the father of Christ with no reservation. However, in Chapter 3, he was setting forth the opinion of the people who thought that Jesus was physically begotten by Joseph. . . . In one respect therefore Joseph was the true father of Christ; in another re-

spect he was the putative father. He was the true father by right of marriage; he was the putative father with reference to physical generation.”⁷

This is an apparently new distinction. It represents a concept taken up by modern writers on the fatherhood, who consider, with Estius, that “father by right of marriage” is the ultimate basis of Joseph’s relationship to our Lord. On the other hand, they again imitate Estius in analyzing “putative father” as an essentially negative description. It denies that the Saint was the physical father of Jesus, but it does not show *how* or even *if* he was father in any positive fashion.

For the chancellor, this defense is not enough. He next proceeds to show the wide difference between the fatherhood of St. Joseph and that of an ordinary adoptive father, “in order that it might be more completely understood how truly Joseph was the father of Christ.” As always, the texts he brings forward are those of Augustine and writers who closely imitate him. In all this analysis Estius evidently looks on St. Joseph as father of Christ not only after the Incarnation had taken place, but also in its very occurrence—not, of course, father by physical generation but father in the moral order because of the marriage.

In his concluding paragraph he takes up the second half of the original subject raised against Joseph’s fatherhood. Now the question is raised: Is Joseph the foster father of Jesus and nothing more? He replies: “Origen thinks that Joseph was honored

with the title of father merely because of the faithful service he gave Christ.⁸ We reply that this reasoning is by no means sufficient. First, because it is not the custom of Scripture to call the fosterer 'father' and the nurse 'mother.' Second, because the Virgin placed him before herself even with his title as father, saying, 'Thy father and I.' The Evangelist did the same, saying, 'His father and mother were wondering'—lest you perhaps think that the Virgin alone did this because of her humility. Third, because Luke calls both parents, with the Greek word *goneis*, as it were, procreators—because, as we have said, the generation of the son pertained also to Joseph by right of marriage. Fourth, because it is said by the same Evangelist that 'He was subject to them,' namely, as a son to His parents. Finally, because Luke as well as Matthew traces the genealogy of Christ through Joseph. It would have been absurd to do this through one who was father for no other reason than the fact that he acted as a fosterer."⁹ This excellent summary represents an analysis of the insufficiency of "foster father" which seems to be unknown to modern writers on St. Joseph. Concisely reviewing much of Augustine's doctrine on the fatherhood, it again leads us to Joseph's marriage to Mary as the ultimate basis of his relationship to God incarnate.

Francis Suarez (*1617)

In the development of the theological doctrine concerning St. Joseph, the role of Francis Suarez

was extremely important. Suarez not only synthesized the content of the studies of St. Joseph made in the centuries before him; he also probed more deeply into the significance of Joseph's selection by God. He received much more attention on this subject than did Estius, so that in today's writings on the Saint, the bulk of the doctrine is at best an explanation or expansion modeled on Suarezian lines.¹⁰

In Suarez' commentary on the third part of the *Summa*, he devotes his Eighth Disputation entirely to St. Joseph. It is mainly from this source that we will draw his analysis of the fatherhood.¹¹ One of the most striking features of his treatment is the caution and prudent reserve which he brings to his subject. In his time a number of writers and preachers had gone to unprecedented extremes in exaggerating the privileges of St. Joseph, and an objective theological study was gravely needed. Hence, the opinions of Suarez deserve careful study in view of the deliberate conservatism with which they were written.

Suarez first lists all the evidence of Church tradition pointing to the virginal life of the Saint.¹² In discussing the question of Mary's vow of virginity he also highlights the necessary co-operation of Joseph in making the marriage virginal, although he does not say more concerning the Saint in this respect.¹³ There are apparent objections against the genuinity of the marriage, he continues, but these flow from the inexact terminology of the Fathers of the Church, and they must be understood in their

context. The marriage of Joseph and our Lady is truly valid, and all Catholic theologians teach this doctrine as "a matter of faith."¹⁴

Suarez believes that the marriage bond began to exist at the espousal, and therefore that Christ was conceived in Mary when she was already the wife of St. Joseph. "It is certain that the marriage between Mary and Joseph, in so far as its essence and contract are in question, was perfected before the Incarnation of the Son of God. This is the common opinion of the Fathers and theologians."¹⁵ In addition, an aprioristic argument points to the same conclusion. God arranged the union partly for the protection of the reputations of Jesus and Mary; therefore, "it must needs have been that when she conceived, she already had a spouse by whom people would think she had conceived legitimately and without sin."¹⁶

Because of the marriage, Joseph received the title of father of Christ, and was popularly supposed to be such. With Augustine, Suarez adds that the supposition of Joseph's physical fatherhood, incorrect as it was, existed only among those who did not know of our Lady's miraculous motherhood. Actually, the Saint's title as "father" came not only from the people but also from St. Luke and from the Blessed Virgin herself. This name, Suarez reasons, is not an empty title; it represents an actual fatherhood, as the following considerations show.

First, neither the Blessed Virgin nor Luke would have used it unless the Holy Spirit had in-

spired them to do so.¹⁷ God's action in willing this name for Joseph was based on infinite wisdom and providence; but names imposed with such wisdom indicate the dignity or nature of the thing they represent. In this case the Eternal Father shared with Joseph a name that was proper to Himself alone; and together with the name He gave Joseph the office and the responsibility of father of Christ. We can turn to an excellent illustration. When Christ on the cross commended His mother to John the Apostle, our Lord clearly showed the exceptional love He bore him. Jesus shared His own sonship with John, making John His substitute, as it were, in caring for and in loving Mary. How do we know this? The answer lies in the fact that the works of God are perfect, and Jesus would not have given John a title that had no meaning. Now, in the case of St. Joseph, when the Eternal Father gave the Saint the title of father of Christ, this had a meaning far more exalted than even the "son of Mary," as John had been called. The dignity of Christ infinitely surpasses the dignity of His mother; and the authority of a father—authority, incidentally, which St. Joseph's title implies—is much more than the filial care of a son. Thus, by comparing Joseph and John, we arrive at some understanding of the true significance of Joseph's name as father.

Throughout this methodical presentation Suarez does more than merely synthesize considerations of past writers. In one sense he would already have made a notable advance if he had stopped

with his systemizing alone. Like Estius, however, he is constantly offering new aspects or new developments of principles first proposed by Augustine. For example, he takes up the fact that Joseph was called father by Luke and by Mary, both of whom were fully aware of the virginal conception of Jesus. Evidently, Suarez continues, the Saint did not share only in the name of father of Christ. He also shared in the reality which it signifies; else there would have been little or no reason for Luke and Mary to speak as they did.

This participation of St. Joseph in the fatherhood over Christ extended as far as possible for a human being—always excepting, of course, physical generation. Suarez draws a further conclusion: If Joseph was father in everything except physical generation, this means that he was given the love, the solicitude, and the authority befitting his station, or, in other words, the very capacity to be the father of Christ. “Hence, it happens that Blessed Joseph shared not only in the name of father of Christ, but also in the reality which lies beneath the title and this in the greatest degree in which man could have this participation, excepting fleshly generation. Therefore, he possessed the love, the solicitude, and (if I may say so) the authority of a father.”¹⁸

Suarez makes another advance when he expands Augustine’s presentation of St. Joseph as more than an adoptive father. Joseph’s “adoption” consisted in accepting the Son whom he had not

generated but whom God had bestowed on his marriage. "By adoption even he who is completely extraneous becomes a son, and he who adopts him is called a father and is a father in his own way. Joseph, however, accepted and in a certain fashion adopted Him whom his wife had brought forth by means of the power of the Holy Spirit and without his own action—this most beloved son bestowed by God so that as a result He became in a certain way his son, in a more noble way that excluded imperfection." ¹⁹ The "imperfection" mentioned here by Suarez seems to refer to that which exists in ordinary adoption with reference to ordinary natural sonship. The adoptive son does not pertain to the marriage of his foster parents as its connatural fruit; but in the case of our Lord, Jesus was the fruit, albeit miraculous, of the marriage of Joseph and Mary. Accordingly, St. Joseph accepted from God's hand the child of his own marriage.

Suarez now develops Augustine's "fatherhood by right of marriage," showing more fully its juridical source; first, Joseph's possession of Mary and therefore his possession of her Son; and second, the mutual ownership that the marriage effected.

Because the Saint was truly the husband of Mary, he became in a certain sense the lord of her body. As a consequence, the fruit of that virginal body belonged to St. Joseph. A fountain miraculously springing up in a garden would belong to the owner of the garden. So, too, in the case of Jesus and Mary and Joseph. As was prefigured in the Old

Testament,²⁰ the virginal earth (Mary) conceived of the blessing of the Lord, and the fruit of that blessing belonged to St. Joseph, who possessed the land.

“I add, finally, that husband and wife are in a certain way made one by the bond of marriage. Now, although they are made one flesh by bodily union, they become one in heart and one in will by reason of their marriage contract. That is why they own all their goods in common. What is under the dominion and authority of one, consequently belongs to the other in some degree. The Blessed Virgin was the mother of Christ; therefore, it was impossible for Joseph as her true husband not to share in the quality of parenthood, always excepting physical generation.”²¹ Whereas Gerson had originated the concept that Joseph possessed Christ because as husband of Mary he possessed Christ’s mother, here Suarez looks more to the common ownership shared by the holy couple. This particular view is a valuable advance, for it accentuates Joseph’s fatherhood as something very real in the moral order. Always, of course, the basic premise must be the fact that Jesus was the miraculous fruit of the marriage. Once this truth is granted, the parenthood of Mary necessitates an analogous parenthood in St. Joseph.

Here, then, according to Suarez, is the reality of Joseph’s office. Because of it Joseph became the lawful superior of Christ as man. Luke’s meaning cannot be doubted when he says that Jesus “was subject to them.” We must, of course, understand

the correct meaning of our Lord's subjection. Because of His dignity as God, it was impossible for Him to be subject to any creature in the fullest sense of subjection. Nonetheless, Jesus could and did will to be subject to St. Joseph, freely tendering obedience and reverence to him as to a father.

Suarez completes his study of the fatherhood by describing the paternal affection and service which the Saint lavished on the Child Jesus. Here again he draws out an effective comparison in order to reach a deeper understanding of Joseph's position as fosterer.

We can understand, he says, that there existed between Mary and Joseph and between Jesus and Joseph a bond of mutual love and closest friendship. This was an intrinsic outgrowth of the position of the Saint as husband and father. It belongs to the perfection of a wife to love her husband and to be sincerely grateful for the devotion he bestows upon her. Since Mary was the holiest and most perfect of all wives, we gain some idea of her love for Joseph, and of his love as her perfect husband in return. But Jesus in His turn was the most perfect of all sons, and Joseph had the heart of a father bestowed on him by the Eternal Father in the sharing of their common name. The daily life in the intimacy of the family circle could not but increase the mutual love and gratitude of the three members of this holy family. Hence, Joseph's fatherly love for Christ and his service for his divine charge were expended with all the more devotion and excellence. ²²

It is to be noted that Suarez has placed this discussion of St. Joseph as foster father at the end of his treatment of the fatherhood. Both the location and the context show that in Suarez' opinion Joseph's foster fatherhood is subordinate to and dependent on Joseph's fatherhood by right of marriage—his basic title. Moreover, to this is also due the Saint's fatherly position, not only after the Incarnation but also at the very moment when the Incarnation took place. Suarez does not make the statement in so many words, but the idea is easily discernible. If nowhere else, it appears at least in his treatment of the marriage and in his attributing to St. Joseph a participation in the fatherhood over Christ as intimate as humanly possible.

Probably the most significant innovation Suarez pioneered is contained in his description of St. Joseph as a participation in the "order of the hypostatic union." This presupposes a most intimate relationship between Joseph and Jesus, further indicating the reality of the Saint's fatherhood in the moral order. Suarez introduces this topic by comparing Joseph's office or ministry with that of the Apostles. Their ministry pertained directly to the order of sanctifying grace. "But there are other ministries which touch the order of the hypostatic union, and this order of its very nature is of higher perfection, as we earlier explained concerning the dignity of the Mother of God. It is in this order that I think St. Joseph's ministry was instituted, and, as it were, in the lowest grade. But by the same token, Joseph's position surpasses all others because it

exists in this higher order. Accordingly, St. Thomas carefully states that the Apostles are greater by reason of their ministry of the New Testament. Joseph's ministry, however, belonged neither to the New nor properly to the Old; but rather to the Author of each, and to the cornerstone uniting the two."²³

In default of an explicit definition, we must judge the meaning of "order of the hypostatic union" from Suarez' context. He seems to understand that this order refers to the human nature of our Lord together with all the gifts, privileges, and relationships which directly flow from it. Only Jesus essentially belongs to this order, for in Him alone the natures of God and of man are united in the Divine Person. Also included, however, is everything decreed by God as a means or a condition of the causing of the Incarnation. In such a case its sole reason for existing is the hypostatic union, and hence it belongs to the order of the hypostatic union although not essentially. Now, since Mary and Joseph were chosen by God as part of His plan to bring Christ respectably into this world and rear Him until manhood, they belong to this order as co-operators, for the whole reason for the existence of both was the Incarnation. After Mary, no one had any such role as did Joseph in preparing for Christ by his marriage, and in taking care of our Lord after Jesus was born. Hence, Suarez plainly states that the Saint's place in the order of the hypostatic union must be reserved for him together with our Lord and our Lady, to the exclusion of all others.

What reference, however, does this have to the nature of St. Joseph's fatherhood? Directly, it is true, Suarez' vindication of the Saint's rank pertains to the dignity of the fatherhood rather than its nature. Yet indirectly it points to the tremendous reality of the fatherhood, expressing in strong terms the consequences of Joseph's paternal relationship to Jesus. Thus, it is another way of indicating that the Saint was bound to our Lord by the very real ties of a fatherhood in the moral order.

To tabulate Suarez' doctrine,

a) Joseph is the husband of Mary in a genuine and virginal marriage,

b) toward which the Saint had co-operated by reason of his consent to live virginally with our Lady.

c) The marriage contract was, at least in its essence, entered into at the time of the espousal,

d) so that when Mary was already the wife of St. Joseph, Christ was conceived within her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit.

e) God specially arranged this marriage for various reasons, among them being the protection of the honor of Mother and Son.

f) The Son miraculously given to Mary was thereby given to Joseph, for Mary belonged to Joseph just as Joseph belonged to Mary.

g) Moreover, as husband and wife they owned everything in common, and Joseph therefore shared to a certain degree in Mary's parenthood.

h) Joseph was the putative father of Jesus, that is, in public opinion he was thought to be the physical father of our Lord.

i) However, there existed a much deeper reality. The Eternal Father gave the Saint a title which signified what it contained. Joseph shared in the Eternal Father's relationship to Christ as far as humanly possible, excepting physical generation.

j) The Eternal Father bestowed on Joseph the capacity for loving Christ as a true son.

k) Joseph was more than an adoptive father inasmuch as the Child was not extraneous to his marriage but had been conceived and born within it.

l) Joseph served as fosterer by reason of his care in rearing Jesus.

m) Christ willed to be subject to Joseph, so that by the fatherly authority bestowed on the Saint, he was juridically or legally the father of our Lord.

Francis de Sales (*1622)

After Suarez the most prominent writer on St. Joseph was Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Church. De Sales is known for his Nineteenth Conference, *On the Virtues of St. Joseph*, a sermon preached on the Saint's feast. In such a context we might expect a devotional rather than a strictly theological treatment, but Francis' panegyric of St. Joseph's virtues is actually a devotional presentation of dogmatic principles. Here we will consider some of his references to the fatherhood.

They are mainly of interest because they represent a synthesis of doctrine in his time.

The Geneva bishop begins with the text, "The just man shall flourish like the palm tree,"²⁴ and then applies to St. Joseph the comparison which Ephrem first used thirteen centuries earlier.²⁵ De Sales does not acknowledge any dependence on Ephrem, but his development of the idea follows Ephrem's simile so closely that a theory of independence is most improbable. Throughout, Francis is referring to the legend of the palm tree's fecundating shadow as a symbol of Joseph's role with regard to Jesus and Mary: "The palm tree does not contribute any of its substance to this production; yet no one can say that it has not a great share in a fruit of the female palm, which without it would not bear any but would remain barren and unfruitful."²⁶

This figurative and poetic passage certainly describes an intimate co-operation of St. Joseph in the circumstances of the Incarnation of our Lord. De Sales is thinking here of a causation of those events which in God's plan were necessary to prepare for Christ's assumption of human nature. The next sentence shows what these events were to be. "God having destined from all eternity in His divine providence that a virgin should conceive a son who would be both God and man, willed nevertheless that this virgin should be married."²⁷ Francis does not explain the ultimate reason why Jesus was to have a virgin mother, namely, because the one natural fatherhood of the Eternal Father was not to

be shared with any human being. He does, however, explain the reason why our Lady was to be married: partly to protect her virginity and the reputation of herself and her Son. Thus, "It was necessary that divine Providence should commit her to the charge and guardianship of a man absolutely pure, and that this Virgin should conceive and bring forth the sweet fruit of life, our Lord, under the shadow of holy marriage."²⁸ Clearly, this marriage is called a "shadow" not as if it were an appearance of a genuine union but rather because, like a shadow it protected the reputation of Mary, and within its shade Christ our Lord was conceived and born. In several phrases, De Sales repeats the idea that Joseph "although he contributed nothing of his own, yet . . . had a great part in the most holy fruit of his sacred spouse." Moreover, Joseph's office was directly willed by God. "Mary belonged to him, and was planted close to him, like a glorious palm by the side of its beloved palm tree, and according to the decree of divine Providence could not produce fruit and must not do so except under his shadow and in his sight; I mean under the shadow of the holy marriage which they had contracted together, which was unlike the ordinary marriages of this world, whether in respect to the communication of outward goods or the union and conjunction of inward goods."²⁹

De Sales does not elaborate his meaning of the "unlikeness" of Joseph's marriage in comparison to other marriages; it evidently refers to the fact that

the marriage was not consummated. Most important, however, is the common parenthood of Joseph and Mary, and the spiritual link that bound Joseph to Jesus. "By means of this marriage, the Good of eternal goods, our Lord Himself, belonged to St. Joseph as well as to our Lady. This is not true as regards the nature which He took in the womb of our glorious Mistress, and which had been formed by the Holy Spirit of the most pure blood of our Lady; but it is so as regards grace, which made him participate in all the possessions of his beloved spouse." ³⁰

Here De Sales follows the long tradition from Augustine, showing that Christ came to Joseph through the marriage with our Lady. Here, too, recurs the idea of mutual ownership in marriage, as already presented by Suarez. Probably the most noteworthy element of the passage is De Sales' description of the fatherhood in the moral order. This was not a fatherhood "as regards nature," but it was "as regards grace," and consequently Joseph shared in all the possessions of Mary, her son included. The reference to a fatherhood according to "grace" is somewhat enigmatic, if taken literally. In technical theological language, it perhaps indicates the moral order, for the possession of Jesus by St. Joseph is said to be not according to physical nature; and logically, "physical nature" would be opposed to the moral order, within which Joseph's fatherhood actually existed.

To summarize, Francis De Sales pictures our Lord as the fruit of the virginal marriage. The mar-

riage protects the honor of our Lord and of our Lady, and by reason of it Joseph can be called an intimate co-operator in the circumstances of the Incarnation. In God's plan he was necessary in order that Jesus might be born of the Virgin Mary within the bonds of a true marriage.

Cornelius a Lapide (*1637)

Numerous theologians discussed the fatherhood, but we can single out here only those who figured prominently in the development of the doctrine concerning it. Such a one was Cornelius a Lapide, whose influence is readily perceived in writers of later centuries. However, he follows the treatment of Suarez quite closely. In explaining the fatherhood by right of marriage, A Lapide describes Christ as the fruit, as it were, of Joseph's field, belonging to Joseph's family because Jesus belonged to the family of Mary. It is in this connection that A Lapide mentions the term "matrimonial father" as a possible title that would express the Saint's relationship fittingly.³¹ Henceforth, the search for a satisfactory and adequate title becomes noticeable.

Bossuet (*1704)

Bossuet, the oratorical genius, seems to have been the first to express in detail Joseph's co-operation in the Incarnation due to the Saint's virginity. Fundamentally, Bossuet is saying the same as did Augustine in his reiterated parallel of Mary and Joseph as virgin mother and virginal father. His em-

phasis, however, and the development of his thought are both different. He describes Mary's virginity, which was reserved for the motherhood of God, as also belonging to Joseph by reason of the virginal marriage; that is why the fruit of Mary's virginity belongs to Joseph as well. "Jesus, this blessed Child, has emerged in a certain sense from the virginal union of the two spouses. Did we not say that the virginity of Mary drew Jesus Christ from heaven? Is not Jesus the sacred flower which virginity produced. . . . and therefore, can we not say that it is Mary's virginity which makes her fecund?"³²

Here appears the recurrent idea in the tradition dependent on Augustine, that Jesus is the miraculous fruit of the marriage. Bossuet also takes cognizance of the divine decree that Jesus was to have no human natural father and was to be born of a virgin. In the following sentences he attributes to Joseph some causative role in bringing about the circumstances of the Incarnation. "But if this is so [i.e., that it is Mary's virginity that makes her fecund], I will hesitate no longer in affirming that Joseph had a part in this great miracle. The purity of Mary is not only the trust but is also the property of her virginal spouse. She belongs to him by marriage; she belongs to him by the chaste care he expends on her. O fruitful virginity! If you are the property of Mary, you are also the property of Joseph. Mary has vowed virginity; Joseph also guards it; and the two spouses present it to the Eternal Father as a treasure preserved by their common solicitude."³³

In saying this, Bossuet is certainly thinking of Joseph's consent to the virginal marriage, so necessary for its existence. He draws the logical conclusion: "If, then, Joseph has so great a share in the saintly virginity of Mary, he also partakes of the fruit which she bears; and this is why Jesus is his Son, not indeed according to the flesh but Son by the spirit, because of the virginal union which joins Joseph with Christ's mother."³⁴ Bossuet is following the Augustinian pattern again. Joseph's fatherhood is spiritual, a relationship in the moral order fundamentally due to the marriage. Hence, it existed from the first moment that Mary's virginity was "fruitful."

Bossuet now turns to consider Joseph's paternal authority. "St. John Chrysostom notes that everywhere in the Gospel Joseph appears as father."³⁵ It is he who bestows the name of Jesus, just as fathers name their children. It is he whom the angel warns of all the dangers to the Child; and it is to him that he announces the time of return."³⁶ It would seem that in this citation of Chrysostom, Bossuet claims too much. Especially since Chrysostom does not appear to have accepted the marriage as genuine, his authority concerning the interpretation of the fatherhood ought not to be unduly extended. It is true that in the passage Bossuet cites, Chrysostom refers to the jurisdiction of Joseph over Christ; but Chrysostom says nothing of the added warnings by the angel, as Bossuet seems to imply.

“Jesus reveres Joseph and obeys him. It is he who directs His actions as one who is the superior in taking care of Him. Everywhere he is shown to us as father.”³⁷ Here, too, Bossuet states the facts correctly, but the thought does not appear in Chrysostom. “‘Whence does this come?’ asks Chrysostom. Here is the true reason: ‘It was God’s plan,’ he says, ‘to give to great St. Joseph all that could belong to a father without the impairment of virginity.’”³⁸ As we have already explained in discussing this passage in an earlier chapter, Chrysostom clearly ascribes to St. Joseph fatherhood in *some* respect, due to the Saint’s authority; but the Greek text does not indicate the idea of “fatherhood in *every* respect except physical paternity” as Bossuet claims it does. Perhaps the best judgment on these passages is to say that their doctrine is correct, and reflects keen theological insight. However, it would be an exaggeration to claim that they faithfully mirror the words of Chrysostom.

Having touched upon the fatherhood by right of marriage, and also as shown by paternal authority, Bossuet concludes by describing Joseph’s fatherly affection. This affection clearly reveals a fatherhood for which the capacity was created by God in St. Joseph: “If, then, St. Joseph is not the father, how could he have the love of a father? It is here that we must understand the action of the power of God in this work. By an effect of this power Joseph has the heart of a father; and if nature does not bestow it upon him, God gives him one from

His own hand. . . . The same hand which forms each of the hearts of men makes the heart of a father in Joseph and the heart of a son in Jesus. This is why Jesus obeys, and why Joseph does not fear to command Him.”³⁹

The bond of a spiritual fatherhood is in the forefront of Bossuet’s thought. It is a link existing between Joseph and Jesus which did not originate from generation—“nature did not bestow it upon him”—but which came from the Eternal Father Himself. In other words, it is a spiritual fatherhood or a fatherhood in the moral order given St. Joseph by miracle and not by God’s ordinary providence. “And whence arises this boldness to command His Creator? It is because the true Father of Jesus Christ, God who generates Him from all eternity, having chosen holy Joseph to act as the father of His Son in time has in a certain fashion infused a ray or spark of the infinite love which He bears His Son. This changes Joseph’s heart, and gives him the love of a father.”⁴⁰

Equivalently, then, Bossuet says that Joseph was not only chosen to act as father of Christ, but that he was also given the capacity to do so by the Eternal Father.

We conclude with this paragraph, which shows how Joseph cared for our Lord as a human father would care for the son he had generated, and how Joseph’s love for Jesus manifests the true fatherhood within him: “If you have not yet understood the fatherhood of Joseph, behold his tears, behold his

sorrows, and realize that he is father. His distress gives us proper understanding; Mary is correct when she says, 'Thy father and I have been seeking Thee sorrowing.'"⁴¹

With Bossuet we close our survey of theological writing of the past, and turn to consider the mind of the Church before making a final synthesis of the doctrine of the fatherhood.

CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

CHURCH DOCUMENTS

The same reasons which kept St. Joseph in a subordinate position in theological literature for so many centuries likewise operated with regard to the official attitude of the Church. Understandably, then, as far as St. Joseph is concerned, our main indications of the mind of the Church come from papal documents that are less than a century old. In general these documents picture the Saint as a servant of the Incarnation. On the one hand, their wording is such that they do not close off further development of theories, proofs, and terminology regarding the fatherhood; but, on the other hand, they adhere quite strictly to a norm which closely

paraphrases the Gospels or presents immediate deductions from them.

Quemadmodum Deus

We begin with the pertinent passages of *Quemadmodum Deus*, the decree of December 8, 1870, wherein Pius IX declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. There we read, "God chose another Joseph of whom the first Joseph had been the type, and whom He made the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures."¹ The Pope certainly indicates that Joseph was given his position in accordance with the special providence of God in arranging for the Incarnation. Joseph's duty, however, is described in very general terms: to govern and to guard Jesus and Mary. This responsibility, in so far as it concerns our Lord, must indicate some sort of authority over Him.

"[Joseph] had as his spouse the immaculate Virgin Mary, and of her was born by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord, who in the sight of men condescended to be reputed the son of Joseph and was subject to him."² Here, while the pertinent documents of the Church leave no doubt as to the genuinity of the marriage, they customarily use the word "spouse" instead of "wife" or its equivalents. This usage is apparently modeled on Luke 2:5, "Mary, his espoused wife," in order to imply delicately that Mary was the virginal wife of St. Joseph. In any event the fact is clearly expressed, following

the wording of Matthew 1:16, that Jesus was born of Joseph's wife. Nothing is said of a fatherhood that might be based on the marriage. Instead, Joseph is described as putative father and father by parental authority.

"Putative father" or some equivalent phrase recurs frequently in the Church documents. It is another instance of a close paraphrase of the Gospels: in this case, Luke 3:23, "Being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph." The great advantage of "putative father" lies in the wide extent of its meaning. Correctly certifying that St. Joseph was not the natural father of our Lord, at the same time it neither denies nor prevents the use of any other title that would show a positive and root sense of the fatherhood.

Yet it would be incorrect to say that Pius IX in this decree limits himself to the supposed physical fatherhood of St. Joseph. The assumption of such a role by the Saint was for the protection of the honor of Mary and Jesus, not for the direct service of Mother and Son. Hence, we find that Pius refers also to Joseph's fatherly authority, his fostering, and his paternal affection. The authority is amply indicated by the use of Luke 2:51, relating Christ's subjection to Joseph no less than to Mary. The Saint's fostering appears from his "support" of Jesus; and his paternal affection is likewise evident, as in this continuation of the Pope's text: "Joseph not only beheld Him whom countless kings and prophets had longed to behold, but lived with Him and embraced

and kissed Him with fatherly love, and expertly supported Him.”³ The entire phrase is adapted from St. Bernard’s homily, used by the Church in its prayers to St. Joseph.⁴ There can be no doubt that the text refers to the will of Joseph to receive Christ as his son, whom he “kissed with fatherly love, and expertly supported.”

Inclytum Patriarcham

In 1871 Pius IX issued another important decree concerning St. Joseph, which complemented the decree of the previous year. The Pope’s introductory sentence alone pertains to our present discussion, and is doubly interesting because we can discern in it a quasi-formula of referring to the Saint: “Almighty God, in preference to all His saints, willed . . . the illustrious patriarch Blessed Joseph . . . to be the pure and genuine spouse of the immaculate Virgin Mary as well as the putative father of His only-begotten Son. He enriched him and filled him to overflowing with entirely unique graces, enabling him to execute most faithfully the duties of so sublime a state.”⁵

This description can be called quite typical of the teaching of the Church concerning the fatherhood. For our purpose it is noteworthy for its emphasis on the divine choice of St. Joseph. For so exceptional an office as husband of Mary and putative father of Jesus, God bestowed on the Saint equally exceptional graces. Hence, although this passage does not explain precisely the nature of Joseph’s

office in all its details, the Pope's wording must mean that Joseph received the capacity requisite for his position.

Quamquam Pluries

These, however, have been but incidental references. We must look for the detailed doctrine of the Church in the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*. Issued in 1889, this encyclical represents our most complete statement concerning St. Joseph. As to the fatherhood, Leo says, "There are special reasons why blessed Joseph should be explicitly named the Patron of the Church, and why the Church should in turn expect much from his patronage and guardianship. For he indeed was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ."⁶

The Pope begins by pointing out the close connection between Joseph's position as Patron of the Universal Church, and his position as husband of Mary and putative father of our Lord. Therefore, he affirms the genuinity or reality of both the marriage and the fatherhood, for Joseph's patronage would not be founded on something that was unreal. It is true that the fatherhood is modified by the phrase, "as was supposed," but the very fact that Leo will immediately explain some of its qualities and consequences shows that it must consist in something much more than an empty supposition.

From this [double position of husband and father] arose all Joseph's dignity, grace, holiness, and glory. The dignity of the Mother of God

is certainly so sublime that nothing can surpass it; but nonetheless, since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures. ⁷

Without a doubt this is one of the most important passages of the encyclical. First in the Pope's thought are the consequences of the Saint's fatherhood and marriage. Like the marriage, the fatherhood has given Joseph an extremely exalted rank. Both to prepare him for his task and to reward him for his co-operation, sublime graces were bestowed upon him. Joseph's further co-operation with these graces resulted in corresponding holiness, and finally in the eternal glory that is the crown of his sanctity; hence, his "dignity, grace, holiness, and glory."

In its later lines the encyclical will treat separately of the fatherhood; here it has begun to devote itself to a study of Joseph's connection with our Lady. When the Pope ranks the dignity of St. Joseph as second only to that of Mary, he is not directly referring to the fatherhood, but is preparing the way to describe the mutual ownership that existed in the marriage. This he does in these lines:

For marriage is the closest possible union and relationship whereby each spouse participates in the goods of the other by the nature of the relationship. Consequently, if God gave Joseph

as a spouse to the Virgin, He assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself. ⁸

Here the thought of the encyclical bears close resemblance to the theological argument that Joseph is father of Jesus by right of his marriage with our Lady. It would seem logical to infer that the Pope's words about Mary as a true parent mean that Joseph, too, possesses the dignity of a true parent by reason of his "mutual participation" with his wife. However, Leo limits himself to enunciating the principle that husband and wife own all things in common. He does not explicitly apply this to Joseph's jurisdiction over Jesus.

Having described Joseph's relationship to our Lady, the Pope now turns to the fatherhood, juxtaposing Joseph's dignity as father of Jesus with the dignity that accrues to him as husband of Mary:

Likewise, Joseph stands out alone in august dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by the divine appointment, considered in the opinion of men as His father. ⁹

The word "likewise" leaves no doubt as to the parallelism that exists between the marriage and the fatherhood. Leo is manifestly speaking of fatherhood in the proper sense of the word when he says that public opinion looked on St. Joseph as father. But if this fatherhood by generation is to be ex-

cluded from Joseph's relationship to Jesus, the relationship of "guardian of the Son of God" still remains. According to the entire concept and context, Joseph's guardianship is nothing if not paternal, as willed by God Himself.

Consequently, the Word of God was modestly obedient to Joseph, was attentive to his commands, and paid him every honor that children should render their parent.¹⁰

We could hardly ask for a clearer description of Joseph's paternal authority—unmistakably a reference to a true fatherhood due to the parallel with the obedience owed to a parent.

From this double dignity [of husband and father] such duties arose as are prescribed by nature for the head of a household, so that Joseph was at once the legitimate and the natural guardian, preserver, and defender of the divine household over which he presided.¹¹

This text further elaborates the fatherly authority of the Saint. It is noteworthy that Pope Leo points out the natural law itself as the basis of Joseph's duties as head of the household. In saying this Leo returns to the idea that the Saint's position comes to him through and because of the marriage, for without the marriage St. Joseph would not have been, by natural law, the head of the Holy Family.

Now we read an excellent summary of the service and love which Joseph bestowed on his two charges. It is in virtue of this affectionate support

tendered to Jesus as to his son that the Saint has received the title of foster father.

Zealously he watched over his spouse and her divine Child with the most ardent love and constant solicitude. By his labor he regularly provided for both of them such necessities of life as food and clothing. In seeking a place of refuge he warded off that danger to their lives which had been engendered by the jealousy of a king. Amid the inconveniences of the journey and the bitterness of exile, he continually showed himself the companion, the helper, and the consoler of the Virgin and of Jesus.¹²

With this passage Leo's direct description of the fatherhood is completed. Taken as a whole, it can correctly be styled as a portrayal of St. Joseph's "fatherhood of education."

In the remaining section of the encyclical the idea of the fatherhood comes forward in so far as it is contained in the Saint's patronage of the Universal Church. It is in this section that the Pope refers to Joseph, this time with no modifying term attached. Evidently the Pontiff wishes the word understood according to his past explanation, and feels that a limiting adjective is no longer necessary. Since all physical generation has been excluded from St. Joseph's fatherhood, there should be no hesitancy in attributing to the Saint an analogous fatherhood in the moral order, as the Pope has described it. This concept of analogy is further sug-

gested in the recurrent phrases, "as with" or "with a sort of paternal authority." Here is the passage in question:

The divine household, which Joseph governed as with paternal authority, contained the beginnings of the new Church. . . . This is his numberless family, scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority because he is the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ.¹³

If we wish to condense the doctrine of *Quamquam Pluries*, it is somewhat difficult to differentiate between the explicit teaching of the encyclical and the deductions that flow so readily and immediately from certain of its statements. The many strands of its teaching can perhaps be brought together in the following summary:

a) Joseph, as the true husband of the Mother of God in a virginal marriage, thereby shares in Mary's dignity more intimately than any created person.

b) Because of the mutual ownership due to the marriage, Joseph shares in Mary's parenthood of Jesus, and Jesus belongs to Joseph by right of the marriage. This, however, is a deduction from the encyclical.

c) Joseph is father of our Lord because of the paternal authority bestowed on him by God.

d) He is also father in virtue of the fostering love and service he lavishes on the Christ Child.

e) The Child comes to the Saint in the marriage which God has specially selected, ordained, and brought into existence for the reception and rearing of Jesus.

f) The Saint is not the physical father of Jesus but preserves Christ's honor by being reputed as such.

Other Papal Pronouncements

As mentioned, no document of the Church considers the fatherhood in such completeness as does *Quamquam Pluries*. Brief references are made elsewhere to St. Joseph's position over the Holy Family, but little more. Thus, in Leo XIII's Brief of June 14, 1892, we read of the family that consisted of "Christ our God, our Savior, together with His virgin Mother and Joseph, that blessed man who exercised the rights of father over Jesus. . . . In it all men were to behold the perfect exemplar of domestic society as well as of all virtue and holiness. . . . In Joseph heads of the household are blessed with the unsurpassed model of fatherly watchfulness and care."¹⁴ These are descriptions of St. Joseph's paternal authority and of the fatherhood he exercised in rearing Jesus.

In 1920 Benedict XV issued his *Motu Proprio* on St. Joseph and Labor. Because of the subject matter of this document we would not expect any explicit explanation of Joseph's relationship to Mary and Jesus. There are incidental references to him "who was reputed to be the father of our Lord

Jesus Christ," and "the august head of the Holy Family," but most of the letter deals with other aspects of the devotion to the Saint.¹⁵

Another notable mention of St. Joseph occurs in Pius XI's monumental encyclical against atheistic communism, *Divini Redemptoris*. In it the Pope speaks of Joseph as the "tender and vigilant head" of the Holy Family, and the guardian of the Divine Child. Again, however, since the encyclical was mainly directed toward social problems, a detailed presentation of the Saint's fatherhood was not part of the subject matter. In this encyclical Pope Pius declared St. Joseph patron in the struggle against atheistic communism. This patronage is part of Joseph's patronage of the Universal Church, which, with regard to the Mystical Body of Christ, is the extension of the Saint's fatherhood of our Lord. Hence, Joseph's role against atheistic communism implicitly recognizes his paternal protection and love.¹⁶ These same general ideas will again be found in John XXIII's Apostolic Letter of March 19, 1961, which is contained in full in Chapter 25.

We now bring forward an excerpt from a little-known discourse of Pius XI, given in the Consistorial Hall, March 19, 1928. After comparing the vocation of St. Joseph with those of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter, the Holy Father said:

This was a unique and magnificent mission, that of protecting the Son of God and the King of the world; the mission of protecting the virginity and holiness of Mary; the singular

mission of entering into participation in the great mystery hidden from the eyes of past ages, and of thus co-operating in the Incarnation and Redemption.¹⁷

The fatherhood is not mentioned here by name, but is referred to as Joseph's exercise of a protectorate. Likewise, in the case of the marriage Joseph is said to protect the virginity of Mary. In this reference Pope Pius is implicitly referring to Joseph's consent to the virginal marriage, one of the means—and the main one—by which he shielded our Lady's virginity. We must note carefully that the Pope does not hesitate to ascribe an intimate co-operation to St. Joseph, and this not only with respect to the Incarnation but also to the Redemption itself.

This discourse of Pius XI does not carry the weight of an official doctrinal pronouncement. It would seem to be on much the same plane as a letter of Leo XIII concerning the restoration of the feast of St. Joseph in Spain. Both of these statements serve as further indications of the mind of the pontiffs, but, we emphasize, their probative value is less inasmuch as they are not addressed in an official document to the whole Church.

No one can fail to perceive that this mark of honor is due to the holy man, for as the chosen spouse of the Virgin Mother of God, he was a participant in her dignity by reason of their conjugal union; Christ the Son of God wished him to be His guardian and to be thought His

father as well; he was head of the divine household on earth with, as it were, fatherly authority; he has the Church dedicated to his loyalty and protection. Such a person possesses so surpassing a dignity that no honor exists which should not be paid him.¹⁸

The passage echoes *Quamquam Pluries* so faithfully that what was said of the official encyclical can with the same measure be said of it.

Was something of this praise of St. Joseph retracted in the decree of 1892, which rejected numerous episcopal petitions for a higher liturgical rank for the Saint? Nothing can be farther from the truth, for no question of doctrine was involved in the decree, and therefore no question concerning Joseph's fatherhood. The decree was a prudent liturgical regulation which spoke of the Saint in the Church's customary language as the "chaste spouse of the Immaculate Mother of God and the putative father of Christ our Lord and Savior." The wording implies only the inexpediency of making liturgical changes at the moment.¹⁹

Prayers

When we survey the official prayers of the Church, we find references to a fatherhood of St. Joseph described in various ways. In the Litany of St. Joseph, the Saint is invoked as "Foster father of the Son of God," the "Watchful defender of Christ," and the "Head of the Holy Family." These titles, signifying service, affection, and authority,

are in addition to the couplet that describes Joseph's marriage: "Chaste guardian of the Virgin," and "Spouse of the Mother of God."²⁰ As is evident, the description of the fatherhood given here makes certain that no physical fatherhood be ascribed to St. Joseph. A fatherhood of education as well as Joseph's consent to the virginal marriage must be understood in order to grasp the meaning of these invocations. Otherwise, the Saint could not be pictured in his fatherly relationship to Jesus, or in his relationship to Mary as her virginal husband.

The Preface for masses of St. Joseph, addressing God the Eternal Father, describes the Saint as: the just man, given by Thee to the Virgin Mother of God as her spouse; and the faithful and prudent servant set over Thy family in order that he might protect in the stead of a father Jesus Christ our Lord, Thine only-begotten Son, conceived by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.²¹

The full meaning of the Preface does not immediately emerge from a literal translation. The following paraphrase attempts to express further shades of meaning understood in the Latin original:

Not only was Joseph, who was moreover a just man, God's choice to be the husband of the Virgin Mother of God; he was also placed in charge of the Holy Family as a faithful and a prudent servant of his Lord; and he received these two positions *in order that* he might take

the place of a human father in the care of Him who had been conceived by the action of the Holy Spirit.

This Preface is extremely rich in meaning, far more pregnant, we believe, than any other summary reference to the Saint. Joseph's justice, evidently in reference to Matthew 1:19—"being a just man"—is linked with the fact that by God's special preference he was chosen to be the husband of Mary and to act as the father of Jesus. His obedience and prudence, like that of the faithful steward of Luke 12:42, were outstanding in the discharge of his office over Jesus and Mary; this would indicate paternal authority. God's *purpose* in making these arrangements was to give the Christ-Child a guardian, a fosterer, who was to protect and support and love Jesus in the way that a human natural father loves the son he has generated.

The Preface explicitly points out the virginity of Mary ("Virgin Mother of God"), the virginal conception of Jesus in Mary ("overshadowing of the Holy Spirit"), and the distinct purpose of God in arranging the marriage to receive and to safeguard the infant Christ ("the just man . . . given as spouse . . . and faithful servant . . . set over Thy family . . . in order to protect Jesus Christ"). No explicit reference to the Saint's virginity appears in these lines, but Joseph's co-operation in the virginal marriage must be implicitly understood since otherwise Mary could not have been a virgin mother and wife at the same time.

The mention of the Saint's virginity brings us to consider a prayer approved by the Church, in which Joseph's title of "Virginal father of Jesus" is given unqualified approval. On October 11, 1906, Nicholas Joseph Camilli, Archbishop-bishop of Jassy (Iasi), Romania, in audience with His Holiness Pius X, presented the following prayer which he had composed, asking that it be approved and indulgenced:

O Joseph, virginal father of Jesus and most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us daily to Jesus, the very Son of God, that being defended by the power of His grace while duly striving in life, we may be crowned by Him at the hour of our death.²²

Pius read the text attentively, and then, taking his pen, wrote underneath the prayer its first indulgence. On the following day, October 12, Cardinal Gennari wrote to its author, "I presented the document to the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences; and no one has made any demurrer against it." The increased indulgence of 1931 has since indicated the Church's continued approbation, so that St. Joseph may licitly and laudably be addressed by the authentic title of "Virginal Father" (but see p. 330).²³

It is imperative to remember that the Church has not determined in what sense or senses the title may be used. Obviously, to apply it to the Saint according to any dangerous or heretical doctrine would be illicit. We may safely say that the lifelong

virginity of St. Joseph as well as a fatherhood of Christ is supposed. There seems to be no reason against the following added meaning as well: that Joseph by his virginity and by his marriage with our Lady co-operated somehow in the Incarnation of our Lord. Whether or not this should be accepted will be determined in the next and final chapter, where we shall examine the full meaning of "virginal father" in so far as it is based on tradition.

Offices and Masses

Our final consideration of the prayers of the Church touches the offices and masses of St. Joseph. In the masses of March 19, St. Joseph the Worker (May 1), and the Holy Family (first Sunday after Epiphany), the references are to the Saint's protectorate of the Church and of the Holy Family, his marriage with our Lady, and the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

The breviary hymns of these feasts speak more explicitly than do the masses of Joseph's fatherhood. Briefly analyzed, they picture the Saint as the protector, the putative father, the father in affection and service, the father by authority, and thereby the co-operator in the Incarnation and the Redemption. "Fatherhood by right of marriage" does not seem to appear, at least explicitly. Perhaps this basic juridical title to the fatherhood is contained in the hymns' repetition of the selection of Joseph as husband and father. They emphasize that Joseph is not the physical father, and that Christ was born to Mary his

wife; but, on the other hand, they give Joseph his title of father, they show him exercising the responsibilities of father, and they see in all this his co-operation in the Incarnation. Finally, their acceptance of the Holy Family as a true family within which the Saint is husband and father implies that Joseph is much more than a mere guardian. Nonetheless, "fatherhood by right of marriage" is at most implied, for nowhere do the hymns attribute Jesus to the *marriage* of Joseph and our Lady as its miraculous fruit. If such an instance were to be found, we would have no hesitation in identifying the concept brought forward by Augustine.

The following examples best show these ideas of the fatherhood: for Vespers on the feast of the Holy Family,

Of the ancient fathers, thou art the chosen protector of the Virgin, thou whom the divine Child addressed with the sweet name of father. ²⁴

At Matins,

As a wanderer, led by the word of the angel, the Child swiftly returns from the distant Nile, and is safe under His father's roof, after having endured much suffering. ²⁵

In Lauds,

With what perfection of spirit and action Jesus carries out the wishes of His father [Joseph]! Joseph is present with his wife, sharing in her love and solicitude; God unites them in a thousand ways by His gifts of grace. Loving each

other, they unite in love of Jesus, and Jesus gives to each of them the reward of such reciprocal affection. ²⁶

At Matins for March 19,

The Maker of all things chose you [Joseph] to be the husband of the chaste Virgin, and He wished you to be called the father of the Word, and made you as well a minister of salvation. God, the King of kings, the Ruler of the world, at whose nod the company of nether-world spirits trembles, He whom the heavens serve prostrate, He subjects Himself to you! ²⁷

We single out the hymn *Te Joseph celebrent* from Vespers of March 19 and St. Joseph the Worker for special comment. This hymn seems to present the traditional opinion that Joseph and Mary were united in a true marriage by their betrothal; hence, that our Lord was not only born but also conceived within the virginal marriage. Two reasons present themselves for this opinion, which is suggested as a probable interpretation: first, in the temporal sequence, Joseph's marriage is described earlier than the conception of Christ; and second, Mary is called the wife—*conjux*—of the Saint at the time Christ is existing within her.

May the heavenly hosts sing your praises, Joseph; may all the choirs of Christendom re-echo your name—you who, renowned for merit, were joined to the glorious Virgin in a virginal marriage. When you were sorely afflicted with doubt, wondering at your wife who was preg-

nant with her sweet offspring, the angel taught you that the Child had been conceived by the breath of the Spirit from above. ²⁸

It is striking to note also that in the hymn for Matins for the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, the Saint is twice addressed as "father Joseph," and on the second occasion, there is an explicit prayer to God as "Father and Creator of all things" that "we might imitate father Joseph in practice both in life and death." This seems to be the most direct mention in the liturgy of St. Joseph as "father," with no qualifying adjective attached.

Bishops' Petitions

Still another division of ecclesiastical documents calls for brief mention. These are the petitions signed by hundreds of prelates at the First Vatican Council and thereafter. The petitions serve as norms to show how the teaching body of the Church, dispersed throughout the world, has signified its judgment on the fatherhood. ²⁹

The first petition, signed by 118 bishops, asks that St. Joseph be chosen and declared Patron of the Universal Church—"he who was constituted by God as the guardian of His only-begotten Son and who tirelessly carried out toward Jesus and Mary the duties of father and of husband with most loyal love and utmost diligence." ³⁰ Almost the same characterization is found in a second petition signed by 43 Superiors-General of various Religious Orders.

In it the Saint is referred to as the "foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "he whom Christ had here on earth as His foster father and guardian."³¹

A third petition is more detailed. Macabiau quotes 255 signatories in the order found in the original: 38 cardinals of the 42 at the First Vatican Council, including the future Leo XIII; and 217 Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops.³² The text which these prelates approved reads in part as follows:

No one is unaware that Blessed Joseph was chosen by the special providence of God in preference to all other creatures in order that he might merit to be the husband of the Virgin Mother of God and to be the father of the Word Incarnate, not indeed by generation but by love, by adoption, and by the right of marriage. So much so is this a fact that we read that he was not only called the father of Christ in the holy gospels and by the Blessed Virgin herself, but also that our Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh humbly deigned to be subject to him as to a father. . . .³³

This description of the fatherhood is quite comprehensive. It mentions first, the divine selection of St. Joseph for his position; next, his marriage to our Lady; and third, the fatherhood of Jesus that came to him through that marriage. Mentioned, too, are virtually all the important titles used by anyone in referring to the fatherhood: Joseph's affection for Christ, the authority given him over our Lord,

and "adoption." We suggest that the very fact that the petition speaks of fatherhood by right of marriage shows that this "adoption" must be analogous, since Joseph could not accept Jesus as if He had been a son extraneous to the marriage. According to the context, "adoption" is inserted probably in order to further indicate that the Saint accepted Christ as his own son. Finally, "adoption" should be understood according to the thought of Augustine, which clearly lies behind the wording of this petition, as the references to Luke and to Mary help to show; and Augustine, we recall, explicitly excludes adoption in the strict sense of the word.

In Chapter 21 we shall discuss the bishops' petition of 1961 to include St. Joseph's name in the Mass. This petition is based on the dignity and reality of Joseph's fatherhood.

Condemnations

To conclude this chapter, we must note the Church's condemnation of erroneous extremes. The Holy See has issued two such reprobations of teaching concerning St. Joseph. In each case the author in question held that the Saint somehow contributed physically to the Incarnation of our Lord, namely, as a "physical cause."

In 1907, José D. M. Corbato put forth the theory that by a sort of miracle St. Joseph physically was the father of Christ due to the action of the Holy Spirit. This was supposed to be physical fa-

therhood in the proper sense of the term, although the "miracle" was postulated in such a way that the doctrine of the virginity of our Blessed Lady was left unimpaired. Corbato's book was promptly placed on the Index of Forbidden Books,

especially in respect to the doctrine proposed and defended by the author, of a divine fatherhood of St. Joseph in the real and proper sense of the word.³⁴

The second action of the Holy See was taken against an article on the fatherhood written in 1928 by Raphael Petrone, C.M. In his retraction the author made the statement that he had been informed of the condemnation of his article by the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office, that he made his submission, and that he retracted all erroneous opinions as well as those contrary to Catholic sense.³⁵

It was not mentioned in particular which statements had been retracted, but the objectionable thesis in all likelihood was the presentation of St. Joseph as a physical, instrumental cause of the Incarnation.

The essential issue is probably the thesis defended by the author that while the virginity of Mary was of course left intact, St. Joseph had a part in the conception of Christ due to a miraculous intervention of God. It is an uncommon expression to assign to St. Joseph a "divine fatherhood."³⁶

As these condemnations show, it is wrong to claim for the Saint any physical co-operation or causality in the virginal conception of Christ within Mary. Causality in the moral order, however, is not excluded, nor is a physical causality with respect to the circumstances preceding, accompanying, and following the Incarnation itself.

CHAPTER
FIFTEEN

TOWARD A FULL CONCEPT
OF THE FATHERHOOD

A Conspectus

The gospels of Matthew and Luke picture St. Joseph in the exercise of actual fatherly duties. They imply a fatherhood that concerns the education of Jesus and that exists solely in the moral order.

In early Church writers very little, relatively speaking, is found concerning St. Joseph; even less is said by them concerning his fatherhood of Jesus. This obscurity has tremendously influenced the Saint's position in succeeding centuries. To evaluate it correctly and with justice to St. Joseph, it must be looked at in its historical context. Particularly in the first centuries of the Church, the primary purpose

of writers and preachers was the explanation and defense of the fundamental dogmas of the Faith. Consequently, Catholic opinion emphatically concentrated on those aspects of Joseph's relationship, when discussed, which would not endanger the doctrines of Christ's divine origin and Mary's perpetual virginity. Thus is explained much of the early emphasis on St. Joseph's title of "putative father," and second to it, "foster father."

In these first Christian centuries Ephrem discerns the presence of some sort of true paternity in the moral order; the marriage contract brought it about that he who had not generated should possess fatherhood. Jerome is the first to see the influence of Joseph's virginity with respect to the Saint's relation to Jesus. Augustine, however, is by far the greatest of the Fathers and doubtless of all writers in his keen analysis. Reasoning from the gospel facts, he perceives that St. Joseph's fatherhood came to the Saint by reason of his marriage with our Lady. In other words, the Child Jesus was truly the fruit, albeit miraculous, of the virginal marriage of Joseph and Mary. The holy couple exercised a joint parenthood, even though Joseph's fatherhood, unlike the motherhood of Mary, was merely a moral and not a physical relationship.

This, in briefest compass, can be called the "Augustinian tradition." It appears repeatedly in the works of later theologians, together with their progressively deeper appreciation of the fatherhood. In harmony with it, St. Thomas Aquinas describes the marriage of Joseph and our Lady as ordained

and brought into existence to serve the Incarnation; Gerson, Peter d'Ailly, Suarez, Estius, Francis de Sales, and Bossuet—each has his additional contribution to make, all of which have influenced modern thought. In defending fatherhood by right of marriage these men are pointing out a relationship far more basic than that of a mere fosterer.

Official Church documents concerning the fatherhood are understandably as recent as they are few. This is due, in part, to the historical obscurity of St. Joseph, an obscurity which his vocation temporarily required. The pronouncements of the Church follow the gospel account quite closely, so that what has been said of the gospels might be said in general of the official ecclesiastical doctrine. Nonetheless, the Church again and again implies the key importance of St. Joseph's marriage in the plans of God. In this teaching, coupled with Leo XIII's explicit statement that Joseph and Mary owned all things in common, we can discern something of the Augustinian concept of the fatherhood by right of marriage.

The historical analyses of St. Joseph's fatherhood show pointedly how the facts of the gospels were increasingly studied and appreciated as the centuries progressed. Yet, in the past even as in modern times individual writers usually emphasized one or other element of the fatherhood and were concerned with a limited aspect. In the present chapter we shall attempt to go beyond previous limits, bringing together the many ideas suggested in the past, pointing out perhaps new details, and

condensing them into a brief but widely inclusive synthesis. In other words, the fatherhood is to be looked at as originating from and depending upon the fact of Joseph's virginal marriage. To comprehend it more deeply, we must consider it in the light of this one basic principle.

The subject is, of course, very complex and is open to theological controversy. No claim is made here that the present study has solved all the problems which the fatherhood involves. Nevertheless, a synthesis such as this ought to contribute to a clearer, over-all understanding of St. Joseph's role, particularly with respect to the question of his co-operating in the Incarnation.

Fatherhood in General

The fundamental point from which all discussion must begin is the concept of fatherhood in general, its ideal essence. With St. Thomas we say,

The titles of father, mother, and son suppose generation, not however of any sort, but properly speaking of living beings and particularly of animals [i.e., sentient beings].¹

Generation in this sense has a very definite meaning.

It signifies the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle; and this is properly called birth. Not everything of that kind, however, is called begotten; but, strictly speaking, only what proceeds by way of similitude. . . as a man proceeds from a man.²

Fatherhood, then, is a relationship that is founded upon generation, and generation is the "origin of a

living being from a conjoined living principle, proceeding by way of similitude.”³ However, as a relationship, fatherhood rests on the permanent effect of generation rather than on its transient action. Again, according to St. Thomas:

Certain relationships do not arise from actions as they actually are, but more as they have been; just as some one is called a father subsequent to an effect following from his action. Relationships such as these are based on that which is left in the agent due to his action.⁴

Now, however, a new factor must be considered. All generation has a permanent effect, but in the case of human beings the permanence of this effect is far greater than in the case of brute animals. Due to this permanence—we continue with St. Thomas—marriage is an institution of the natural law, and fatherhood legitimately occurs only within the stable bonds of marriage. The generation of a human being calls for the rearing of the offspring as a natural complement. In other words, fatherhood, having resulted from generation, is oriented toward the education of the child.⁵ In St. Thomas’ words:

Nature does not intend solely the generation of offspring, but also its education and development until it reaches the perfect state of man as man, and that is the state of virtue. Hence, according to the Philosopher, we derive three things from our parents, namely, existence, nourishment, and training.⁶

Nature does not intend solely the existence of offspring, but also the perfection of existence.⁷ The end of matrimony is the begetting *and upbringing* of children.⁸

Offspring is not called the good of marriage only in so far as it is generated by means of marriage, but also in so far as it is received in marriage *and is there reared*.⁹

Thus it is that the education and rearing of the child is looked on as a continuation or prolongation of the generative act. True fatherhood in its fullest sense concerns itself with reproducing not only the father's physical likeness in the offspring, but also with reproducing the father's likeness of soul.

The child is to be supported and trained in the faculties which he possesses specifically as a human being, his intellect and will. In parenthood the father's task of educating his son supposes a deep love of the child whom he has generated. This is because generation ideally is motivated by love, and the rearing of a son continues, as we have said, the act of generation. In the love that continues to exist between father and son we discern the union of souls, or, in other words, the spiritual bond that links parent and child. Hence, granting the fact that natural fatherhood is a physical bond, *it is even much more a spiritual bond* that unites father and son as human beings, in a way that is impossible to brute animals. Perhaps the popular concept of fatherhood fails to grant due importance to this bond. According to it the generative act is taken as essential—

and rightly so for fatherhood in the proper sense. Nonetheless, for all human fatherhood, proper or improper, the moral relationship or spiritual bond is that which helps to make fatherhood human in the full and complete sense of the word, taking it out of the exclusively animal sphere.

From the very creation of mankind God willed to link marriage with the propagation of the human race. According to this divine law, fatherhood should occur solely within the bonds of marriage, or, in other words, within the family circle. The marital act is a dispositive cause which prepares the matter into which God will create and infuse a new life; but the bonds of marriage are to protect this child, and are to allow the parents to complete the development which generation has begun. The husband is to receive the child whom he has generated—but always the child's mother is to be united to his father by the permanent and exclusive marriage contract. In this fashion the family is the unit of human society. Fatherhood, limited to the generative act, can exist outside of marriage; but fatherhood, in the full sense intended by God, comes solely to the head of the family, within and because of the marriage that forms his family.

*St. Joseph's Fatherhood: A Relationship
of Soul*

What of the nature of St. Joseph's fatherhood? Parent presents it first as a theoretical possibility:

If fatherhood in the natural sense of the word supposes a bond both physical and spiritual, it is possible nonetheless to conceive, in the absence of the physical tie of generation, a spiritual bond which is linked not to an action of nature, but to a direct intervention of God—a bond so perfect as to be the basis for a true fatherhood.¹⁰

In the one case of St. Joseph's relationship to our Lord, the theoretical possibility became an actual fact. The physical bond of generation was lacking, but the spiritual bond of education and love was present. This was due to the action of God, who chose the Saint to be the husband of our Lady, and who gave Christ to the virginal marriage in such a way as to invest Joseph with fatherly love, fatherly guardianship, and fatherly authority. Augustine seems to have been thinking of the fact when he first emphasized so repeatedly the spiritual nature of St. Joseph's fatherhood and its existence as a moral bond. It is this bond which we must now investigate, as it existed between Jesus Christ and St. Joseph, by reason of Joseph's marriage to our Lord's virgin mother.

Fatherhood by Right of Marriage

As we have seen, Christian tradition did not allow Augustine's keen appraisal of the fatherhood to be forgotten. The idea appeared again and again in one form or other. St. Thomas used it when he said that the good of the marriage was the Child Jesus, not by means of human generation but be-

cause the marriage was specially directed to receive and rear our Lord:

Offspring is not called the good of marriage only in so far as it is generated by means of marriage; but also in so far as it is received in marriage and is there reared. Consequently, the good of this marriage was the Child, but not in the first fashion [i.e., by means of human generation]. Neither a child born in adultery nor an adoptive son reared in marriage is its good, since marriage is not directed to rear such; but the marriage [of Joseph and our Lady] was specially ordained for this purpose, that the Child should be received and brought up within it.¹¹

At this point a few words are in order to explain the varying meanings attached to "good of offspring"—all of which meanings, however, eventually are equated with "fruit of the marriage" either implicitly or explicitly. Augustine, it will be remembered, stated that every good of marriage was fulfilled in the parents of Christ—offspring, loyalty, and indissolubility. Peter Lombard interpreted the "good of offspring" not as necessarily existing in every marriage blessed with children but rather as existing only in those marriages wherein the parents accepted their children for the purpose that they be trained in religion. Both Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, because they were commenting on Peter Lombard, took their meaning of "good of offspring" from the definition given by the Master

of the Sentences. In other words, offspring does not become a "good" until the child's parents have exercised acts of intellect and will, accepting the child as such.

Now in the case of our Lord (to follow out the implications of Albert and St. Thomas), Jesus had to *belong* to the marriage of Joseph and our Lady before He became its good of offspring. This already made St. Joseph the father in the moral order, by right of marriage. Moreover, the marriage was divinely ordained to receive Jesus as its good of offspring—something that could not be true if Jesus had been an adopted son. Hence, on this score also, St. Joseph was father in the moral order of the Son who was given to his marriage as its miraculous fruit.

Modern theologians have equated "good of offspring" with offspring itself, and have described their idea by calling Jesus the fruit of Joseph's marriage. First in Bover's words,

Jesus is the fruit and offspring of this union, for the marriage was ordained by God in order that within it and by means of it the Son of God would be brought honorably into the world. God supplied for the marital act by a miracle, but in all other respects He left the rights and duties of Joseph untouched.¹²

Michel echoes the same idea.

The proper good of marriage—its offspring, the fruit of the union of husband and wife—was not lacking in this marriage [of Joseph] that is without parallel. . . . All that belongs to a fa-

ther, outside the proper act of marriage, belonged to St. Joseph with respect to the Child Jesus. This is . . . magnificently developed by Bossuet, and found already epitomized in St. Thomas Aquinas, who teaches that by a special ordination of Providence the good of the marriage of Joseph and Mary was truly the Child Jesus.¹³

Such, then, was St. Joseph's fatherhood by right of marriage. Directly concerned not with the physical act of generation, but with the reception of Jesus Christ into the marriage and with His rearing, it included the service and care which has traditionally been described by the title of foster father. It was motivated by a truly paternal love whereby the Saint accepted Jesus as his own Son. Joseph was the breadwinner of the Holy Family, supporting our Lord and our Lady most faithfully; his actions were not those of a soulless servant, but represented loving paternal devotion. To correspond with such love and such service, God gave the Saint the authority of a father. In recognition of this authority as head of the Holy Family, our Lord's human ancestry was traced through St. Joseph in the genealogies of Matthew and of Luke. For the same reason, Jesus willed to be subject to Joseph as a son would be to his natural father. Thus we see that the fatherhood, because of the marriage, is the ultimate basis for Joseph's paternal responsibility in the education of Jesus Christ. The final reason for the exercise of fatherly duties by St. Joseph must always

lead us to the fact of the Saint's marriage to our Lady.

Jesus The Fruit of the Marriage

In turning to the more detailed discussion of this fatherhood, we must note the importance of determining the time when St. Joseph's marriage came into existence. As already indicated in Chapter 8, modern writers on the marriage commonly adopt the traditional view that the betrothal ceremony of Joseph and our Lady was essentially equivalent to their marriage. Hence, even before the Annunciation and Incarnation, Mary was the wife of Joseph. For this reason the statement has been made repeatedly that Jesus was not only born but was also conceived within the virginal union, or, in other words, He miraculously belonged to the marriage.

Yet, if we call our Lord the fruit of the marriage, as so many writers have done, what precisely do we mean? In the ordinary providence of God, children are begotten by a husband of his wife. But how can Christ be described as the fruit of the marriage of Joseph and our Lady since the marriage was virginal? Evidently, in this instance as in the case of ordinary parenthood, some sort of previous co-operation must have existed on the part of the parents. In the case of St. Joseph, the Saint did not co-operate physically in any way in the conception of Jesus in Mary. One conclusion remains: Joseph's co-operation existed not in the physical but in the moral order, yet because of it Jesus belonged to Joseph as well as to Mary.

In God's eternal plan Jesus was to be born of a *virgin* mother lest He have two natural fathers, one divine and one human. It was fitting and according to God's decree that the Eternal Father should not share His natural fatherhood with any human being, particularly lest greater difficulties be added in the acceptance of Christ's divinity by the faithful. Also according to the same plan, Jesus was to be born of a virgin who was *married*. It has been relatively easy to discern in this providence the means of protecting the honor of Mother and of her Son; the fact has been strongly emphasized in Church tradition. However, a much more basic reason for the marriage of Christ's mother—probably we should say, the absolutely basic reason—lay in the natural law itself. We have already mentioned the fact that God willed all children to come into the world within the protection and permanence of marriage, so that they would be reared and loved within the family. When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took on Himself the nature of man, Jesus did not wish to exempt Himself from this law. Accordingly, not only did Jesus live within family life during His growing years at Nazareth; He was miraculously conceived and born in such a way as to be *received* within a family as well. In this family Mary was the wife and mother, St. Joseph the husband and father. The family was to protect Jesus, to rear Him, to love Him. Joseph accepted the Child, who had been bestowed on his marriage according to the divine decree of the Incarnation.

Directly, Jesus was given to Mary, but through Mary Jesus also belonged to Joseph and to Joseph's family. Tradition has seen various sources of this joint parenthood: Mary belonged to Joseph as his wife; ¹⁴ as husband and wife they owned everything in common; ¹⁵ and the very procreation of the Child in Mary, even though virginal, belonged to the marriage of St. Joseph. ¹⁶

From these considerations it can be seen how the union of Joseph and Mary was of its very nature oriented to the Incarnation, and how God brought it into existence essentially to receive and to rear our Lord. ¹⁷ We shall find it necessary to insist on this principle repeatedly in the following pages.

When Did the Fatherhood Begin to Exist?

If the ultimate basis for Joseph's relationship to Jesus depends on the Saint's marriage, the question logically arises as to the moment when the fatherhood began to exist. St. Matthew's gospel tells of the angel who appeared to Joseph, giving him the command to execute the final ceremonies of the marriage, and to fulfill the office of giving Jesus His name. ¹⁸ Would this indicate that previous to the angel's message St. Joseph was not the father of Christ, who was already existing in Mary's womb? Reimsbach puts the question and its answer succinctly:

Do the words of the angel express a mandate to the Saint to act as father of a child who is in reality a stranger to him? Absolutely not. . . .

Joseph was to accept Mary together with the Child whom she was carrying, inasmuch as this Child was . . . the work of the Holy Spirit Himself, who did not wish in any way to deny the rights of Mary's legitimate husband, and who gave the Child to Mary dependent on St. Joseph. . . . If there existed any mandate [to Joseph] it was the mandate to accomplish his duty and to exercise his right.¹⁹

Instead of saying that the angel constituted Joseph the father of Jesus; more accurately we should consider the angel's message as an "annunciation" of what already existed. Joseph had already been chosen by the providence of God, the Child had already been given to his marriage, and now he was being told of the rights he even previously possessed.

The difficulty supposes that an explicit consent of the Saint to the plans of God was necessary, in fact, an explicit consent to act as father of Christ. Generally, in reply, several authors have suggested that the Saint's explicit intention to fulfill God's will included the implicit intention to receive Christ. This obedience to God was also coupled with Joseph's agreement to live virginally with our Lady in their marriage, thus actually preparing for Christ's coming. As Parent phrases this view,

The acceptance of the fatherhood was already contained virtually in the consecration that Joseph made of himself to the service of God when he entered into his virginal marriage with Mary.²⁰

The explanation in general is correct, but no author has pursued it to its ultimate limit. When and how could St. Joseph "virtually or implicitly"²¹ accept his future part in the upbringing of Jesus? We offer this answer:

Every valid marriage contract supposes the spouses' acceptance of the children whom God Almighty will see fit to bestow on their marriage. Since the primary purpose of marriage, as divinely instituted, is the generation and rearing of offspring, no persons could ever enter into a true marriage without thereby accepting the fact that their marriage is essentially oriented toward the begetting of new life. Therefore, when St. Joseph and our Lady exchanged their matrimonial consent, both of them implicitly accepted any children that God would send to their union; otherwise the marriage could not have existed.

Secondly, granting the possible supposition that Joseph and Mary took a vow of virginity, their vow would include the resolution not to request the marriage act, but it would in no wise be against the substance of their marriage. Such a vow would forestall only that physical action on their part which would tend to beget offspring. The vow would not and could not exclude their implicit acceptance of a child if God were to bestow him on their union; otherwise the vow would contradict their marriage contract.

The explanation of Joseph's implicit acceptance which we here suggest is hinted at in the sermon of John Gerson at the Council of Constance.

The procreation of the Child Jesus occurred in you, Mary, by the Holy Spirit, with the true or interpretative consent of your husband Joseph. For he wished that the will of God should be accomplished in all things, "being a just man." ²²

As for the docility of Mary and Joseph to God's designs, Mueller suggests as a confirmatory argument the evident readiness of Mary and Joseph to carry out God's plan for the Incarnation at the times it was separately revealed to them. ²³ This would indicate an implicit willingness to receive our Lord, as it had previously existed in the hearts of the holy couple.

*How Did St. Joseph Co-operate
in the Incarnation?*

The discussion of St. Joseph's acceptance of the fatherhood brings us to a much more difficult question closely allied to it. Modern authors have phrased the problem in various ways, and from their presentation we can summarize and condense the difficulty in these words:

It seems impossible that St. Joseph could have co-operated in any way in the coming about of the Incarnation. Before his enlightenment by the angel, he had no knowledge of the pregnant condition of his espoused wife, and therefore he had no knowledge of the conception of the Son of God. At best he served as father of Christ *after* the Incarnation, in a

position that came to him accidentally (*per accidens*). He had nothing to do with the Incarnation itself, or in other words, Joseph's office was concerned with the Incarnation in its continued existence (*in facto esse*); the Saint did nothing with respect to its occurrence (*in fieri*).²⁴

As a correct starting point, following Sini-baldi,²⁵ we must understand that St. Joseph's co-operation was *extrinsic* to the Incarnation, in the *moral* order alone, and *mediately* through the Blessed Virgin. Mary's action, in contrast to Joseph's, was *intrinsic* to the Incarnation and *immediate*; and it existed in the *physical* as well as in the *moral* order. In making use of this terminology we do not mean that St. Joseph was extrinsic to the hypostatic union, but rather that he did not physically cause Christ as Mary did; and hence he was extrinsic to the Incarnation.

The discussion actually centers on the type of causality that should be attributed to St. Joseph with respect to the Incarnation. At the outset we reject three "causalities" as condemned by the Church or at least as theologically erroneous. First, Joseph was not the father of Christ in the "real and proper sense of the word."²⁶ Second, he did not exercise his fatherhood as a positive instrumental cause of the virginal conception of Christ.²⁷ Third, his abstention from the use of his marriage rights did not make him a "negative efficient cause" of our Lord's conception in Mary.²⁸

Three Opinions

All authorities consulted in connection with this study call Joseph either a "condition" of the Incarnation or "cause removing obstacles," a "moral cause" or "cause in the moral order," or one who co-operated in a dispositive manner. We shall evaluate the three representative views individually.

According to Holzmeister, St. Joseph was a necessary condition (*conditio sine qua non*) for the conception and birth of Christ within the virginal marriage of our Lady. Joseph did not yet know of the coming Incarnation at the time of his marriage; therefore, he influenced the origin of the Child not by any explicit action of his will, but by an implicit consent, namely, by the fact that he agreed to be the virgin husband of Mary.²⁹

Parent, describing the same circumstances, attributes the same role to the Saint except that he characterizes Joseph as a "cause removing obstacles":

Joseph's virginal marriage, we must repeat, is by no means the proper cause of the effect that the Holy Spirit produced with the exclusive co-operation of Mary. It is, however, oriented to this effect as a cause removing obstacles. United to Joseph, Mary could be truly married without suffering detriment to her virginity; united to Joseph she could also conceive and bear her divine Child without suffering harm to her reputation and to the Child's reputation as well. In the realization of the divine plan

St. Joseph thus collaborated in a thoroughly spiritual manner, and this even before he was informed of it by the angel.³⁰

To understand the opinion here proposed, we must bear in mind that a necessary condition

removes that which prohibits a cause from obtaining its *per se* effect. The condition does not positively influence the production of the effect, but it produces that without which the cause would be prevented from obtaining its effect. The *conditio sine qua non*, therefore, bears a necessary order to a *per se* effect.³¹

In other words, a necessary condition and a cause removing obstacles (*removens prohibens*) are synonymous and identical.

According to these notions, Holzmeister and Parent are certainly correct in saying that St. Joseph's co-operation removed grave obstacles to the bringing about of the Incarnation. There can be no doubt of the fact that the marriage protected both Mary and Jesus, and that Joseph's consent was absolutely necessary for its existence. Nevertheless, so it seems, the Saint's activity was much more than that of a necessary condition. The marriage did much more than remove obstacles to the Incarnation; it was *positively* ordained to prepare for Christ's coming within its family circle. To cite again St. Thomas' opinion, echoing the whole Augustinian tradition of Christ as the fruit of the marriage, the union was brought into existence by God in order that Christ might be received and

reared within it. Now, if we limit St. Joseph's role to that of a necessary condition, we seem to be limiting unduly the role of the marriage. On the one hand, it is true that our Lady was to bear our Lord as a virgin wife so that her reputation and the reputation of Jesus might be shielded; but it is also true that our Lady's marriage existed for another grave reason: the divine decree that Christ like every other child should belong to a family. Hence, by St. Joseph's consent to be Mary's virginal husband, the Saint not only helped "remove obstacles," but also *positively* concurred in a further part of God's plan, namely, that Jesus should be received within a family. Joseph was much more than a necessary condition.

Hagen and Knabenbauer describe the co-operation of St. Joseph as that of a "moral cause" or a "cause in the moral order." According to Hagen:

Rightly Joseph can be called and is called by the evangelist the father of Jesus, for Jesus was begotten of his wife. Moreover, in order that Jesus might be born of a virgin mother, according to gentle divine providence Joseph was to contribute to this by means of his continence. Hence, in some sense he was the cause of the origin of Jesus, not a physical cause, but what is usually called "moral."³²

Knabenbauer, citing Bellouvet, approves of calling the Saint a cause in the moral order:

We can correctly add here the suggestion of Father Bellouvet (from the *Hierarchia Mariana*

of Bartholomew de los Rios) that Joseph is called the father of Jesus because he truly contributed to His origin; for according to the divine plan Jesus was to be born of a virgin wife. The continence of Joseph constituted his fatherhood as a cause in the moral order.³³

Since various authors understand the meaning of "moral causality" often in widely different ways, we must judge it here according to context. cursory examination suggests that it refers to a causality in the order of intellect and will. This tentative meaning is borne out by the definition of Glenn:

A moral efficient cause . . . is one that exercises an influence on a free agent (that is, a free actor, doer, performer) by means of command, persuasion, invitation, force, or example. The free agent who is moved to action by such influences is the physical efficient cause of the action; the one who exercises such influences over the physical cause is the moral efficient cause of the action.³⁴

In this sense God would be said to be the physical efficient cause of the origin of our Lord. St. Joseph, as a secondary and subordinate moral efficient cause because of an act of his will, would help to bring about those previous circumstances which God had willed, namely, that our Lord be born of a married virgin. As a result of Joseph's co-operation, God would then be ready to effect the Incarnation.

In judging this view we are not so much interested in the terminology as in the reasons for holding causality in the moral order. The opinion excellently and clearly excludes any physical co-operation on the part of St. Joseph. It seems, moreover, to advance beyond that of Holzmeister and Parent in that it ascribes to the Saint a more positive role with respect to the Incarnation; but it is insufficient because it fails to take into account St. Joseph's consent to the marriage. In their preliminary explanations, its proponents correctly say that Jesus was to be born of a married virgin; yet in further explaining Joseph's co-operation, they seem to ascribe the Saint's co-operation *solely* to his *continence* within the marriage. This is certainly incomplete. As we shall immediately claim, Joseph's co-operation is constituted first and foremost by his consent to be the virginal husband of Mary. Again to appeal to St. Thomas, we say that only by means of Joseph's matrimonial consent could that *marriage* have been brought into existence which was ordained to receive Christ. Only in the supposition of the marriage contract could Joseph agree with our Lady to live virginally within their union.

Thus we arrive at the third opinion, that St. Joseph caused certain circumstances of the Incarnation. We propose this as the most probable explanation.

Mueller describes the actions of St. Joseph which, he believes, are best called "co-operation in a dispositive manner":

Joseph was able to co-operate, and he did so, by means of his own virginity and by means of the virginal marriage with the chaste Virgin, as it had been foreseen and foreordained by the boundless wisdom of God. In this way Joseph made it possible for the eternal Son of God to be conceived and to be born of a married virgin; in this way Christ as man was able to enter the world in accordance with the primeval law [that children were to be begotten within marriage]; and, moreover, in a fitting, immaculate, and worthy way.³⁵

Joseph fitted himself for his sublime office by means of his superlative holiness—Holy Scripture calls him a just man; and when he had been married to the pure Virgin, he loved her with the most chaste and virginal love of a husband. He exercised tender care to protect her virginity, for it belonged to him by reason of their bond of marriage. This he did not only after the miraculous supernatural conception of Mary, but also previous to it, and so he also shared in the divinely incarnate fruit of this marriage and virginity.³⁶

Moreover, St. Thomas says of the chaste virgin, "By means of the grace given her, she merited that degree of purity and holiness which made it possible for her to be fittingly the Mother of God."³⁷ We can say the same of St. Joseph in a true although not entirely identical sense: "By means of the grace given him, he merited that

degree of purity and holiness which made it possible for him to be fittingly the spouse of the Blessed Virgin and the father of Christ.”³⁸

Accordingly, Joseph’s holiness as well as his consent to the virginal marriage are the facts that gave the Saint a co-operation with respect to the Incarnation.

Directly and in the physical order, of course, the Saint co-operated in no way in the Incarnation. In the moral order, however, his holiness and the acts of his will whereby he entered upon the virginal marriage with our Lady were actions which brought about apt circumstances. This disposition or aptitude of circumstances did not require that the Incarnation take place. Rather, the reverse was true. The Incarnation required that the virginal husband of Mary, acting as the father of Jesus, should fittingly possess superlative holiness and outstanding conformity to God’s will. Only such a man could fittingly live in such intimacy with Mary and Jesus, and could rule them and love them as husband and father.³⁹

The Incarnation also required a virginal marriage between St. Joseph and our Lady, and this by a necessity flowing from a twofold source:

a) First, *by the special law of God*, God wished Jesus to be born of a married virgin for many reasons. Our Lord was not to have a human natural father; His reputation was to be protected as well as the reputation of His Mother; and He was to be received, reared, guarded, and loved

within a true family circle specially chosen and fitted for the task.

b) Second, *according to the ordinary law* which God promulgated in nature at the time of creation, all children were to be conceived and born within marriage. It was the divine will that Jesus, too, should be received within the marriage that was to rear Him. He did not exempt Himself from the universal law.⁴⁰

Even with this explanation, the difficulty might still persist that St. Joseph should be called merely a necessary condition with respect to the Incarnation. Why, then, must he be considered something more? The answer repeats in different language what has already been said. Joseph placed a double positive action: his exchange of matrimonial consent with Mary, and his agreement to live continently with her. Both of these actions removed obstacles to the Incarnation, but they accomplished much more than that. They brought about—and particularly Joseph's marriage consent should be emphasized here—they brought about the marriage which by God's design was particularly fitted and disposed to receive Christ within it.

A final question of the original problem still remains to be discussed. Did St. Joseph serve as the father of Christ in a position that came to him accidentally (*per accidens*)? The reply is once again a reiteration of the doctrine we have proposed. For the reasons mentioned, the marriage was brought into existence in order to serve the Incarnation;

Christ was its fruit. Therefore, even at the moment of His assumption of human nature, He belonged to it *per se* according to the special decree of divine Providence and according to the natural law of the family. *Per se*, likewise, He belonged to St. Joseph, who as the husband of Mary was head of Mary's family.

St. Joseph's Co-operation After the Incarnation

What is to be said of Joseph's service to Jesus after the Incarnation? We know from the Gospel that Joseph loved the Child and reared and protected Him most faithfully. However, in this devotedness the Saint was certainly not responsible for the continued existence (*esse*) of Christ as the God-Man. Jesus Himself said,

I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. ⁴¹

Joseph's duties were concerned rather with the welfare (*bene esse*) of Jesus, until the time when the Saint's parental responsibility came to an end. Joseph acted toward Jesus as a human father would act toward his natural son.

The Analogy of the Fatherhood

The Saint's relationship to our Lord is clearly analogous to natural fatherhood; but how to explain or apply the analogy? Modern writers on the theol-

ogy of St. Joseph have mentioned this analogy in passing references at best. Hence, the following lines expand and build on the study of Garrigou-Lagrange, who alone has tabulated the meanings of fatherhood in its various senses.

One proposition must be accepted as a rock-bottom first principle: Fatherhood in the proper or strict sense of the word rests on the generation of the son by the father.⁴² Accordingly, if physical generation does not take place, fatherhood can exist only in an improper or wide sense. Nevertheless, even in the absence of generation this can validly be called a true fatherhood.

In the strict and proper sense of the word we speak of:

a) the *uncreated fatherhood* of the Eternal Father, who from all eternity generates His only-begotten Son, the Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. We also speak of

b) the *created fatherhood* that exists among sentient beings of the same species because of physical generation.

In wider senses we apply fatherhood to numerous relationships in which physical generation is lacking, but in which other aspects of fatherhood or similarities to it are present.

a) Thus, by justification men share in the nature of God in a sort of spiritual re-birth, so that the just obtain a quasi-inborn right to the inheritance of God.⁴³ Since the just have been made adoptive

sons of God, this means that God in His turn has made Himself their adoptive Father. The relationship surpasses all other fatherhoods in dignity, excepting only the eternal generation of the Word by God the Father.

b) Beneath it in dignity there follows the most sublime and exalted fatherhood ever given a human being—the relationship of St. Joseph to the divine Son miraculously given him and his virginal wife in their marriage. This is, we repeat, a fatherhood in the improper sense inasmuch as St. Joseph did not procreate our Lord but reared, educated, and loved Him with the care of a father. Joseph's paternity contains elements of other fatherhoods in the wide sense, namely, a sort of adoption, a juridical relationship, and the service of a fosterer; but unlike all others, this is the sole instance in which a child belonged to a marriage within which he was not generated by the father. Most of all, it will forever surpass all human fatherhoods in dignity because it concerns God Himself in human form.

c) We next list the relationship of a man who in the sight of the law accepts an extraneous person as his own son. This is a case of adoptive or legal fatherhood. He who makes the adoption obtains the rights of a father and takes on specific responsibilities, even though he has not generated his adopted son.

d) In the fourth place we speak of foster fatherhood—the relationship indicated in consequence of nursing and rearing, not in consequence of ties

of blood. This paternity is concerned with the actual carrying out of a father's duties more than it is concerned with his legal status.

e) Finally, there exist fatherhoods in the spiritual and the intellectual order which represent a very wide and transferred use of the word. Examples of such spiritual "paternity" are found in popes, founders of Religious Orders, and priests who act as spiritual directors and who administer the sacraments. In the intellectual sphere artists, inventors, authors, and poets are said to be fathers of the works they produce. The "fatherhood" in all such cases is extremely figurative and symbolical, and no one would hesitate to call it a true metaphor.

Is St. Joseph's Fatherhood Metaphorical?

The mention of metaphorical fatherhood immediately suggests that perhaps St. Joseph's fatherhood should be called metaphorical as well. This apparently is confirmed by Augustine's definition of a metaphor, "A transfer of a certain word from a proper to an improper meaning,"⁴⁴ and the dictionary definition, "A figure of speech in which one object is likened to another by asserting it to be that other, or by speaking of it as if it were that other."⁴⁵ However, these definitions also fit the "fatherhood" of artists and inventors, which is, as we have said, extremely symbolic and figurative. Now, if they are also applied to St. Joseph's fatherhood, does this mean that St. Joseph's relationship to Jesus must be put on a par with so far-fetched a

“fatherhood” as that of an inventor with respect to his product? In other words, are all metaphors *equally* figurative and symbolical? Does the use of metaphor necessarily indicate an attenuated or even an *imaginary* resemblance?

The difficulty here mentioned does not exist in reality. Based on a misunderstanding of the truthfulness of metaphorical language, it can exist only in the minds of those who deny that metaphorical language can express the truth both vigorously and aptly. Indeed, in some cases a metaphorical description is the only one possible. To quote Brown's detailed study of imagery:

The use of metaphor is implicitly a reasoning of analogy. It implies a likeness or even an equation of relations between two objects of thought which otherwise may be wholly different. . . . Analysis enables us to see wherein precisely lies the truth of metaphor. From certain descriptions of metaphor one would gather that it is an observed resemblance which the mind turns arbitrarily into an identity, or which, at all events, is stated as an identity. Whence it might be inferred that there is necessarily some imperfection in the truthfulness of all metaphorical statements. For it would seem to involve confusion between resemblance and identity and a perception of an object of thought so blurred that that object may be momentarily confounded with another and wholly different object of thought. . . .

In all this there is surely a misconception. . . . What the mind perceives is a resemblance of relations so close as to be practically an equality.

Metaphor, Brown adds, is a species of the analogy of proportion. Then he continues:

Metaphorical statement is in fact capable of quite the same degree of accuracy or inaccuracy as any literal statement. . . . *The truth, therefore, of any given metaphor depends upon the truth of an implied equation, an equation not between two objects belonging to different spheres of being . . . but between two relations. . . . The use of metaphor involves no sacrifice of truth.*⁴⁶

Some metaphors will be more figurative, more symbolic than others. In such cases the "resemblance of relations" is weak. As the metaphor grows less symbolic and as it more closely approaches a nonmetaphorical meaning, the "resemblance of relations" increases. Let us illustrate this by studying the analogies of various types of fatherhood already mentioned. These illustrations will serve to point up all the more sharply the nature of the metaphor of St. Joseph's fatherhood.

The intellectual relationship of an inventor to his product resembles physical generation in certain respects. Hence, we can describe this relationship schematically as follows:

The relationship of

an inventor to his invention
is similar to the relationship of
a natural father to the son he has generated.

Yet this is an extremely figurative "fatherhood" because of the tremendous dissimilarity between the product of the human generative act and an invented piece of machinery. A weak resemblance to proper fatherhood is present, but the qualities of physical generation and upbringing of children are absent. The mechanical product represents neither generation in the physical order, nor is it linked to its maker by a filial bond in the moral order. To speak of the "rearing" of an inanimate object would be senseless.

Let us now consider the analogy of foster fatherhood. Schematically,

The relationship of

a foster father to his foster son
is similar to the relationship of
a natural father to the son he has generated.

Foster father is analogous and improper with respect to natural fatherhood because physical generation has not occurred. The fosterer takes upon himself the task of educating his foster son, a responsibility which in itself belongs to true fatherhood. Hence, the relationship is no longer based upon a weak resemblance, for a bond has been set up in the moral order which *imitates* the moral bond between a father and his natural son.

Our third example concerns God's adoptive fatherhood of the just. St. Thomas describes this as a fatherhood in the improper sense, and as a metaphor. It is by no means a merely symbolic relationship. First using the example of "lion-ness" to illustrate metaphorical analogy, St. Thomas then shows that God is called father of all creation *in varying degrees, in so far as the creatures' resemblances to natural sonship grow more and more perfect.*

In the creature, sonship is found with relation to God not in a perfect manner . . . but by way of a certain likeness, which is the more perfect the nearer we approach to the true idea of sonship. For God is called the Father of some creatures by reason only of the likeness of a vestige, for instance [as Father] of irrational creatures. . . . Of some, namely, the rational creatures, [He is the Father] by reason of the likeness of His image. . . . And of others He is the Father by the likeness of grace and these are also called adoptive sons. . . . Lastly, He is the Father of others by the likeness of glory, forasmuch as they have obtained possession of the inheritance of glory.⁴⁷

These various "fatherhoods" of God over His creatures are, then, metaphorical *in different degrees*, in so far as they approach more or less perfectly the concept of fatherhood in the proper sense. God actually exercises true fatherly love, and this love becomes the ideal which every human father is to

imitate. God's fatherhood is metaphorical because it applies in the improper sense of the word (we are not generated by Him); yet it is neither chimerical nor merely symbolic. God's metaphorical fatherhood of his creatures far exceeds in dignity St. Joseph's metaphorical fatherhood of Christ. Therefore, we ought have no fear that the same terminology would derogate from St. Joseph's position when we call Joseph's fatherhood metaphorical.

Schematically, we outline St. Joseph's fatherhood thus:

St. Joseph	The relationship of	Jesus Christ
	to	
	is similar to the relationship of	
a human father	to	his natural son.

The single dissimilarity here is the absence of physical generation on the part of St. Joseph. In all other respects, the relationship is the same. The moral bond between Joseph and Jesus is such as exists between a natural father and his natural son. Christ, the fruit of Joseph's virginal marriage with our Lady, is miraculously bound to the Saint as his son. Joseph, in his turn, is linked to Christ in the moral order by ties that are as genuine as any that ever linked an ordinary father to the son he had generated. Always, we must note emphatically, these ties are in the moral order alone, so that the fatherhood of the Saint is to be understood in the wide and improper sense of the word. Nonetheless, since these ties are *part* of the definition of fatherhood

in the full sense, St. Joseph's fatherhood is *a very real and genuine fatherly relationship*.

Sometimes the fatherhood of St. Joseph has been compared to that of the Eternal Father. Schematically, in such a case:

The relationship of

St. Joseph	to	Jesus Christ
would be said to be similar to the relationship of		
God the Father	to	God the Son.

Here is an analogy which should be used with extreme caution. This is an instance where St. Joseph's fatherhood would rightly be called extremely figurative if it were to be treated as a "sharing" in the fatherhood of the Eternal Father over the Second Person of the Trinity. Tremendous dissimilarity exists in the comparison, such as did not exist in the comparison between the Saint and a human natural father. In the present case we are comparing the Infinite God with St. Joseph, one of His finite creatures. We are comparing fatherhood by generation with a fatherhood in the moral order alone; and, most of all, fatherhood in its absolute infinite fullness with a fatherhood by participation. Hence, this analogy must not be pressed too closely.

Father Faber, in his popular and colorfully written works of the past century, made quite common the use of the title, "Shadow of the Eternal Father." Theologians have seen no objection to the application of this phrase to St. Joseph provided that it be understood with proper restrictions.⁴⁸ Possible excesses would be such as Lepicier warns

against—for example, a concept of a “vicarious fatherhood” for St. Joseph whereby the Saint visibly expressed the perfections of the Eternal Father.⁴⁹ The entire question concerns the correct application of the analogy that exists. The similarity must not be pressed to such a point as to overshadow the dissimilarity that also is present.

An Adequate Title

The choice of an adequate title to describe the fatherhood represents a knotty problem. We can understand the state of the question as it is put in the words of Billot:

Since this instance is in every way *sui generis* and wholly singular, no name exists in the human vocabulary by which such a relationship can be indicated. That is why we are able to say what title should not be given Joseph, more than we can say what title can be used, understanding, of course, a name which would properly and adequately express the bond by which [Joseph] is linked to Christ.⁵⁰

Acknowledging this difficulty, not a few authors of modern times have devoted their attention to search for a title that would express St. Joseph's unique position as satisfactorily as possible. In the history of the Church, they reason, the search for adequate terminology has occurred often enough. Virtually a whole new language had to be constructed to describe the dogmas of Christianity; and it was only through the criticism and discussion

of centuries that technical terms were developed to express truths which had previously been foreign to human intelligence. Concepts like "procession," "spiration," and "person," as well as "transubstantiation" and "sacrament" are apt examples of this development.

Concerning St. Joseph, certain statements ought to be avoided because of their vagueness and need for distinction. "Jesus had no earthly father" and "Joseph was not the real father of Jesus" are expressions that seem to deny all paternity to the Saint, whereas he might rightly be pictured as "father in a true (or a real) sense" since his fatherhood exists analogously in the moral order. It would, however, be incorrect to claim that Joseph is father of our Lord in *the* real or *the* true or *the* full sense of the word. Fatherhood, as we have seen, indicates, first of all, the physical generation of the child, and only secondarily his support and upbringing. Since St. Joseph is not father of Jesus by generation, he is certainly not "father in the full sense."

"Adoptive Father"

As to individual titles, "stepfather" and adoptive father" bear a meaning according to their strict definition which does not apply to the Saint, although in a wide sense "adoptive father" has met quite frequent use in the past. What does it actually signify? In the first place, adoption is something arbitrary. Its effects can be more or less limited, and it can be dissolved by due process of law. In Jo-

seph's case, however, the Saint's relationship to our Lord is not something arbitrary. Due to the marriage it is founded on the natural law as well as a special ordination of divine Providence. Joseph's rights and duties are those of a natural father, despite the fact that he did not generate Jesus. His fatherhood could have been dissolved only by God Himself, because only God Himself created it and gave it to him. The Church pictures Joseph's universal patronage as an extension of his fatherhood of our Lord. Accordingly, far from any sort of dissolution the divine approval was certainly given to St. Joseph, and has not been revoked.

It is true that there are certain similarities between Joseph's fatherhood and that of an ordinary human adoptive father. Neither of these two relationships implies physical generation of the child by the parent in question; and both relationships imply mutual duties and rights, as well as the acceptance of the son by the father. The discrepancies, however, are far more momentous than these points of agreement. The outstanding difference between a human adoptive father and St. Joseph is this: An adopted son is a stranger or alien to the marriage of his adoptive parents, or to one of them. He does not possess a natural right of inheritance. Yet Jesus was by no means alien to the marriage of Joseph and our Lady. The very purpose of the virginal union as determined by God was that it should prepare for our Lord's coming, should receive Him in its midst, and should rear Him to adult manhood. Moreover,

because Jesus was born of Mary who was Joseph's wife, Jesus possessed the natural right to inherit Joseph's property.⁵¹

It is noteworthy that Thomas Aquinas does not himself use the term "adoptive father." He merely mentions it in passing, prefixing the phrase, "There are some who say this."⁵² Augustine also rejects the idea of true adoption when he says that Joseph is the father by reason of the marriage, and this "much more intimately than if Christ had been extraneously adopted."⁵³ Equivalently, the great objection against "adoptive father" is that the phrase might exclude Joseph's fatherly position as husband in the marriage to which Christ was given as offspring.

"Putative Father"

As to the expressions, "putative," "reputed," or "supposed" father, Luke's text warrants their use—"Jesus being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph."⁵⁴ The context of the gospel passage is clear. The Evangelist inserted the reference to show that the Jews thought our Lord to be the natural son of Joseph. However, as we noted in Augustine,⁵⁵ Luke himself never calls Joseph the putative father of Jesus. The Evangelist speaks of him as "father," or in conjunction with Mary, as "parent."⁵⁶ This must mean that the Saint possessed some fatherly relationship to Jesus which was completely independent of the erroneous supposition of physical fatherhood made by Joseph's neighbors. If Joseph's fatherhood were to consist solely in this supposition, once that

the error would be removed, the Saint would no longer have any fatherly relationship to Jesus, and this situation (no fatherly relationship because of no supposition of physical fatherhood) would be contrary to an otherwise proved fact.

To illustrate this point, Macabiau conjectures that after the Annunciation all the miracles of the Incarnation might have been revealed to the people of Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. With the details of the Incarnation thus made known from the beginning, Joseph's vocation would have been non-existent if his sole purpose had been the concealment of our Lord's divine origin and the protection of Mary's reputation. In the hypothesis, the Saint would not have been the putative father of Jesus, but his fatherly relationship would certainly have still remained.⁵⁷

In making these statements we do not intend to suggest that "putative father" is wrongly applied to the Saint. It correctly connotes—and this probably accounts for its wide usage by the Church—that Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus. It does not indicate in any positive sense the nature of the Saint's position, but it does imply a real honor for St. Joseph: the Saint was chosen to conceal the miracle of the Incarnation until such time as Christ willed to preach and to prove His divinity.

"Legal Father"

What judgment should be passed on "legal father"? Here again several distinctions are necessary.

If "legal father" is taken to mean that in the eyes of Jewish law Joseph was the natural father of Jesus, the term is identical with "putative father" and has equivalently been explained. If it is taken to mean that the lawful ancestry of the Davidic line as well as the property rights of St. Joseph belonged to our Lord, the term is likewise correct.

However, "legal father" has sometimes been judged according to a third meaning. The levirate law of the Old Testament created a legal fatherhood set forth thus in the Book of Deuteronomy:

When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another; but his brother shall take her, and raise up seed for his brother; and the first son he shall have of her he shall call by his name, that his name shall be not abolished out of Israel. ⁵⁸

Here there is question of two successive husbands of the same wife. A *natural* son of the *second* husband is *legally* ascribed to a *dead* father, namely, the first husband; and this son is conceived and born in *another* marriage in which his legal father had no part. Plainly, none of these elements applies to St. Joseph. Jesus was born in Joseph's own marriage while Joseph was still living. Since our Lord's conception was virginal, the possibility of a natural human fatherhood is totally excluded. Thus, it is manifest that this technical meaning of "legal father" cannot be applied to the Saint.

“Foster Father”

By far the most popular title given St. Joseph is that of “foster father.” It has long done excellent service in describing the Saint, ever since it was first applied by Origen in the third century.⁵⁹ Sometimes it has been taken as synonymous with “adoptive father,” and then would have an incorrect meaning.

By its actual definition fostering indicates a relationship due to nursing or rearing of progeny, and not due to any tie of blood. “Foster father” is usually understood to include the fatherly affection with which the Saint received, protected, and supported the Child Jesus, as well as the paternal authority he exercised in the Holy Family. Notwithstanding these advantages, even this title does not measure up to the exacting requirements of designating St. Joseph’s fatherhood. It is excellent; there is no doubt of that. But theologically it remains incomplete, for it fails to show that Joseph’s fatherly relationship is based on something more fundamental than mere fostering. It is correct for what it says, but it does not represent the end of the quest for a title as adequate as possible.

“Matrimonial Father”

Cornelius a Lapide suggested “matrimonial father” as a description of the Saint, inasmuch as Joseph’s fatherly rights came to him because of his marriage with our Lady.⁶⁰ The expression has never received favorable acceptance. Its meaning is am-

biguous, for it does not necessarily connote, as it ought, our Lord's conception in a *virginal* marriage.

"Vicarious Father"

In 1921 Reimsbach proposed that St. Joseph be invoked as "Parent of God by vicarious fatherhood."⁶¹ This phrase, theologically speaking, is correct, but against it is the valid objection of its length and its technical wording. If it were shortened to "vicarious father," it would mean that in a certain extended sense St. Joseph represented the Eternal Father with respect to our Lord, thus corresponding to the popular devotional title, "Shadow of the Eternal Father." Nevertheless, the title is somewhat incomplete in that it fails to imply the virginal marriage of Joseph and our Lady—the basis of Joseph's fatherhood. On the other hand, it rightly suggests that the fatherhood was not in the physical but in the moral order. Ultimately, perhaps, the title should be judged according to the advisability of referring to St. Joseph as a representative of the Eternal Father. We have already called attention to the transferred sense in which Joseph as a creature would be called the vicar of the First Person of the Trinity with regard to the Second Person. The relationship of the First to the Second Person is internal to the Trinity; outside the Trinity, all actions of the triune God are common to the Three Persons. Hence, a very figurative analogy is involved if one were to say that St. Joseph "took the place of God the Father with respect to God the Son." In addi-

tion, caution must be used because of the fact that the Eternal Father generates Christ according to Christ's divine nature alone. According to His human nature Jesus has no natural father;⁶² He has only, according to His human nature, the fatherhood of St. Joseph over Him, and this, of course, is only in the moral order. All these are important theological distinctions which ought not to be lost sight of when the Saint is referred to as "Vicar of the Eternal Father."

"Eminent Spiritual Fatherhood"

In 1948 a new expression was brought forward by Parent. Its justification can best be made in the words of its author.

It seems to me that we would remain faithful to the thought of St. Augustine and St. Thomas by speaking of the eminent spiritual fatherhood of St. Joseph. He is father only according to the spirit, says St. Augustine. This fatherhood is *spiritual* and *analogical* because it remains foreign to the order of physical generation, to which fatherhood in the proper or full sense of the word belongs, whether created or uncreated. But it is also an *eminent* fatherhood because it surpasses all human fatherhood of the spiritual order or of the juridical order; and by its spirituality it resembles even the divine fatherhood, yielding in dignity only to the divine motherhood of Mary.⁶³

If this expression as it stands were changed to "eminent spiritual father," that is, from the abstract to the concrete, apparent disadvantages arise which might make it unsuitable for popular use. Thus, the double adjective, "eminent spiritual" leads to awkward length; and in English, at least, "spiritual father" has several common meanings which come to mind long before any reference to St. Joseph. Nonetheless, as "eminent spiritual fatherhood," the description has very much to recommend it, and we hope that it will be received into the list of traditional references to St. Joseph. Whether or not this will occur can be determined only by the test of time.

"Virginal Father"—The Ideal Title?

The final title to be discussed here is "virginal father." We have already spoken of the basis of this name in Augustine's 51st Sermon, also noting Pius X's express approval and indulgencing of the prayer that contained the expression. Holzmeister does not hesitate to say categorically that in his opinion "virginal father" ends the search for the title that aptly describes St. Joseph's unique position over Jesus.⁶⁴ Mueller⁶⁵ and Macabiau⁶⁶ express the same opinion.

Certain objections raised against "virginal father" seem to be based on a misunderstanding of its meaning. Suppose, for instance, one were to think that St. Joseph cannot be called the virginal father of Christ on the score that Joseph's valid

marriage supposedly began with his wedding, namely, after our Lord had been conceived in Mary. Such an objection would rest on a false premise. It would take for granted that the legitimate use of "virginal father" depends on the time when the marriage began to exist, whether at the espousal or at the wedding. However, the approval of the Church guarantees a correct meaning to this title, especially since the Church has encouraged its propagation by making it part of an indulgenced prayer. In addition, it is difficult to see how the expression would wrongly be applied to St. Joseph even if one were to set aside the traditional opinion that the marriage consent was exchanged at the betrothal.⁶⁷

According to Mueller, another objection has been made that Joseph was not constituted the father of Jesus merely because the Saint lived a virginal life; and, therefore, Joseph should not be called "virginal father."⁶⁸ Again we must call attention to a misunderstanding. "Virginal father" does not expressly say, nor does it seem to imply, that "Joseph, *because* he was a virgin, became father of Jesus." The same objection could be alleged against our Lady's title of "virgin mother"; yet no one reasonably claims that Mary became the Mother of God *because* she was a virgin.⁶⁹

An exaggeration of the title was contained in the French articles and booklet entitled, *St. Joseph, Père Vierge de Jésus*.⁷⁰ In these pages Breynat seemed to propose that the Saint by his virginity somehow helped to cause the Incarnation as a

“negative efficient cause, by way of abstention,”⁷¹ and that for this reason St. Joseph had a right to the title, “Virgin father of Jesus.”⁷² Certainly, the words do not have any such meaning as the book proposed.

Nonetheless, comment should be made concerning official action taken by the Church through the Congregation of the Holy Office regarding the title “*virgin* father,” as applied to St. Joseph. The Canadian Josephologist Gauthier writes as follows:

Are we to say that complete liberty of expression is permitted in this regard? It would seem not so, since, according to a private response which has been sent to me with trustworthy proof of authenticity, the Holy Office indicated its mind in 1948. The Superior General of a religious congregation requested the Sacred Penitentiary Apostolic to grant an indulgence for the following ejaculation: “Blessed be St. Joseph, virgin father of Jesus, chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, patron of the Universal Church.” Before granting this request, the Sacred Penitentiary submitted the text of the prayer to the Congregation of the Holy Office, which replied in the negative. The Cardinal-secretary of the Holy Office sent a personal letter to the Superior General, asking him to have his subjects refrain from propagating the title, “Virgin father of Jesus,” because this formula might easily lend itself to a false interpretation.⁷³

What interpretation should be made of this directive? Officially, it represents a private decision of the Holy Office, not extended formally to the entire Church. Moreover, it does not contest the doctrinal correctness of the title of St. Joseph, but restricts itself to the practical question of a possible misunderstanding, nor does it specifically condemn any particular meaning of the term.

The danger evidently was considered to exist that St. Joseph would be called "virgin father" in the same fashion as Mary is "virgin mother." It can be speculated that a reason for this 1948 caution of the Holy Office was the fact that Breynat's book had defended the use of "virgin father" with propositions which led to the book's removal from sale in 1945.

Accordingly, we endorse Gauthier's suggestion of avoiding "virgin father" as a title of St. Joseph, and of holding that the possibly dangerous parallel between "virgin father" and "virgin mother" is reasonably prevented by calling St. Joseph "*virginal* father" of Jesus. The Latin form of the indulgenced prayer remains as *virgo pater*, approved by the Church since 1906. For English, French, and related languages, the term "virginal" better emphasizes the word's position as a limiting adjective for the word "father." Thus, the basic meaning remains indicated sufficiently, i.e., that Joseph is father of Jesus in every way that he, a virginal man, could be; but this meaning is shown by a term adequately disparate from Mary's title of "virgin mother" to

preserve the uniqueness of her position as the virgin mother of God.

What does "virginal father" actually indicate? According to Holzmeister, it implies that St. Joseph lived in a virginal marriage which was divinely enriched with offspring. Thus it was that he obtained the dignity of a father [and, we add, the dignity of father of Christ] and in himself alone, the simultaneous dignity of a virgin.⁷⁴

Mueller is more detailed and explicit in his explanation of the title:

St. Joseph was the father and is the father of the Child Jesus because he lived in a virginal marriage with Mary the Mother of God. The marriage had its purpose as well as the justification for its existence in the Incarnation of the Son of God, which it served. In the sense we have explained, the Child Jesus was truly the offspring and fruit of the marriage. Moreover, this expression implicitly or virtually contains the idea of "relative to marriage"; for without the virginal marriage with the Mother of God, it would have been impossible for Joseph to become the father of Jesus. . . . I cannot understand why the characterization, "virginal father," should be inadmissible with regard to St. Joseph. As it appears to me, this is the happiest and most suitable title of all that have hitherto appeared.⁷⁵

In expanding upon this defense, we wish to make our position very clear. We presuppose that

“virginal father” is to be accepted not *in vacuo*, as it were, but in the context of referring to St. Joseph’s fatherhood of Jesus. To make a comparison with our Lady, Mary’s title of “virgin mother” *of itself* does not necessarily mean that our Lady lived, let us say, a virginal life after the Incarnation; but “virgin mother” has never been expected to act as a quasi-compendium of all Mariology. Instead, the title supposes a knowledge of the pertinent doctrine concerning our Lady. Similarly with respect to St. Joseph, “virginal father” is not claimed to be an explicit reference to every element of the fatherhood. It presupposes the doctrine on the fatherhood, which in general it designates. A certain amount of reasoning is necessary in order to find its proximate implications. Its remote implications, of course, would be open to argument. Explicitly, however, we believe that it sufficiently indicates the great individuating aspects of the fatherhood which make St. Joseph’s position so exceptional.

“Virginal father” seems to approach the requirements for an adequate description because it is brief, exclusive, and clear—or perhaps we should say that it is as clear as any title ever will be in referring to a fatherly relationship that so utterly transcends all ordinary categories.

Extrinsically, “virginal father” has been recommended in the words of Augustine. Intrinsically, according to its meaning, it so limits the significance of the word “father,” by calling the fatherhood *virginal*, that it excludes all connotation of physical

generation, with no ambiguity whatsoever. On the other hand, by its mention of a virginal *fatherhood*, it indicates that some sort of fatherhood is being referred to. Since physical paternity is excluded by the word "virginal," the rights and duties of a fatherhood in the moral order seem to be the logical conclusion.

By its partial parallel with "virgin mother," the customary title of our Lady, "virginal father" points to Augustine's concept of a joint parenthood of Joseph and Mary, a parenthood that existed for the holy couple because God gave Christ to their marriage as its miraculous offspring. Nonetheless, "virginal father" does not infringe on Mary's unique dignity. By the very fact that it differs from Mary's title, it implies a subordinate and analogous parenthood on the part of St. Joseph, whose fatherhood came to him through our Lady.

Concerning the virginity of St. Joseph, these words as a minimum express the common opinion of the Church that the Saint lived virginally during all his life. This minimum meaning must be, "St. Joseph, who was a virgin [not *because* he was a virgin], possessed the relationship of a father toward Jesus Christ." A further meaning seems to be delicately implied or, perhaps we should say, required: "St. Joseph, by his virginal marriage with our Lady, obtained his position as father of Jesus through and because of the marriage." If this opinion is correct, "virginal father" implicitly touches the root reason of the fatherhood, as the following considerations are intended to show.

In the first place, other titles of St. Joseph, such as "foster father" and "legal father", point to some connection between the word "father"—presumably in the strict sense—and its modifying adjective. This connection is certainly not causal, but rather is restrictive indicating a limit. Thus, the Saint is called foster father of Jesus not *because* fostering would make him father of our Lord in the proper or strict sense, but *in so far as* fostering makes a man participate in the relationship which a natural father possesses. In the same way, as "legal father," St. Joseph is said to have fatherly rights over our Lord *in so far as* according to the law he shared in the legal rights he would have possessed if he had been a natural father.

Now to apply this principle to "virginal father." St. Joseph is father of Jesus *in so far as he, a virginal man, can be the father of Christ*—and in saying this we have exactly echoed the thought of many centuries that Joseph was father in all respects, physical generation alone excepted!

An adoptive father, whose son is extraneous to him and to his marriage, does not possess paternity in a fashion such as this. The description fits only St. Joseph's relationship, according to which Christ was Joseph's true son in the moral order, and not extraneous to him. The Saint could not have obtained such a fatherhood except through the fact that Jesus was born of Joseph's wife. There is no other source possible; the marriage was the channel of parenthood to St. Joseph.

Thus, the title of "Virginal Father of Jesus" exclusively presupposes and agrees with the doctrine of St. Joseph's fatherhood by right of marriage. In doing this it goes far beyond the incompleteness of all other titles of the Saint, tracing the fatherhood to Joseph's virginal marriage with the blessed Mother of God—the union which received Jesus Christ as its miraculous fruit.

PART V

OTHER

THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

CONCERNING ST. JOSEPH

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OTHER
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CONCERNING ST. JOSEPH

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

INTRODUCTORY NOTIONS

Very pertinently the questions might be asked, "What is the purpose of a study of the theology of St. Joseph? Should we not be content to accept St. Joseph merely as the protector of Mary and Jesus, calling him by the time-tested name of foster father? Or why seek more data, delving into Holy Scripture and Church history, since, as every thinking person can discover for himself, there is so little we know about the Saint? Why risk infringing on the rights of the Eternal Father, perhaps detracting as well from the exclusive rank of the Blessed Virgin?"

The chief answer to these queries rests on the principle that knowledge is the basis for action. All other things being equal, we can love and imitate St. Joseph so much the more as we know more about him. Conversely, the greater our love, the greater will be our interest in learning all possible details of his dignity and of his holiness.

A second reason for scientific investigation is the pressing need to find exactly where the truth exists. Only too often in the past, authors' personal devotion to St. Joseph, praiseworthy in itself, has led them into untenable excesses in their writings. The Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye, S.J., merely restates the historical record when he notes that "the clients of this great saint have so rarely succeeded in producing a work worthy of their subject."¹ The late Boniface Llamera, O.P., remarks, "In many such works there predominate vagueness and imprecision, sentimentality and superfluity. They are works of great imaginative labor, but of little fecundity and of little use for the faithful."²

When we realize the consequences of uncritical works on the Saint, we desire all the more a candid, realistic treatment. Among Catholics the devotion to St. Joseph itself has suffered because of exaggerations and mental vagaries. Once a person has been exposed to some of the rash and unfounded claims made for the Saint, the danger is that thereafter he will reject *a priori* whatever is said of St. Joseph, if it has the slightest appearance of being new.

For non-Catholics, as we shall note later, uncritical writings on the Saint have been an occasion to extend criticism to *all* Catholic doctrine in general. The biased critic has seen in this field pious fancy and fruitless speculation. That errors of such sort have existed, cannot and ought not be denied; but serious research on St. Joseph should not be stigmatized with censures that belong to ill-advised extremes.³

The correct attitude avoids criteria that err by excess or defect. On the one hand we do not wish to build on pious audacity, using principles rashly or wrongly proposed. On the other hand excessive caution is equally out of place. Even if we cannot reach absolute certitude in many cases, theological deduction retains its scientific value in analyzing the evidence that exists.

To a person unacquainted with modern writing on St. Joseph, the use of terms such as "Josephite theology" or "Josephology" may seem wholly novel or without precedent. One reason for lack of acquaintance with these terms is the fact that so little has appeared in English concerning the Saint. But Latin, German, French, and Spanish writers have systematized and co-ordinated the historical and doctrinal matter referring to St. Joseph to such an extent that this body of material has repeatedly received the name, "theology of St. Joseph." Hocedez places its formal appearance in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when together with increased devotion to Mary, devotion to her virginal

husband grew apace, and with it "what can be called the theology of St. Joseph, that is, the scientific study of his dignity, his mission, and his prerogatives."⁴ Bibliographical evidence further indicates how prevalent is such usage. For example, Mueller calls his book "dogmatic foundations" of St. Joseph's cultus; Lepicier presents his contributions as a theological tractate; Macabiau arranges his material in the form of "theological theses"; and Bover subtitles his monograph, "a theological inquiry."⁵ The French *Dictionary of Catholic Theology* uses the term on a level with other accepted wording: "The theology of St. Joseph is summed up in the study of the prerogatives of the Saint."⁶

By a parallel with the theology of Mary the title "Josephology" has already taken hold. Llamera, writing in 1944, admits that the title lacks wide use, but on the suggestion of "persons of authority" believes it should be accepted.⁷ It would seem that this word "Josephology" will eventually find overall usage, especially since the semiannual journal issued by the Research and Documentation Center at St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, has included it in its permanent title, *Cahiers de Joséphologie*. Practically speaking, the issue has really been closed with the founding of the North American Society of Josephology at Montreal (1962), not to mention the earlier founding of the Ibero-American Society of Josephology for Spanish-speaking countries.

As for the adjective "Josephite," it has long been accepted as good usage, in describing members of Congregations of Religious of St. Joseph.

Hence, in evident preference to "Josephine"—which is the only other likely modifier—"Josephite" theology aptly refers to the theology of St. Joseph just as Marian theology refers to that of our Lady.

When we speak of the theology of St. Joseph, the question arises how such an expression can be justified inasmuch as theology would seem to be the science of God rather than the study of any of His creatures.⁸ The reply is easy to give. Theology treats not only of God directly, but also of all other things in their relationships to their Creator, in so far as these relationships are known in the light of revelation. That is why we can properly define the theology of St. Joseph as a branch of theological knowledge which, being founded on revealed principles, studies the Saint in his position as virginal husband of Mary and virginal father of Jesus, together with all the graces and privileges that flow from his double office.

It is, moreover, a branch of dogmatic theology because it is concerned with ordering knowledge to truth, and not truth to action, as does moral theology. It is also a subdivision of the theology of Mary; and Mariology in its turn is part of the treatise on Christ Incarnate. Schematically, the theology of St. Joseph considers the Saint:

- first, in his relationship to Mary;
- second, in his fatherly relationship to Jesus; and
- third, as he possesses the graces, privileges, and holiness that grow out of this double vocation.

Like all parts of Catholic theology, Josephite theology should establish solid foundations for true devotion. The piety of the faithful should ultimately rest on its principles, using them as a guide either to check or to stimulate. The study also has great value because of Joseph's intimacy with Jesus and Mary. We investigate the Saint's position not only because his honor and glory redound to the honor and glory of Mary and thence to the honor and glory of Jesus, but also because Josephology helps us penetrate more deeply into the vast mystery of the Incarnation and into the awesome meaning of Mary's motherhood of God.

The Difficulty

At this point an objection arises which seems weighty indeed. We have been referring to the growth of the devotion to St. Joseph. Yet the Church is not allowed to change the doctrine it received from Christ, and admittedly, the devotion to St. Joseph did not exist publicly in the first twelve hundred years of the Church. How can the devotion be genuine, or in other words, how can the theology of St. Joseph be legitimate if the Saint was unknown for long centuries after the age of the apostles?

The difficulty is by no means fanciful, nor is it to be minimized. It was very real for many Protestants who in 1889 bitterly criticized Leo XIII for having issued his great encyclical on St. Joseph.⁹ Their argument against the devotion can be phrased in words like this: "Why was not St. Joseph always honored in the past? You claim that your church

was founded by Christ, that it teaches only what Christ taught, and that it bases all its teachings on Holy Scripture and tradition. Isn't it true that Joseph was completely neglected in early Christian times? Why didn't the first Christians of the primitive Church perceive his greatness? They had the same gospels, yet they did not pay St. Joseph respect in this modern way. Evidently, your Church has disobeyed Christ's commands. Somewhere along the line it has added to the Savior's teachings, and has introduced the devotion to St. Joseph to cater to the pious sentiments of its members."

That this is an accurate summary of a Protestant position appears from the words of A. Lukyn Williams in a non-Catholic reference work. "However much," he writes, "we may respect the faith of Joseph and gladly recognize not only Paul the tent-maker and Peter the fisherman but also Joseph the carpenter as confessedly high examples of the dignity of work and of the spiritual reward it receives, we can have little sympathy with teaching that stands in such lurid contrast to the reticence of the gospels and of the early Church."¹⁰

Williams should be given credit for having seen the historical contradictions that arose from certain exaggerated claims for St. Joseph which he met in a Catholic devotional writer. His comment is by no means in the same class with the pure fantasy of Salomon Reinach, who claimed that the cultus of St. Joseph was unknown during the Middle Ages, even during the Renaissance, and that it

developed only in the nineteenth century because of Jesuit influences! ¹¹

At any rate, all such objections fail to recognize the *basis* of the devotion to St. Joseph. The faithful as a body never refused to venerate St. Joseph. The Church at no time refused to preach the parts of the gospel that referred to him, and in no instance did she ever make any declaration against the dignity and the holiness of his ministry. (We may use "ministry" as an accepted theological term to indicate Joseph's service of Jesus and Mary.) History is very clear on this point. For long centuries Joseph was never singled out. Today in our twentieth century he is still regarded in the same position he has always held as a servant of Christ and Mary in their private home life. Now, however, he is given special honor.

The objection, none the less, can recur in a new form. "Granted that the Church did not change its doctrine, it at least added something new in sanctioning the more advanced veneration of St. Joseph." And this is correct. There can be no objection to a new devotion as such, for in every devotion some special aspect of the Church's teaching is emphasized. Just where the emphasis is to be placed and to what degree, depends ultimately on the plans of Divine Providence.

In many cases we ourselves can discern the wisdom of God achieving His all-perfect ends. For example, all Catholics have always believed in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist but special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament did not appear until

the thirteenth century. Again, in the seventeenth century when the freezing rigors of Jansenism threatened the Church, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was given us in order that the personal love of Jesus might be kept before men's eyes. In the case of our Blessed Lady, the devotion of the rosary was bestowed on the world when the world needed it. In every crisis of the Church Mary has been set forth as our chief intercessor with Christ according to some new devotion or according to a revival and continuation of an older one.

So it is in the case of St. Joseph. While admitting that we cannot fully understand God's reasons for postponing the devotion over so long a period, we are able to see the wisdom of the divine plan as it has been unfolded before us. St. Joseph was reserved for our times because our times need him as the Saint of social justice and the Saint of the family. Joseph the carpenter is to teach the value and dignity of labor, the holiness of marriage, respect for authority, social and interracial justice, and the critical importance of saintly family life—all vital issues that have to be stressed again and again in order to combat the modern errors of worship of the state, of wealth, of pleasure, and of power.

However, we must not deny the fact that the delay of the devotion to St. Joseph does create a problem. Why did the Church neglect Joseph so long in its public veneration? Various answers have been given, more or less along the lines already

mentioned here. It will help to present several of these other approaches suggested by modern authors.

Cardinal Lepicier writes, "Many think that the cultus of St. Joseph should be given slight estimation, for they notice how long it was delayed in the Church—as if he whom we see practically neglected in antiquity would now be worthy of mediocre attention!" Lepicier then gives the usual reasons, that a cultus of St. Joseph in early centuries might well have endangered the dogmas of the divine origin of Jesus and the virginal motherhood of Mary. He proposes new ideas, however, in noting the parallel between the delayed cultus of our Lady (in primitive Christianity) and that of St. Joseph. This short delay in widespread public veneration of Mary has never been used to militate against devotion to her. Hence, even a much greater delay ought not to be used against St. Joseph.

"In this connection," he says, "proportionate application should be made of what we taught elsewhere on the delay in the cultus of the Virgin.¹² Just as it had to be postponed lest faith in Christ, the true God-Man, be put in peril, so was it wisely ordained that Joseph was not to be honored with an outstanding cultus lest the supernatural birth of Christ and consequently the singular glory of the Virgin Mother be overshadowed."¹³

Dusserre explains the problem by distinguishing between the terms "cultus" and "devotion."¹⁴ Normally, he says, the two words are used inter-

changeably as synonyms. Strictly speaking, however, they have different connotations. A "devotion" refers to the respectful, tender, and trusting *attitude* which one manifests toward a saint by reason of his virtue and his greatness. "Cultus" on the other hand consists in the *recognition* and *use* of the intercessory power of the saint. Cultus is first private when individuals offer their private prayers to God through the saint. When cultus becomes public, it is manifested in official prayers and acts of the Church.

Devotion and cultus, therefore, are theoretically distinct. Practically considered, however, they are inseparable. A feeling of devotion first draws one's attention to a particular saint. Meditation on his greatness then serves to make explicit what had previously been merely implied. This is a sort of theological reflection that leads to a growth in devotion, which in turns leads to cultus.

In other words one must first know a saint in order to admire and love him, and that is devotion. The next step is to invoke his intercession, and that is cultus. When cultus on the part of individuals has acquired mature status, it can then (with the approbation of the Church) become official and public cultus. But the two will ever go hand in hand so that cultus will be nourished by devotion, and devotion is vivified by cultus.

Dusserre continues: To apply these notions to St. Joseph: Private *devotion* to the Saint, in the sense just explained, was quite certainly in existence

in the early Church although to a limited degree. Perhaps even a private cultus flourished. The writings of Jerome, Augustine, Ephrem, and Chrysostom prove that individuals were not lacking who discerned the outstanding virtue of St. Joseph. In the later Middle Ages, i.e., from the thirteenth century onward, private devotion to the Saint and private cultus to the Saint spread extensively.¹⁵ Thus, for Dusserre the devotion to St. Joseph as well as the Saint's cultus is a development from private to public status. Logically, in this sense the devotion would always have been present in the Church.

Cardinal Newman is among those who have commented at length on the problem of the long delay of the devotion. He solves the difficulty by distinguishing between "faith" (or doctrine) and "devotion." Faith represents the Creed, the rule of faith, and the acceptance of that rule. Devotion represents the religious cultus which is attached to the objects of our faith, and the practice of that cultus. Devotion must presuppose faith, but faith does not necessarily lead to devotion. We can believe without feeling sentiments of devotion. Faith is one, always the same everywhere. Devotions have multiplied, are varied and variable. They wax and wane with the centuries.

Newman's analysis is quite lengthy, but merits practically full quotation because of its value and its pertinence. "The diversified modes of honoring God," he writes, "did not come to us in a day or only from the apostles; they are the accumulations of

centuries; and, as in the course of years some of them spring up, so others decline and die. . . . The first of these sacred observances were the devotions paid to the apostles, then those which were paid to the martyrs; yet there were saints nearer to our Lord than either martyrs or apostles; but, as if these sacred persons were immersed and lost in the effulgence of His glory, and because they did not manifest themselves when in the body in external works separate from Him, it happened that for a long while they were less dwelt upon. . . .

“Hence at length those luminous stars rose in the ecclesiastical heavens, which were of more august dignity than any which had preceded them, and were late in rising, for the very reason that they were so specially glorious. Those names, I say, which at first sight might have been expected to enter soon into the devotions of the faithful, with better reason might have been looked for at a later date, and actually were late in their coming. St. Joseph furnishes the most striking instance of this remark; here is the clearest of instances of the distinction between doctrine and devotion. Who, from his prerogatives and the testimony on which they come to us, had a greater claim to receive an early recognition among the faithful than he? A saint of scripture, the foster father of our Lord, he was an object of the universal and absolute faith of the Christian world from the first, yet the devotion to him is of comparatively late date. When once it began, men seemed surprised that it had not been

thought of before; and now they hold him next to the Blessed Virgin in their religious affection and veneration." ¹⁶

A final quotation, from Frederick William Faber, merits inclusion here. He writes, "The adoration of Jesus and the devotion to Mary had taken their place immovably in the sense of the faithful and in the practical system of the Church, one shedding light upon the other, and both instructing, illuminating, nourishing, and sanctifying the people. But there was still one more of the 'Earthly Trinity' as it is called.

"Devotion to St. Joseph lay, as it were, dormant in the Church. Not that there was anything new to be known about him, or any fresh revelation to be made of him, except in the way of private revelations to the saints. He belonged exclusively to the sacred infancy. The beginnings of St. Matthew's gospel contained him. By two evangelists he had been left in complete silence, and the third had barely named him in the genealogy. Tradition held some scanty notices of him; but they had no light but what they had borrowed from St. Matthew. All we have now of St. Joseph was there then; only the sense of the faithful had not taken it up; God's time was not yet come. The sense of the faithful was not like the complete science of the apostles. It was not equal to it; it had to grow it; to master it, to fill it out with devotion, to animate it with institutions, to submit it as a perfectly administered hierarchy. But God's time came for this dear devotion; and it came

like all His gifts when times were dark and calamities were rife." ¹⁷

These explanations of the delay in the devotion to St. Joseph can be summed up in terms of Newman's distinction between doctrine and devotion. Doctrines relating to the vocation and dignity of St. Joseph are unmistakably founded on Holy Scripture. The devotion rests on these doctrines. It has changed throughout the years in the sense that after its appearances it has become more explicit and detailed. In itself it does not belong to the substantials of the Faith, but the doctrines on which it is founded have remained ever the same.

Our Method

Not all the subjects included in the theology of St. Joseph are to be discussed in this unit. We omit here the rather theoretical question whether or where St. Joseph is prefigured in the Old Testament, and precisely what gifts of grace he possessed in detail. The nature of Joseph's marriage to our Lady and his fatherly relationship to Jesus has already been covered in Parts 3 and 4, so that this section will confine itself to the graces, privileges, holiness, and other consequences that grow out of the Saint's vocation.

In the following pages we shall present many deductions from the fact of Joseph's double office. Because of the relatively scanty source material concerning the Saint, our answers to certain theological questions must come either by means of such direct

deductions or indirectly by means of an argument from analogy. Properly used, such logic can lead and does lead to reliable information. For example, with respect to the argument from analogy, we know of the existence of certain privileges of the saints. What belongs to the saints in general, must by a stronger reason—granting Joseph's exalted position—belong to St. Joseph. Yet this does not mean that all the *particular* privileges of all the saints will be attributed to the virginal father of Jesus. God bestows special graces suited to the needs of special apostolates, and Joseph was given all the helps he required. He might have lacked the special gift of miraculous preaching which the apostles needed and received for their first exacting tasks; but he must have been given in outstanding measure every *generic* gift which every saint would receive.

By a converse use of this analogy we can also ask whether or not the sublime privileges of Mary belong to Joseph in a lesser degree. Many of the graces of Mary were granted her specifically to help her in her parental task. Reasonably, then, God must have bestowed similar graces on Joseph because Joseph's task was also that of a parent. Joseph's fatherhood in the moral order is unique; hence, his graces like Mary's must also be unique. Nevertheless, in reasoning in this way we must be most diligent lest any grace given exclusively to Mary would seem, by improper logic, to be shared with even so holy a man as Mary's husband.

Such in brief outline is the argument from analogy. It merges into the argument from direct deduction, setting down Joseph's vocation as its major premise:

“According to Holy Scripture and official documents of the Church, St. Joseph was chosen to be the virginal husband of our Lady, the virginal father of Jesus, the head of the Holy Family, and the patron of the Universal Church.”

Then follows the minor premise:

“However, implicitly included in this vocation *because required by it* are various privileges and graces.”

To conclude:

“Hence, these privileges belong to St. Joseph.”

Our first consideration will be the dignity of St. Joseph's position. Next, the fact of his dignity implicitly indicates the holiness which his position demanded. With regard to the Saint's holiness we will ask the detailed questions when and how his sanctity was acquired; how it was conserved and increased; and finally, how it was rewarded. The concluding chapters will describe his position in the Church today: his patronage over all, and the reasons suggesting why the Church has granted him greater honors in its liturgy.

CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN

THE DIGNITY OF ST. JOSEPH

Dignity always implies some sort of excellence, and this excellence in its turn arises from the possession of a good or of a perfection. Hence it is that "a person becomes more excellent by the fact that he possesses a good more excellently than others do."¹ Here we have a general truth which we can use in two ways in understanding the dignity of St. Joseph, either considering the excellence of the Saint in itself, or considering it in respect to the excellence of other persons.

We go to Thomas Aquinas for the principles from which to deduce St. Joseph's true dignity. Aquinas himself did not apply these principles to

St. Joseph; he used them to construct his theology concerning the dignity and holiness of Mary. He wrote, "Those whom God chooses for an office, He prepares and disposes in such a way that they become suited to it, according to the saying of St. Paul, 'He has made us fit ministers of the New Covenant' (2 Cor. 3:6). But the Blessed Virgin was divinely chosen to be the Mother of God, and therefore there can be no doubt that God fitted her for this position by means of His grace."²

Joseph, like Mary, was chosen for an office—the headship of the Holy Family. He must, then, have been divinely prepared and disposed in order to be suited for it. Therefore, "there can be no doubt that God fitted" Joseph for his responsibility. Joseph's excellence arose because God selected him; it was increased or, so to speak, confirmed because God's grace helped him live out his exalted position worthily. Any difficulties would arise not so much in the application of this principle to Joseph himself, but rather in questioning the truth of the principle. For example, was the traitor Judas divinely chosen like Joseph and Mary? With Terrien, we must answer that Judas was indeed chosen by God, but not as were St. Joseph and our Lady. "If there was a liar among the apostles chosen by Jesus Christ in person, this is because the choice of Judas was not absolute. The Lord, in calling Judas to follow Him, knew He would be betrayed by him, but even this went along with the plans of His mercy since the salvation of the world demanded that He be delivered."³ In the case of St. Joseph we realize that

he did not become a traitor. The gospels make it clear he fulfilled his God-given task perfectly, and all subsequent Catholic interpretation of the gospels vouches for the Saint's fidelity. That is how we know he worthily fulfilled the vocation to which God called him and for which God prepared him.

St. Thomas applied a second principle to our Lady which we again refer in a parallel way to St. Joseph. "To the degree that something approaches its source," Aquinas wrote, "by so much does it participate in the effect of that source. . . . Christ is the source of grace. . . . The Blessed Virgin Mary was the closest to Christ in His humanity, because He took His human nature of her. Hence, in preference to all other people she had to receive the fullness of grace from Christ."⁴ But Joseph was closest to Mary and to Jesus because of his position as husband and father. Therefore, reasoning from the general rule, we would suppose that Joseph had to receive the "fullness of grace" second of course to Mary; and again second to Mary, his dignity would be "in preference to all other people."

Strictly speaking, this closeness to Jesus as the source of grace would argue great *holiness* for St. Joseph. It would not *directly* indicate his *dignity*, if by "dignity" we mean the excellence Joseph possessed because of his vocation. Admittedly, Joseph's holiness of itself is already an excellence or dignity. But here we are looking first at St. Joseph's vocation, at the honored rank it brought to the Saint, at his "dignity," and not yet at his "holiness" or likeness to God.

One can reasonably wonder why there seems to be this lack of clear-cut determination in the question of St. Joseph's dignity contrasted with his holiness. Perhaps the cause for the confusion is that one is not precisely the other, but they do go hand in hand. The dignity of St. Joseph required that he be proportionately holy if he was to be worthy of his vocation. His holiness in its turn, as second to the holiness of Mary, would give Joseph an excellence far surpassing the dignity of any other created being except again our Lady.

St. Joseph's Dignity As Husband of Mary

To arrive at a true idea of the dignity of Mary's husband, we take for granted a general appreciation of the true dignity of Mary, for that is the norm. God certainly did not choose an unworthy man to be the husband of the virgin Mother of God, linked so closely to the mystery of God becoming man. In the words ascribed to St. John Damascene, Joseph's position with respect to our Lady is "conceded to St. Joseph by the singular gift of God and by a dispensation that surpasses all understanding."⁵

Probably the best summary of this is found in Leo XIII's encyclical, *Quamquam Pluries*. "The dignity of the Mother of God," Leo says, "is certainly so sublime that nothing can surpass it. None the less, since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures."

The reason for such sharing always rests in the marriage between these two. "For marriage is the closest possible union and relationship whereby each spouse mutually participates in the goods of the other. Consequently, if God gave Joseph as a spouse to the Virgin, He assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also *as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself.*"⁶

Reflection on the consequences of the marriage bond reveals constantly deeper meaning. For instance, when Mary visited Elizabeth, her cousin exclaimed, "How have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk. 1:43.) Yet the visit of Mary to Elizabeth was something brief and temporary. If, even as such, it was to be considered such a magnificent honor, what must be the honor of living with Mary in the intimacy of family life for some thirty years, a privilege that only Joseph possessed as Mary's husband and for which he alone was chosen?

Moreover, because of the marriage our Lady was subject to St. Joseph. St. Paul says of matrimony that the "husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church" (Eph. 5:23). Joseph, then, was in authority over Mary. His dignity on this score can be surpassed only by the fact that Jesus, too, was subject to the Saint. By reason of Mary's holiness and her vocation as Mother of God, our Lady was God's choicest creature, the living Ark of the Covenant. Providence entrusted this treasure to

St. Joseph to be protected and cherished. No other creature, either angel or human, ever had so responsible a relationship.

Joseph's excellence also stands out by a consideration of the ties of love that existed between the Saint and our Lady. The fact is that Mary loved Joseph as she has never loved any other creature. She would not have been perfect in her vocation as the virgin wife of St. Joseph if her love for her husband had been surpassed by any other human affection. Conversely, Joseph as husband was bound to love Mary as he loved no other except God Himself. Joseph became the only created person to hold the primacy of Mary's love and to return it.

Comparisons and considerations such as these serve as apt norms to judge Joseph's dignity as husband. Still another comparison can bring home the idea even more strongly. Spiritual writers have long marveled at the dignity of St. John the Evangelist because Jesus put Mary into John's keeping on Calvary. The same warmth of expression should be extended to St. Joseph with greater force. John received Mary from her dying Son to guard her, to love her as his mother, to console her for her relatively few remaining years. Joseph had received Mary and guarded her and loved her as his virgin wife for the long years before she became a widow. One wonders why the force of this comparison between the privilege of Joseph and the privilege of John the Evangelist has been so little developed. *Its a fortiori* logic is powerful, striking, and clear.

Thus it is that we return to the fact that God chose St. Joseph to be the husband of our Lady, and God considered the Saint worthy of such a post. The Church put this idea into the oration for the former feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph: "O God, who in thine ineffable providence were pleased to choose blessed Joseph as the spouse of thy most holy mother. . . ." In other words God foresaw Joseph's cooperation and bestowed on him the position in the Holy Family. As we earlier mentioned from St. Thomas, the marriage of the Saint and our Lady was expressly brought into existence by God in order to serve the Incarnation. The only man God chose for the husband was St. Joseph, to parallel the divine selection of Mary.

St. Joseph's Dignity As Father of Jesus

In analyzing the relationship of Joseph to Jesus, we are struck by the many parallels with Joseph's relationship to Mary. So, too, the consideration of the dignity of one parallels the dignity of the other. This is the plan Leo XIII follows. After discussing the marriage, the pope says, "Likewise, Joseph *alone* stands out in august dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by the divine appointment, and in the opinion of men was His father. As a consequence, the Word of God was modestly obedient to Joseph, was attentive to his commands, and paid him every honor that children should render their parent."⁷

The pope's words provide headings under which Joseph's dignity as foster father can be listed.

He was the "guardian of the Son of God by the divine appointment." This was no casual choice, no position obtained by accident. "In the opinion of men he was His father." Joseph had the tremendous honor of being selected as legal father, bound to Jesus by the legal and spiritual ties of fatherhood. And "as a consequence" Joseph received from Jesus the love and reverence and "every honor" owed to a true parent—which in a true sense Joseph must have been! Yet this child was no ordinary person; He was God Himself, the Son of God, and the son of Joseph. Joseph possessed His love as no other created person save Mary possessed it. Jesus was the perfect son; that is why we can know for certain that He loved Joseph in a manner and to a degree that He loved no one else, again excepting Mary. The reason is always the same: only one creature named Joseph of Nazareth, a carpenter, held the rights of father over Jesus Christ.

Joseph, then, was the father of Jesus not only in name and in popular estimation but also in actual fact. Theologians have not been slow to draw the parallel between Mary's motherhood and Joseph's fatherhood in the moral order. If the former gave Mary a quasi-infinite dignity because it had to do with God Himself, then with proper qualifications the other gave Joseph a quasi-infinite dignity because his fatherly relationship, too, referred to God.⁸

The dignity of the Saint continues to appear from the fact that Jesus was subject to him. This

means that Joseph taught Jesus much of the experimental knowledge Jesus deigned to learn in His human nature. It also means that in a correct sense Joseph was the only man who ever possessed fatherly authority over God! The subjection must be understood, of course, with proper theological distinctions. Jesus was subject only with regard to His human nature and human will, not as to His divine nature and divine will. Again, He was subject not in strict rigor but rather by a condescension whereby He freely willed to be subject to Joseph. Finally, His obedience did not cover His divine mission as Savior, as He indicated at the time He was found in the temple (Lk. 2:49). His was the submission of the child to its father, to show to the world the example of obedience in children who have not yet been emancipated from such obedience by mature age, marriage, or religious vows.⁹

Whether we look on Joseph's fatherhood from the aspect of Joseph's authority, his love for Jesus, or the selflessness it entailed, all considerations must end in superlatives. To use a comparison, Jesus praised John the Baptist (Mt. 11:11) superlatively because of the Baptist's utter abnegation in following out his vocation as herald of the Messiah. But if Joseph's vocation had called for notice during the Public Life, what would have been the praise Jesus would give Joseph! The perfect "human father" of the perfect Son would wear himself out in the service of his charge. Jesus promised a reward for even a cup of water given to one of His "little ones"

(Mt. 10:42), for this was evidently a noble action. St. Joseph gave not just one cup of water but his life and his service directly to Jesus.

Mueller suggests the comparison that St. Joseph's dignity as virginal father of Jesus gives the Saint greater excellence than sanctifying grace and the right to the beatific vision itself.¹⁰ This refers, of course, only to the two *dignities*—the fatherly relationship to Jesus compared with the adoptive sonship of God in the supernatural order. It does not mean that Joseph's fatherhood *in itself* would give the Saint greater supernatural perfection, nor that *in itself* the fatherhood would make Joseph capable of that happiness which comes because of sanctifying grace and the beatific vision. Instead, the comparison points out that Joseph possesses true fatherly rights over Jesus; that Joseph is not the adoptive father, for Jesus is given to him within the bonds of his own marriage;¹¹ and therefore, the dignity of this true fatherhood of Him who is God is much greater than the dignity of being an adopted son of God.

Moreover, the beatific vision is something that belongs to God alone by nature. Adoptive sonship gives men and angels the right to share in the beatific vision. But Joseph's fatherhood would certainly give the Saint a stronger right to the beatific vision than would adoptive sonship.¹² The fatherhood is in a true sense the source of Joseph's graces.

A fitting conclusion to such reflections on the dignity of Joseph's fatherhood can best be made in

the words of St. Bernard, adopted by the Church as a prayer in preparation for mass: "O fortunate man, blessed Joseph, to whom it was given to see the God whom many kings yearned to see and did not see; to hear the God whom many kings yearned to hear and did not hear; not only to see and hear, but to carry, to kiss, to clothe and protect Him!"¹³

Joseph's Dignity As Head of the Holy Family

Perhaps, strictly speaking, St. Joseph's position as head of the Holy Family should not be considered a separate title to dignity so much as a combination of the other two, but it has its own special value. It depicts Joseph's relationship to Mary and Jesus *together*, not separately as "husband" and "father" do. Leo XIII evidently considers it a separate title, giving it prominence by itself: "From this double dignity [of husband and father] such duties arose as are prescribed by nature for the head of a household, so that Joseph was at once the legitimate and natural guardian, preserver, and defender of the divine household over which he presided. These duties he fulfilled as long as he lived. Zealously he watched over his spouse and her divine Child with the most ardent love and constant solicitude. By his labor he regularly provided for both of them such necessities of life as food and clothing. In seeking a place of refuge he warded off that danger to their lives which had been engendered by the jealousy of a king. Amid the inconveniences of the journey and the bitterness of

exile he continually showed himself the companion, the helper, the consoler of the Virgin and of Jesus." ¹⁴

This passage of the encyclical emphasizes the *natural* position of Joseph in the Holy Family. Again we are reminded that it is not something artificial and arbitrary, as if he were merely a protector of Mary and an adoptive guardian of Jesus. Instead, by the natural law itself Joseph governs the family whose other members are God and the Mother of God. The dignity he would have because of this authority has already been noted separately concerning the subjection of Mary and Jesus to Joseph; it is part of the ministry of the personal service of God Himself.

Suarez analyzed Joseph's place in the Holy Family by saying that the Saint thus participated in the "order of the hypostatic union." The word "hypostatic" comes from the Greek language, and means "personal." Hence, because the divine and human nature were united in the one *person* of Jesus Christ, the order of the hypostatic union refers essentially to the human nature of Jesus together with all the gifts, privileges, and relationships that directly flow from it. ¹⁵ Joseph and Mary also belong to the order of the hypostatic union, although not essentially but by reason of their ministries. Joseph's place lifts him above all other creatures because no one served Jesus and Mary more intimately than he. In the words of Suarez, "There are ministries which touch the order of the hy-

postatic union, and this order of its very nature is of higher perfection. . . . It is in this order that I think St. Joseph's ministry was instituted, and, as it were, in the lowest grade. But by the same token Joseph's position surpasses all others because it exists in this higher order." ¹⁶

Joseph's Dignity As Patron of the Universal Church

Earlier writers on St. Joseph could not discuss Joseph's universal patronage as a title of his dignity inasmuch as the official proclamation was not made until 1870. However, it is surprising that more recent theologians have not given it the separate attention it deserves. As in the case of "Head of the Holy Family," Joseph's patronage of the Church grows out of his fundamental position of husband and therefore father. Again according to Leo XIII, "The divine household which Joseph governed just as with paternal authority contained the beginnings of the new Church. The Virgin most holy is the mother of all Christians since she is the mother of Jesus and since she gave birth to them on the mount of Calvary amid the unspeakable sufferings of the Redeemer. Jesus is, as it were, the firstborn of Christians, who are His brothers by adoption and redemption. From these considerations we conclude that the blessed Patriarch must regard all the multitude of Christians who constitute the Church as confided to his care in a certain special manner. This is his numberless family, scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority because he is the husband of Mary and

the father of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is conformable to reason and in every way becoming to Blessed Joseph that as once it was his sacred trust to guard with watchful care the family of Nazareth, no matter what befell, so now by virtue of his heavenly patronage he is in turn to protect and to defend the Church of Christ." ¹⁷

Joseph's patronage of the Church is something unique, shared with him by no other saint. Michael the Archangel and the Apostles Peter and Paul do not have ranks so exalted. Michael's task is that of a quasi-military protector (cf. Ch. 20); Peter and Paul are the foundations of the Church at Rome; but only Joseph is, if one can use the expression, "father of the Church." As Leo XIII pointed out, it is this note of fatherly protection that characterizes Joseph's patronage—fatherly love for everyone, everywhere in that Church which is the outgrowth of the family at Nazareth. It is all the more excellent because it is so universal, and because it is based on Joseph's original vocation and his attitude toward the Church.

This position of St. Joseph, indicated by the Church documents in so many ways as second only to that of Mary, appears also in the office of the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. There, the hymn for Lauds reads as follows:

Altis locatis sedibus
Celsaeque Sponsae proximus,
Adesto nunc clientibus
Quos vexat indigentia.

Thou, high in heaven,
Closest to thy exalted spouse,
Help, now, thy clients
Whom want presses sorely.

St. Joseph and the Angels

All these reflections on Joseph's dignity as husband of Mary, virginal father of Jesus, head of the Holy Family, and patron of the Universal Church lead to the conclusion that Joseph's worth is far greater than that of any other saint, and evidently greater than the angels as well. But this suggested greatness requires an explicit comparison with the angels and the greatest of the saints. Several difficulties arise and would remain unanswered unless such a comparative analysis is made.

An inquiry such as this does not flow, therefore, from idle curiosity that tries to count the gifts of God as bestowed on His servants. The wrong attitude would be that criticized in the *Imitation of Christ*: "Do not be inquisitive or dispute concerning the merits of the saints; who is more holy than another, or who greater in the kingdom of heaven. Such often breed strifes and unprofitable contention and nourish also pride and vainglory whence arise envies and dissensions while one man proudly prefers this saint and another that" (3, 58).

It is true that rash statements on the relative dignity or holiness of the saints ought to be avoided, especially when the data of revelation are absent. In the case of St. Joseph, however, the fonts of

revelation contain enough information to draw conclusions that are reasonably certain. Such conclusions are not necessarily taught as of divine faith, but they can claim theological certainty or at least probability according to the reasoning behind them. Perhaps we should emphasize once again that the purpose of discussing the questions on the comparative dignity of St. Joseph is *not* to diminish the glory of the angels and other saints. The comparison is made necessary on another score. The evidence indicates that St. Joseph possesses exceptional dignity second to Mary. How are we to square this fact with the dignity or holiness of other saints?

The proper starting point for all discussion is undoubtedly the statement in the encyclical of Leo XIII, "There can be no doubt that more than any other person [St. Joseph] approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures."¹⁸ Michel comments on the passage as follows: "To take these words in their full sense it would be necessary to conclude to the pre-eminence of St. Joseph not only above all the saints but above the angels." He adds, however, that the assertion should be interpreted as indicating the mind of the Church, and in a situation like this where so sweeping a claim is made, the greatest prudence should be manifested.¹⁹ Interestingly enough Michel himself published a much less reserved interpretation some years before his opinion was printed in the French *Dictionary of Catholic Theology*. His earlier version read, "Although no explicit assertion of Catholic theology

exists to corroborate this interpretation, it seems that we can logically draw the conclusion this far"—i.e., that in dignity St. Joseph surpasses not only the saints but all angels as well.²⁰

To decide whether or not the Saint is truly so eminent, we can apply to St. Joseph the same principle Thomas Aquinas applied to Mary. "The Mother of God was superior to the angels with reference to the dignity to which she was divinely elevated. However, insofar as her state in the present life was concerned, she was inferior."²¹ We reflect that the ministry of angels is to guard men; but the ministry of Joseph was to guard Jesus. Again, the guardianship of the angels even with respect to Jesus (as when "angels came and ministered to Him"—Mt. 4:11) is by no means as intimate as was St. Joseph's. Such ministry did not put the angels into the order of the hypostatic union. Hence, the dignity of exercising a true fatherhood of Jesus would seem to give St. Joseph an excellence far surpassing that of the angels.

St. Paul argues that the natural fatherhood of God the Father over God the Son makes Him "so much superior to the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee'?" (Hebr. 1:4.) Parallel-wise and always with due restrictions, we can apply this text to St. Joseph. To which of the angels was it ever said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus"? (Mt. 1:21.) In other words no angel ever had the paternal

right of bestowing the name on the divine Child; no angel was legally considered the father of Jesus; no angel ever received the submission of the Son of God to his command.

On grounds such as these Cantera concludes, "What can we say of St. Joseph relative to the angels and celestial spirits? Does he also excel them in dignity and excellence? We can affirm it with no fear, since it is not repugnant theologically that the Saint was predestined in order and in rank above them all. This affirmation is not certain doctrine of the Church, but there are solid reasons that accredit and verify it." The angels exercise sublime and adorable ministries of obedience and of love with regard to the Word Incarnate. However, these angelic ministries and adorations are not as profound and special and directly concerned with Jesus as was the ministry of St. Joseph. Even more, the degree of dignity is measured by the degree of love which souls attain in this life. St. Joseph, Cantera believes, made such progress in the love of God because of his closeness to Jesus that he advanced far beyond all the angels in a degree of *holiness* that gave him an equally prominent degree of *excellence*.²²

St. Joseph And St. John the Baptist

The question of St. Joseph's pre-eminence, however, arises not so much in connection with the angels as with John the Baptist. The superior rank assigned in the liturgy to the name of John the Baptist does not imply any inferiority on the part of

St. Joseph, for as Benedict XIV makes it clear, the order of names in the liturgy is not intended to define the degree of dignity or holiness of the saints.²³ The reason for difficulty lies in the interpretation of the words of Jesus. "Amen I say to you, that among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Mt. 11:11). Hence, it is the gospel text rather than the liturgical rank of the two names (e.g., in the Litany of the Saints) that must receive our attention.

This judgment concerning relative order in the liturgy is a far cry from the negative attitude of a Consultor of the Congregation of Sacred Rites (evidently Jerome Saccheri, O.P.) who in 1869 recommended that the petitions for the advancement of the Saint's name in the liturgy be refused on every count save one, and this because St. Joseph's pre-eminence was doubtful. At the time, it is true, Joseph had not been declared Patron of the Universal Church, undoubtedly a most momentous Church action in glorifying Joseph on earth. Nor had St. Joseph been granted the high liturgical honors later accorded him by St. Pius X and Benedict XV and John XXIII. Perhaps this might help explain the reluctance to champion Joseph's dignity.

At any rate the Consultor of 1869 writes in evident sympathy with the action of Benedict XIII, who in 1726 felt that Joseph's name should be placed in the Litany of the Saints, but not before that of John the Baptist—"because to prefer St. Joseph to the Precursor would have meant more excel-

lent holiness and dignity in Joseph, something which cannot be considered certain and evident; for the authority of the Word of God, written or handed down, is not extant; and there is also lacking any sort of tradition in the Catholic Church.

“In this connection,” the Consultor continues, “Suarez himself, who first taught that St. Joseph obtained more perfect grace than St. John the Baptist, adds that he holds this as only probable. For the opposite opinion the saying of Christ our Lord argues greater holiness and excellence in St. John the Baptist: ‘Amen I say to you, that among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist’ (Mt. 11:11), although this phrase receives different interpretations.”²⁴

Such a view, of course, was entirely legitimate for its author to hold since he considered his reasons theologically sound. Particularly in this case where the Church has made no definite and binding pronouncement free discussion has been of great benefit for the cause of St. Joseph. As to the assertions that “the authority of the Word of God, written or handed down, is not extant,” and as to the denial of any Church tradition of Joseph’s excellence, a few words of recapitulation will suffice.

In the first place no competent writer would claim that the explicit veneration of St. Joseph existed publicly from the beginnings of the Church. But the *foundation* for attributing to the Saint his exclusive dignity and holiness is certainly found in the gospel narrative, and this is enough. Emphasis

on St. Joseph's position and the fuller appreciation of it appeared relatively late in Church history.

Concerning the oft-cited text about John the Baptist, many comments are in order whose force and logic cannot be gainsaid. In fact, when our Lord declared that "among those born of women there has not risen a greater," He evidently did not expect His words to have a slavishly literal interpretation. Certain exceptions were to be made—at least He Himself and His mother Mary were not to be considered. Otherwise, Jesus as well as Mary would have been included in the number of "those born of women" as inferior to the Baptist. Clearly, then, exceptions to this statement of Jesus are justified if the dignity and holiness of the persons in question are manifest from some other source. If Joseph's pre-eminence cannot be reasonably denied, he too is to be exempt from the limitation that might at first sight seem to exist in our Lord's words.

In interpreting the gospels it is a generally accepted principle that whenever doubt exists concerning a particular passage, the parallel description in another evangelist should be consulted, provided such a passage exists. In this instance Luke offers a more detailed report of Christ's language: "Among those born of women, there is not a *greater prophet* than John the Baptist" (Lk. 7:28). In other words, Luke's account shows that Jesus praised the Baptist as superior to all the prophets of the Old Testament.

This interpretation follows not only from the text but also from the context of both Matthew and Luke. Immediately after saying: "There has not risen a greater (prophet) than John the Baptist," Jesus adds (according to Matthew), "yet the least in the kingdom of *heaven* is greater than he," and (according to Luke), "yet the least in the kingdom of *God* is greater than he." Thereby all reasonable cause for difficulty is removed. The evangelical traditions according to their wont give a substantial narrative, not repeated slavishly word for word, and they also make evident the hyperbolic language which Jesus used. Christ our Lord is indicating that the least ministry of the New Testament (which is truly the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God) is in itself far greater than the greatest ministry of the Old Testament, even as John the Baptist had fulfilled it.

Suarez helpfully points out that Joseph belongs neither properly nor exclusively to the Old and New Testaments.²⁵ Even more, Joseph's was the personal service of Christ in His hidden life, not a ministerial or a preaching activity such as that of the apostles and their successors, the bishops of the Church.

The interpretation given here is confirmed by reliable authorities. Lagrange states, "Once again must we state that there is no question here of the personal holiness of the Baptist, but rather of his historical situation; he pertained to the law like others; he surpassed them by announcing the new

order, but he is inferior to the workers of the king.”²⁶ Cornelius a Lapide gives the theological reason for Joseph’s superior dignity: “It is more to be father and ruler of Christ than to be his herald and forerunner.”²⁷ Finally, Jones explains in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, “The Baptist is praised not so much for his personal sanctity as for the part he has so faithfully played in the divine scheme. . . . That John worthily fulfilled the function is supposed throughout, but our Lord is not speaking of his sanctity; it would be idle, therefore, to introduce the question, e.g., of our Lady’s excelling sanctity in connection with the text. Yet (still in the order of dignity and not of sanctity) the members of the Kingdom (already in existence on earth) are more highly privileged.”²⁸

Certainly, then, John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets. He had the gift of prophecy as well as the privilege of baptizing the Savior. He alone fulfilled among all the prophets what the rest had prophesied. But for all his holiness and excellence, his closeness to Jesus and the dignity of his ministry must yield to St. Joseph’s position as virginal husband of Mary, virginal father of Jesus, head of the Holy Family, and Patron of the Universal Church.

St. Joseph and the Apostles

Another difficulty against St. Joseph’s pre-eminence can arise when the vocation of the Saint is compared with that of the apostles. The praise of the apostles is explicitly set forth by Thomas

Aquinas. Commenting on the text of St. Paul, "This grace has abounded beyond measure in us" (Eph. 1:8), St. Thomas writes, "From this there is manifest the rashness, not to say the error of those who presume to compare certain saints to the apostles in grace and glory; for it is clear from these words that the apostles have a greater grace than other saints, after Christ and the Virgin Mother."²⁹

There are several answers to the difficulty proposed by St. Thomas. The words of St. Paul, "This grace has abounded beyond measure in us," do not have to be understood (as Aquinas understands them) in a comparison between the apostles and the rest of the faithful. Hence, they do not necessarily imply that the apostles have more dignity than all other human beings except our Lady. They can be taken simply to mean that "we"—all the faithful—"are engulfed by the treasures of God's grace."³⁰

Nevertheless, even if one does adopt St. Thomas' interpretation, there is still no real difficulty against St. Joseph's surpassing the apostles in dignity. Joseph was dead at the time Paul was writing his supposed comparison; so was John the Baptist. Paul would have been speaking of those who were living. Francis Suarez answers the difficulty by remarking that the ministries of Joseph and of the apostles cannot, properly speaking, be compared. Joseph's ministry concerns the order of the hypostatic union, and is an essentially higher order than the ministry of the apostles. Moreover, while the

apostles might be considered the greatest in the New Testament, Joseph belongs neither to the Old nor to the New Testament, but to the "Author and Cornerstone" of each.³¹

Michel comments, "It is incontestable that in the Middle Ages Joseph's cultus was hardly existent; the humble and modest saint was not thought of. . . . There is no question of a comparison of the apostles with a saint who came before them. . . ." He labels the whole objection from St. Paul's text and Thomas Aquinas' commentary on it as "a difficulty which in fact does not exist."³²

CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN

ST. JOSEPH'S HOLINESS

The doctrine that St. Joseph surpasses all creatures except Mary in holiness is becoming more and more commonly accepted in the Church. Some theologians have hesitated on the question whether the Saint surpasses the angels as well as all men, but their hesitation is admittedly due to a prudent reserve rather than a cognizance of facts that would permanently militate against St. Joseph.¹ This growth of the doctrine of the Saint's holiness does not of course involve any change in essential Catholic doctrine. Instead, there is question of a progressively deeper understanding of the significance of Joseph's vocation as virginal husband of

Mary and virginal father of Jesus. Among modern authors who have written on St. Joseph's holiness the treatment is strikingly similar and at times almost identical.² The reason for this similarity is probably the same as existed with regard to St. Joseph's dignity—the existence of a common theological source, Francis Suarez. We shall summarize this traditional presentation here, amplifying it (as we did in the case of Joseph's dignity) with newer deductions drawn from St. Joseph's patronage of the Universal Church.

The connection between Joseph's dignity and Joseph's holiness is so close that at times the same wording can be used for the one as for the other. The two depend on each other as means to the end or as cause and effect. Joseph's dignity required that he be proportionately holy; Joseph's holiness grew out of the fact that the Saint possessed such dignity.

What is meant by holiness? It refers to freedom from all that is evil, to a supernatural likeness to God, and to the possession of sanctifying grace. More particularly, as heroic virtue, holiness represents the living picture of evangelical perfection: perfect purity from sin, intimate union with God, all ruled by the supreme norm of rightness.³

The gospel of St. Matthew gives explicit testimony to Joseph's holiness when it calls him a just man (Mt. 1:19), or "right-minded."⁴ The narrative of his life reveals his magnificent character even more pointedly. Among the great virtues he manifested are his unwavering faith, deep humility, consummate prudence, virginal chastity, and instant

obedience. These are the effects appearing on the surface, as it were, that connote an underlying love of God which brings the Saint to a high order of sanctity. Of course, Joseph's virtues generally were not singled out for special mention in the early centuries of the Church. In the designs of God his position was obscure. While many of the Fathers gave lengthy tributes to the virtue of Joseph of Egypt, it is hard for us to understand at this distance why they passed over the humble foster father in silence. Even Augustine, who brilliantly analyzed Joseph's marriage and fatherhood, did not advance to the apparently logical step of eulogizing Joseph's holiness.

The only gospel text that drew notable comment on Joseph's virtues among the Fathers was the reference to the "just man" in Matthew. St. John Chrysostom's interpretation of the words is pioneering for its insight and rare for its length. His words of praise are still more unusual because in his opinion the espousal of Joseph and Mary was not a true marriage, and Mary supposedly was separated from Joseph on Calvary while Joseph was still living.⁵ None the less, Chrysostom's tribute to the faith, magnanimity, and justice of St. Joseph is unsurpassed by any other tribute to the Saint during the first millennium of the Church. That is why this long passage merits full inclusion here.

“‘Joseph, her husband, being a just man.’ Here, ‘just man’ means adorned with every virtue, for it pertains to justice not to be avaricious, and justice

is the universal virtue. 'Being a just man,' that is, kind and self-controlled, he wished to dismiss her privately. Not only was he reluctant to punish Mary; he would not even deliver her up. Have you ever seen anyone who so loves wisdom and who is free from all tyrannical bent? He was so immune to [jealousy], this plague of the soul, that he refused to inflict pain on the Virgin even in the slightest degree.

"Accordingly, since it seemed that by law he was no longer permitted to keep her, and since it appeared that to denounce her and to bring her to trial was of necessity to put her to death, he chose neither course but began to elevate himself above the law. For with the coming of grace many prophetic types of this sublime institution were to appear. Just as the sun, not yet showing its rays, nevertheless illumines the zenith of the celestial vault from on high, so did Christ, who was about to emerge from the womb, illumine the whole world before His actual appearance." In this instance, Chrysostom says, such foreshadowing occurred through St. Joseph.

"Do you perceive the moderation of this man? He did not chastise, he mentioned the affair to no one, not even to her who was under suspicion, but he debated the matter within himself, seeking to hide from the Virgin the reason for separation. Nor does it say that he wished to cast her off, but rather to send her away, so kind and self-controlled was he.

“While he was pondering over all this, the angel appeared to him in sleep. Why not openly, in the manner that he appeared to the shepherds and to Zachary, as well as to the Virgin? This man was so ready to believe that he did not require such a manifestation. After Mary’s conceiving, an evil suspicion took hold of his soul, but none the less he was ready to be easily led to good hope if only some one might come to lead him. Then it was that he received the revelation.”

When the angel appears to Joseph, commanding him to flee into Egypt at once, Chrysostom comments, “Have you ever beheld such obedience, a soul so docile? Have you ever seen a spirit so alert, subject to no prejudice against anyone? When he suspected evil [of Mary], he was unwilling to keep her with him; but on the other hand, when such suspicion was removed, he no longer insisted on putting her away. Nay more: he kept her with himself, and he became a servant of this entire economy.

“When Joseph heard this message, he was not offended nor did he say, ‘Here indeed is something very puzzling! You told me but recently, “He shall save his people” (Mt. 1:21); and now He is unable to save Himself, and we must flee on a long journey and change of place? This is contrary to your promise.’ No, he uttered nothing of this sort, for he was a man of faith. Nor did he inquire the time of the return even though the angel spoke vaguely, saying, ‘Remain there until I tell thee.’ Thus, Joseph did not

become slothful, but he obeyed and bent his will, and he bore all his trials with joy.”⁶

This is certainly a keen analysis of Joseph's virtue drawn from the main events in Joseph's life. It shows how the gospel account indicates his holiness. However, from the mere analysis of his actions we would not be justified in claiming for him a holiness that surpasses all others except the holiness of Mary. So exceptional a claim can be made only indirectly by deduction. Theological principles must be used to argue to the holiness that *had* to exist in the man who carried out the vocation assigned to the head of the Holy Family.

The fundamental principle used by theologians is that applied to the Blessed Virgin by Thomas Aquinas, which we already noted in the preceding chapter: “Those whom God chooses for an office, He prepares and disposes in such a way that they become suited to it.”⁷ Bernardine of Siena shows how this principle is extended to St. Joseph.

“As a general rule, covering all special graces communicated to rational creatures, whenever divine Providence chooses someone for a special grace or an exalted position, He endows the person thus chosen with all the gifts necessary for him and for his office. This principle was eminently verified in St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus Christ and the true spouse of the Queen of Heaven and Mistress of angels. He was chosen by the Father as the faithful fosterer and guardian of His principal

treasures, that is, His Son and Joseph's spouse; and this duty Joseph performed with all fidelity." ⁸

Bernardine reasoned to the pre-eminence of St. Joseph as the greatest of the patriarchs, but it remained for John Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris, to be the first to mention explicitly a holiness for Joseph that surpassed that of all other men and angels after Mary. Gerson made the claim in his sermon at the Council of Constance, September 8, 1416. Implicitly, he based his conclusions on the requirements of St. Joseph's vocation. According to Gerson, "Mary is raised by grace and by glory above the choirs of angels—a fact which I do not dare to deny about Joseph although I do not presume to affirm it. There were present in both of them the perfections of other irrational and rational, even angelic creatures in a sort of eminent manner. . . . A devout meditative soul discovers enough to be inspired to praise Mary and Joseph in every way by justly ascribing to them . . . all the glory that exists in other creatures, the angels included. . . . If indeed Jesus did not lie when He said, 'Where I am, there also shall my servant be' (Jn. 12:26), then that man seems to be closer to Him in heaven who on earth was found, after Mary, to be more intimate, more obedient, and more faithful." ⁹

The reasoning of Gerson, Bernardine, and Aquinas follows out the connection that exists between high dignity and high holiness:

1. It is an ordinary law of the supernatural life that God confers grace proportioned to the office

for which a person is selected. In other words when God Himself chooses someone for a certain task, and when He absolutely wishes His candidate to carry out that duty with all perfection (especially when the task is most special), He confers grace that is best suited to its execution.

2. This law applies more strictly according to the degree that the office or dignity approaches a divine Person.

3. It has its strongest binding force for a man directly entrusted with the essentials of salvation in order that they might be handed on to others.¹⁰

Sometimes, we know, disloyal men have occupied high spiritual offices, as in the case of Judas discussed in the earlier chapter; but no such lack of aptitude occurs in those whom God has chosen efficaciously, foreseeing their signal cooperation in the work of the Redemption. Always excepting Mary, no human being or angel was ever lifted to an office even equal to that of St. Joseph. Joseph's vocation brought him into most intimate contact with a divine Person. God did not so much commit to Joseph the grace necessary for the salvation of others; He confided to Joseph the very Author of salvation, the Source of all grace. Joseph was to protect our Lord's reputation, to provide Him with the necessities of life, to guard and rear Him to the full stature of His manhood, to keep the secret of the Incarnation intact, to love Jesus as a father loves his God-given son. And if Joseph was prepared by God to exercise the authority of a father over Jesus,

he must also have been prepared to be the holy husband and guardian of the Blessed Virgin. Otherwise, God would have failed to provide sufficiently for the holiness of Mary. It would have been most unseemly for Mary to share the intimacy of her family life with a sinner. Therefore, since no other person was ever so closely joined to Mary as was St. Joseph, his sanctity must have been as exclusive as was his vocation.

These different considerations are not necessarily separate and distinct proofs of the pre-eminent holiness of St. Joseph. They coalesce among themselves, confirm each other, or else show different aspects of Joseph's sanctity. They lead, for example, to another theological principle showing the connection between Joseph's dignity and sanctity. St. Thomas applied it to Mary; we extend it to demonstrate Joseph's close resemblance to Jesus and to Mary.

"To the degree that something approaches its source, by so much does it more participate in the effect of that source. Christ is the source of grace. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the closest to Christ in His humanity, because He took His human nature of her. Hence, in preference to all other people she had to receive the fullness of grace from Christ."¹¹ But, always with the exception of our Lady, no one approached Christ, the source of grace, more closely than did St. Joseph. *Joseph's intimacy with Jesus was never equaled.* He was in Christ's presence for all the long years of the Hidden Life, and he merited even to "carry, to kiss, to clothe and protect

Him.”¹² The holiness that befitted Joseph should, therefore, have been second to the holiness of Mary.

Yet, even more, we recall that if Joseph was close to our Lord, he was also close to our Lady. His was the privileged proximity to Mary, the mediatrix and aqueduct of all graces. Through Mary, Joseph would be assured of receiving the richest inspirations of grace to attain sterling holiness. Mary could not fail to pray for her virginal husband, to whom she owed so much for his selfless affectionate service. As phrased by Bernardine of Siena, “Because the Virgin knew how great was the unity of marriage in its spiritual love, she also knew that Joseph had been given her by the Holy Spirit as her spouse and as a trustworthy guardian of her virginity, to share her love and her service of the divine Son of God. This is why I believe that she loved St. Joseph most sincerely with all her heart.”¹³

Suarez takes up the same idea in greater detail. “It is likely that the Blessed Virgin asked for and obtained by her prayers precious gifts and helps of grace for her spouse, whom she loved with singular devotion. For if it is true, as indeed it is, that one of the most effacious means of obtaining grace from God is devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who cannot believe that most holy Joseph, beloved of the Virgin and most devoted to her, received utmost perfection of holiness? . . . It is part of a wife’s virtue and sanctity that she love her husband and desire and procure for him every benefit, especially for his soul. The Blessed Virgin was all-perfect in every-

thing; hence, she excelled in this love as well. Moreover, we should consider the gratitude which is owed to one's benefactors and which is better repaid by nothing except love. St. Joseph suffered much, and he endured many labors because of the Virgin, all with a manifestly unique, generous, and willing love." ¹⁴

As with the love of Mary for Joseph, so with the love of Jesus for Joseph. Christ's love for His parents was that of a grateful, devoted son. We logically conclude that after Mary no creature except Joseph held so high a place in the affections of our Lord. For His father on earth His was the love of the most perfect of sons, a love tendered to the man who acted in the stead, as it were, of the Eternal Father in heaven. Jesus would have been negligent in His filial duties if He had failed to procure the spiritual welfare of St. Joseph. We cannot doubt the exceptional reward Jesus would intend for the Saint because of so many works of paternal love.

Finally, we arrive at indications of St. Joseph's holiness from the fact that no natural force is more powerful than example. Proverbially, the simple truth has been expressed that "words exercise influence, but example draws one in its wake." Only Mary and Joseph lived for so long a time in the intimate company of God made man, and only Joseph daily beheld the joint example of Jesus and Mary—God Himself, and God's most perfect creature. Bernardine of Siena expresses the idea thus: "If we wretches often can make progress by living with holy men who, compared to the Virgin, are

nothing, what tremendous progress should we not attribute to Joseph, who lived with the Virgin! How much perfection must have accrued to him by living with God, blessed Jesus!"¹⁵ And in our own day we try to appreciate the sanctifying power of receiving Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and in praying to Him in His sacramental bodily presence. Joseph lived in that physical presence of Jesus not for a few moments or days but constantly during the Hidden Life. The holy house at Nazareth was the tabernacle, and Joseph like Mary cradled the child Jesus in the ciborium of his arms.

St. Joseph's patronage of the Universal Church can be taken as another indication of his exceptional holiness even though in a certain sense this is not an independent norm. The patronage of the Church is an extension of Joseph's care of the Holy Family; and Joseph's holiness has already been deduced from the requirements of his Holy Family vocation. Nevertheless, the patronage, even if not completely distinct, acts as a sort of corollary. According to St. Thomas the more perfect love the saints possess in heaven, by so much more do they pray for men and to such a degree can they help us.¹⁶ In other words, the more close their union with God, by so much is their efficacy as patron saints increased.

We can apply these principles to St. Joseph conversely. In his case by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he has been officially declared Patron of the Church, for everyone, everywhere. Therefore, his fatherly protection is extended over all, and the

Church has entrusted itself to his loving care. No other saint has ever been given such a tribute. St. Michael is a sort of military protector of the Church, not its patron; all other saints are at best diocesan or local or class patrons. Joseph, however, because he is the Patron of the *entire*—“universal,” “catholic”—Church, must equivalently be patron for *all*, and therefore *in all things*.

In Michel's words, “A role no less glorious has followed upon Joseph's part in the Incarnation, now completed—that of protector of the Church, this Church which continues the mystery of the Incarnation on earth. If Jesus Christ as head of the Church must have the fullness of grace which belongs to the head, a ‘fullness of which we have all received’—if the holy Virgin, insofar as she is mother of men must possess a grace more perfect than that of other creatures—can we not equally affirm that the role of protector of the Church constitutes for St. Joseph a title to an exceptional”—and, we would add, a strictly unique—“superabundance of grace”?¹⁷ Thus it is that St. Joseph as husband, as father, as head of the household, and as universal patron evidently must be gifted with a likeness to God similar though inferior to Mary's. The writings of recent popes concerning this holiness show forth the mind of the Church. The documents implicitly repeat the theological principle, “Holiness must befit such dignity; such dignity requires parallel holiness.”

Benedict XV says, “How numerous and how exalted were the virtues with which he adorned his

poor and humble condition! And among all these virtues *none was wanting* to ennoble the man who was to be the husband of Mary Immaculate and who was to be thought the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁸

In 1870 when Pius IX proclaimed the Saint as Patron of the Universal Church, he referred to him as “another Joseph, of whom the first Joseph had been the type.” The holiness of Joseph of Egypt is clearly described by scripture. But if Joseph of Egypt is but a type of Joseph of Nazareth, evidently the holiness of the virginal father is much greater. Pius IX also adopted the words of St. Bernard regarding Joseph’s exclusive intimacy with Jesus, paraphrasing them as “And so it was that Him, whom countless kings and prophets had of old desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed, and most sedulously nourished.” And “*because* of this sublime dignity which God conferred on His most faithful servant”—an intimation that Joseph’s dignity must imply commensurate holiness?—“the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God.”¹⁹ The Church would not single out any saint so extraordinarily unless his holiness was equally extraordinary and would call for imitation.

The idea of Joseph’s supernatural fitness for his vocation always recurs. Pius IX begins his liturgical decree of 1871 with the words, “The Catholic

Church rightly honors *with its highest cultus* and venerates with a feeling of deep reverence the illustrious patriarch blessed Joseph, now crowned in glory and honor in heaven, whom Almighty God *in preference to all His saints* willed to be the chaste and true spouse of the Immaculate Virgin Mary as well as the putative father of His only-begotten Son. He enriched him and *filled him to overflowing with entirely unique graces* in order that he might execute most faithfully the duties of so sublime a state.”²⁰

The most explicit teaching of the Church is the classic, oft-repeated passage of Leo XIII in *Quamquam Pluries*. Joseph “indeed was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ. From *this* arise *all* his dignity, grace, *holiness*, and glory. . . . There can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures. . . . Joseph *alone* stands out in august dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by the divine appointment.”²¹ When we commented earlier on this passage, we noted that Leo deduces Joseph’s dignity and holiness from Joseph’s double vocation; but, he adds, in *dignity* Joseph is second only to Mary. Logically the inference is justified that in *holiness*, too, Joseph is second only to Mary.

The encyclical explicitly mentions some of the virtues Joseph exercised according to the gospel narrative. Later in the encyclical, Pope Leo points

out at even greater length why Joseph is so universal a patron for all classes of people: he possesses virtues which all can imitate.²² This is the theme to which the pope returns in his letter on the Holy Family. Here is the picture of Joseph as uniquely holy, and therefore patron for all, because in the Holy Family "all men were to behold the perfect exemplar of domestic virtues as well as of all virtue and holiness. . . . We cannot doubt that all the glories of domestic life, taking their origin in mutual love, saintly character, and the exercise of piety were *without exception* manifested in a superlative degree by the Holy Family, as a pattern for all other families to imitate. To this end, a benign Providence had established the Holy Family, in order that all Christians in whatever walk of life or situation might have a reason and an incentive to practice every virtue, provided they would fix their gaze on the Holy Family. In Joseph, therefore, heads of the household are blessed with the unsurpassed model of fatherly watchfulness and care."²³ We should note in these words how "all virtue" is to be found "without exception" and "in a superlative degree" in the Holy Family. Joseph's rank in this family automatically would indicate that his holiness is above the holiness of all others outside it.

To crown these tributes the Church has given St. Joseph certain exclusive honors which he shares with our Blessed Lady alone—among them, a special litany, a proper preface in the mass, and an invocation in the Divine Praises. Most of all, Joseph's

name was included in the *Communicantes* prayer of the Canon of the mass, on December 8, 1962. The Litany of St. Joseph is a prolonged tribute to Joseph's sanctity. In it he is invoked as exercising particular virtues in an outstanding degree: justice, chastity, prudence, bravery, obedience, and faith; and his patronage indicates further virtues of his life: patience, poverty of spirit, industriousness, family care, protection against sin, sympathy for the afflicted and dying, hatred of the devil, and staunch guardianship of the Church.²⁴ Of course, it is true that liturgical rank does not *of itself* indicate the Church's belief in a saint's holiness, greater or less. None the less, because these exclusive privileges are not isolated, they seem to show that the Church sets Joseph's patronage second to that of our Lady. We recall that a more extensive patronage grows out of correspondingly greater holiness of the patron saint.

In understanding this analysis of the gifts showered on St. Joseph to make him holy and worthy of his vocation, one final caution is needed. We must not think that such sanctity was strictly passive. God had foreseen from all eternity the cooperation of the Saint. The divine choice of St. Joseph gives us a hint of the degree of Joseph's self-immolation. Mary is the Queen of Martyrs, and the holiest of human beings and angels. If Joseph is second only to Mary in sanctity, then he likewise must be second only to her in putting to death any will of his own that might resist the will of eternal

Love. St. Francis de Sales gives him this tribute: "Although it is true that Mary possessed every virtue in a higher degree than is attainable by any other pure creature, yet it is quite certain that the glorious St. Joseph was the being who approached most nearly to that perfection. . . . All her virtues and perfections were absolutely reflected in St. Joseph, so that it almost seemed as if he were as perfect and possessed all virtues in as high a degree as did the glorious Virgin." ²⁵

CHAPTER
NINETEEN

ST. JOSEPH'S PRIVILEGES

In no other section of Josephite theology does so little explicit evidence exist as with regard to St. Joseph's privileges or prerogatives. Here more than anywhere else we must depend on the principle of deducing the Saint's prerogatives from the requirements of his office. This means that the answer to most of the questions to occur will have to be, "It is fitting," "It is only probable," or "We don't know."

Because of this one might fear that the discussion will defeat its purpose by overclouding truths that are well established. Trained theologians are properly equipped to explore new frontiers of

knowledge by investigation and by argument. Yet what is helpful for experts can understandably become confusing, even repugnant for a general reader.

A caution such as this is prudent and valid. However, we believe that in the present case it does not apply. The interested reading public is not unacquainted with the fact that difficult and subtle issues developed in the past concerning St. Joseph. Once people read of the historical claims that have been made for the Saint, they themselves wish to learn the intrinsic grounds for such claims. They are not bettered by having a puzzling religious question deliberately left unanswered when legitimate inquiries can be settled with a decisive reply, even though (as in this chapter) the reply will usually be based only on probability.

Reduced to specific categories, the questions on the various spiritual prerogatives of St. Joseph are actually details of his holiness. They are concerned with his first acquisition of sanctifying grace, with the conservation of grace during life, and with the reward of grace after death. According to this division, in the historical picture St. Joseph has been claimed as conceived immaculate or purified of original sin in his mother's womb. Writers and preachers have also speculated on his freedom from sin throughout his career; was he preserved by God from mortal sin, from deliberate and semi-deliberate venial sin, and even from the temptations of concupiscence? Finally, concerning his

lot after death, did his body rise from the dead so that at this very moment he is in heaven, body and soul, like Jesus and Mary? These are the subjects we shall discuss in this chapter, admittedly among the most speculative topics of the theology of St. Joseph.

One guiding principle should be kept in mind. We would not be justified in departing from the teaching of Leo XIII that St. Joseph became a unique sharer in Mary's dignity and holiness by reason of his marriage. His position as virginal husband of the Mother of God and even more his position as virginal father of Jesus Christ required a worthy subject, who in God's plans received a fitting preparation and a fitting reward. But to what extent did Joseph's holiness resemble that of Mary? In other words how far may (and should) Mary's privileges of grace be extended to her spouse?

The grace under discussion is what theologians call *gratum faciens*, that is, grace which "makes a soul pleasing" to God. This is the grace which justifies and sanctifies the individual, and brings about union with God. There is another type of grace called *gratis data*—"freely given," "gratuitous"—which is directed not so much to the sanctification of the person who possesses it but is rather ordained to sanctify others. Graces of this second type are, for instance, the power to work miracles, to speak in unknown tongues, to prophesy, to read the secrets of hearts, and like gifts, all of which

have the prime purpose of instructing others in faith and persuading them exteriorly. These are called charisms.

Sometimes the claim has been made that St. Joseph possessed such *gratiae gratis datae* in view of the fact that his holiness is so exalted. But such a claim is not valid. To estimate these graces for working miracles and similar marvels, we must realize that these gifts do not suppose holiness in their owner, and it can even be that a person in sin receives them from God. For the one who has such charismatic gifts, they do not cause holiness either effectively or meritoriously although in many cases they accompany holiness. We cannot judge the saints' love for God by any such extraordinary phenomena. Hence, with regard to St. Joseph we should say that Joseph had none of them unless perchance they were necessary for his double vocation in the Holy Family. The Saint's mission was not to teach others. Graces which the apostles required in their ministry were useless for Joseph. Therefore, as Cardinal Gotti concludes, "In those graces which particularly belonged to his ministry, Joseph surpassed all other men; in other gifts and graces, he could be surpassed by others."¹

Cantera's analysis is worth noting here. Having chosen Joseph to co-operate in the mystery of the Incarnation, he writes, the Lord filled him with abundant and special graces, outstanding prerogatives that were in agreement with the exalted destiny to which he was predestined. But it is a

reprehensible extreme to infer that Joseph was given all the charisms (i.e., miraculous gifts) which God bestowed on all Christian saints. Such a bestowal is not linked with greater or lesser holiness of soul; it has a special evangelistic and apostolic purpose. Consequently, we do not have a right to claim for St. Joseph all the privileges of other saints simply because he was the greatest of the saints after Mary. We must admit always, however, that those graces belong to him which he needed with respect to his office. "We must always travel on the path traversed by our predecessors, not departing from the sources of revelation as legitimately interpreted by the authority of the Church or by the principles of solid theological reasoning." ²

An Immaculate Conception?

During the late Middle Ages, when the devotion to St. Joseph was coming to the fore, certain overzealous proponents defended what they called an "immaculate conception" of St. Joseph. In some of these cases it seems that the real meaning of the term was clouded over or altogether misunderstood in the minds of these writers and preachers. One would judge that they were rather arguing for a pre-natal sanctification of the Saint after he (like all other humans except Mary) had contracted original sin, the debt of Adam.

In succeeding centuries a small number of authors actually claimed for St. Joseph the identical privilege granted our Blessed Lady. In our own century the opinion was resurrected by José D.M. Cor-

bató, who in 1907 asserted that Joseph like Mary possessed sanctifying grace from the first moment of his existence. Corbató's book was promptly placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. However, we cannot automatically reject his doctrine about Joseph's "immaculate conception" merely because of this prohibition by the Church. His book was suppressed, according to the decree, "especially" for a different reason. He had proposed and defended "a divine fatherhood of St. Joseph in the real and proper sense of the word."³

Practically all of the quotations brought forward by Corbató to support his opinion did not actually affirm Joseph's immaculate conception. At best the texts spoke of Joseph's great holiness in general, his purity of life, and his exalted dignity. They did not descend to concrete privileges, and the few claims made for such a doctrine were from panegyric sermons, not from the writings of Catholic theologians.

An argument that might have weight in deducing the privilege for Joseph is the reasoning based on the law of nature governing the likeness of husband and wife. Such likeness, it has been said, should be in qualities of soul as well as of body. Accordingly, since the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin, the same privilege belonged to him who was made worthy to be her virginal husband.⁴

This line of reasoning fails in its fundamental point. The absolute spiritual likeness that is postu-

lated for husband and wife is in reality not required. Moreover, any such likeness would have to exist only during the years of marriage, if this argument held. Far more cogent than such a principle is the probative value of the doctrine of original sin. St. Paul states that all men sinned in Adam (Rom. 5: 12). This rule is so universal that no one has the right to invoke exceptions to it without the strongest reasons for doing so. In the case of our Lady the tradition of the Church has vindicated the highest privileges for her from the infant years of the Church. When the Council of Trent officially and explicitly defined the universal extent of original sin, it mentioned at the same time that it did not intend to include the Blessed Virgin in its decree.⁵ No other exception was made. Finally, in the Bull of Pius IX defining the Immaculate Conception of our Lady the Pope stated that this privilege belonged to her in a singular fashion.⁶

The retort has been made that the privilege would still remain "singular" if another person in addition to Mary received it; that the Bull defined the *privilege*, not the *exclusiveness* of the privilege; and that the mind of the Council of Trent was not to limit to Mary alone the exception from the definition on original sin.⁷ Against this, the thought of the Church seems to be clearly expressed, so much so that of the theologians who have studied the pertinent documents and history, some (with Lepicier⁸) have not hesitated to call "rash and suspect of heresy" the opinion that St. Joseph was

conceived without original sin in the same way as was our Lady. Other theologians place a slightly milder censure on the proposition, namely, that it is against the common and certain view of Catholic theology. In either case the agreement against it is practically unanimous. In Cantera's judgment, belief in the immaculate conception of St. Joseph could be an object of private belief but not of public faith. If an individual wished to satisfy private piety by privately attributing such a privilege to St. Joseph, that person would not sin; but to defend it theologically would be neither prudent nor secure. "The differences between Mary and Joseph are not in degree but in kind."⁹

Actually, the theological question which theoretically remained open was definitively closed with the statement of Pius XII in his encyclical, *Fulgens Corona*. Writing in 1953, Pius stated that Mary "obtained this most singular privilege, never granted to anyone else, because she was raised to the dignity of the Mother of God."^{9a}

St. Joseph would be the first to call attention to the all-special prerogative of his virginal wife. We affirm that Mary alone was conceived without original sin, to prepare her to become the Mother of God.

Joseph's Prenatal Sanctification?

We come now to the question concerning the sanctification of St. Joseph in the womb of his mother. This doctrine, like several others concerning the Saint, was first proposed by John Gerson in his

sermon at the Council of Constance in 1416. Other pioneers of the devotion to St. Joseph also held the doctrine: Isidor de Isolanis, Bernardine of Busti, and Alphonsus Liguori.¹⁰ Liguori makes the assertion that Suarez holds the view also, but Suarez actually refuses to take such a stand, or in fact any stand. He believes that since both scripture and the official tradition of the Church are silent on the point, we do not have sufficient evidence to form a correct judgment.¹¹

The outstanding reason for holding that Joseph was purified of original sin in the womb of his mother is one of fitness. It is proper, so the argument goes, that the man whom God chose to be the husband of the Blessed Virgin and the virginal father of Jesus should have been sanctified by a special privilege of God in a more excellent way than any other human being. The privilege of prenatal sanctification is attributed to John the Baptist by all theologians; and to other saints of the Old and New Testament by a certain number. Accordingly, by a stronger right the privilege must have been granted to St. Joseph, who was far more than merely a patriarch, prophet, or even forerunner of Christ. In the words of John of Carthagena, "Every sanctification in the womb was because of the unusual future dignity of the one sanctified, or because he had a relationship to Christ, the saint of saints, in a very special manner. Both facts are eminent in our Joseph; for he was the first whom the Holy Spirit canonized in the New Testament,

calling him 'just'; and above all other men he bore a prior and immediate relationship toward Christ, to protect Him in His infancy." ¹² Isidore de Isolani gives two reasons for Joseph's prenatal sanctification: Jeremiah and John the Baptist were thus sanctified—*a fortiori* the privilege must have been granted to Joseph. And if the dignity of her Son led to Mary's Immaculate Conception, then Joseph's dignity must have led to his sanctification before his birth. ¹³

The contrary arguments generally used against this privilege for St. Joseph are drawn from a principle stated by Thomas Aquinas. After St. Thomas sets forth his opinion that the prophet Jeremiah as well as John the Baptist were sanctified in the wombs of their mothers, he adds, "Nor are we to believe that any others were sanctified in the womb, of whom scripture makes no mention; for privileges of this sort, granted to some persons over and above the ordinary rule, are directed to the utility of others, according to the text, 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor. 12:7); but there would be no profit for the sanctification of others, arising from the sanctification of some in the womb, unless the Church would be made aware of the fact." ¹⁴

The *a fortiori* comparison of St. Joseph with John the Baptist and the prophet Jeremiah means little or nothing in probative value when we realize that sanctification in the womb does not necessarily indicate greater holiness. The argument shows even

more weakness if we consider that almost every claim for sanctification of this sort has failed to receive common acceptance among theologians. "We are unable to say with certainty that anyone was sanctified in the womb except John the Baptist."¹⁵

Far from holding the sanctification of Jeremiah in the womb of his mother, the contrary opinion is defended by a great number of Fathers, theologians, and exegetes.¹⁶ Even though the words in Jeremiah 1:5 have been translated as "Before thou emerged from the womb, I sanctified thee," the meaning of *sanctify* in the original Hebrew means "to be prepared" or "to be destined for something." This meaning is brought out, for example, in the Knox translation, "Before thou ever camest to the birth, I set thee apart for myself."¹⁷

Scripture certainly gives no hint of prenatal sanctification for St. Joseph; the Fathers of the Church make no such allusion; and the Church documents do not refer to it in any way. Hence, the negative opinion states that we do not have sufficient reason to defend Joseph's purification from original sin before his birth. It is no valid argument to claim that Joseph must have been sanctified in the womb because he was a just man. While it is true that Joseph's vocation required most extraordinary graces and freedom from actual sin, this still does not indicate any necessity for prenatal sanctification. The fact that John the Baptist received the privilege would not create in Joseph any deficiency

in holiness with respect to St. John. At whatever time sanctifying grace was infused into Joseph's soul, that grace was already more abundant and more magnificent than the grace accorded any other creature with the exception of Mary. Benedict XIV, writing as a private theologian, plainly stated that the affirmative view for Joseph's sanctification before his birth "lacks a firm and stable foundation in sacred theology."¹⁸

Apparently we must conclude that for the present this will remain an open question. The truth lies concealed in the mystery of the grandeur with which God has surrounded the Saint of the Hidden Life. No argument on either side seems final. We have no intrinsic evidence to decide against the belief; we have no certain evidence for it. To say that Joseph's sanctification was required only from the time he was espoused to Mary and not beforehand, fails to take into account God's preparation of the Saint for his vocation.

As for Thomas Aquinas' appeal to the lack of evidence—which is probably the strongest argument in favor of the negative view—it is noteworthy that Aquinas sets aside his own limitation when speaking of this same question with reference to our Lady. "Nothing is handed down in the canonical scriptures concerning the sanctification of the Blessed Mary as to her being sanctified in the womb; indeed, they do not even mention her birth. But as Augustine in his tractate on the Assumption of the Virgin argues with reason, since her body

was assumed into heaven, and yet scripture does not relate this, so it may reasonably be argued that she was sanctified in the womb. For it is reasonable to believe that she who brought forth the 'only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:14) received greater privileges of grace than all others. . . . Moreover, it is to be observed that it was granted by way of privilege to others to be sanctified in the womb. . . . It is therefore with reason that we believe the Blessed Virgin to have been sanctified before her birth from the womb." ¹⁹ Might it "reasonably be argued" that Joseph, too, was sanctified in the womb, even though the scriptures do not relate this?

Démaret offers an original approach that other theologians seem to have overlooked. He denies the principle of St. Thomas, namely, that sanctification in the womb would be a charism, a grace primarily ordained for the sanctification of others rather than for the individual receiving it. It is instead, he says, intrinsically in the order of sanctifying grace, and it is ordained for the sanctification of St. Joseph. Its only unusual characteristic is the time of its bestowal, i.e., before Joseph's birth. None the less, it concerns the question of making St. Joseph an adopted son of God as soon as possible, thus preparing him as early as possible for the office which would later require in him holiness so exalted. If by theological deduction the fact of Joseph's prenatal sanctification becomes evident, then indeed this gift would be of value for the sanctification of others,

and the Church would be made aware of the fact—both requirements laid down by St. Thomas.²⁰

Our ultimate opinion comes close to that of Cornelius a Lapide. "God could have given this privilege to many people, but whether He actually did so, we do not know. By all means, if after the Blessed Virgin He bestowed it on any of those mentioned earlier, it seems that He did not deny it to St. Joseph her spouse."²¹ Even so valiant a defender of St. Joseph speaks conditionally at best.

The Sinlessness of St. Joseph

Concerning St. Joseph's sinlessness, various degrees or subdivisions can be considered.²² In ascending order we can ask

1. Whether Joseph committed any mortal sin during his life, or was his soul so flooded with the riches of grace that he was strengthened against all grievous sin, retaining of course full exercise of his free will?

2. Whether he ever committed deliberate or semi-deliberate venial sin, or was he preserved by God's efficacious grace from doing so?

3. Whether a still higher privilege was bestowed on him, namely, the restraint of concupiscence?

To begin with, we must affirm without the slightest hesitation that the Saint was not impeccable. We use the word in this sense: the *possibility* of sin existed in Joseph's life. His could never be, for example, the sinlessness of Jesus, for whom it

was impossible to violate the law of God because of the union of the human and the divine nature in the Second divine Person. We are concerned with the *fact*, rather than the *possibility* of Joseph's sinning, in so far as this fact or absence of fact can be deduced from theological reasoning. In other words, *did* St. Joseph ever commit actual sin? Or was he given such graces that the inclination to sin was restrained in him, and he was able to avoid not only mortal but also venial sin? On this subject dogmatic certitude either from Holy Scripture or from official Church teaching does not exist. It must be remembered that our findings are based on theological probability according to the evidence at hand.

All authorities agree that St. Joseph must have been confirmed in grace. This is a minimum opinion, generally accepted. It means that God's providence surrounded the Saint with such helps that he did not sin grievously nor, in general, did he commit fully deliberate sin. The reason usually given for holding this opinion rests on Joseph's vocation and on his intimacy with Mary and with Jesus.

According to Richard, after Joseph's virginal marriage to our Lady the Saint certainly did not sin in the matter of chastity; after the birth of our Lord he did not sin in any other aspect as well.²³ Hervé is more conservative. He believes that the doctrine of St. Joseph's sinlessness cannot be proved, and that the inclination to sin (concupiscence) was not restrained in the Saint. But St. Joseph was confirmed in grace at least from the time of the marriage be-

cause "at that time his mission began." For the avoidance of all venial sins after the marriage, Hervé continues, "This does not seem to be something that should be conceded; but it is conceded by many, that he avoided fully deliberate venial sins with regard to chastity."²⁴

Michel also takes a strict stand. He writes, "Lepicier defends the thesis of sinlessness with much conviction, basing it upon the perfect purity which the mission of St. Joseph required. Our piety toward St. Joseph does not oblige us, it seems, to affirm this thesis without restriction. The mission of St. Joseph required sinlessness, but only in the time when the mission was confided to him." It is possible, Michel adds, that God accorded the privilege of sinlessness to Joseph throughout his whole life. Yet because such a great gift is so complete and so rare, we ought to require evidence that is much more convincing than that which is ordinarily brought forward. The Council of Trent defined that man cannot avoid sin without a special privilege from God.²⁵ This privilege was certainly conceded to Mary as a consequence of her Immaculate Conception. But while we recognize the possibility of so exceptional a gift being lavished on creatures other than our Lady, we must also recognize that the fact of its concession cannot be demonstrated by theological argument. "All that we have reason to affirm is that St. Joseph by reason of the mission confided to him was confirmed in grace from the instant of his marriage to the Blessed Virgin. Would it not be more exact simply to say that St. Joseph was con-

stituted in grace in a pre-eminent manner (a privilege which does not necessarily imply sinlessness), and that from the first moment of his use of reason he did not cease increasing the superabundant treasure of sanctifying grace which God bestowed on him at that time?"²⁶

Against this view is the reasoning of Cantera, Démaret, Llamera, Msgr. Sinibaldi, Cardinal Lepicier, and other theologians. This group not only holds that St. Joseph was free from mortal and venial sin during his entire life, but also that concupiscence was held in check in St. Joseph by God's special grace.

The "concupiscence" which will be discussed refers to the inordinate and indeliberate attraction of our sense nature toward its proper objects. As a result of the sin of Adam our body is no longer completely subject to the control of reason. We cannot govern our sense reactions so that they invariably agree with the dictates of reason. Even in the enjoyment of legitimate sense objects we often feel an inclination to press forward to an illicit degree; or perhaps the inclination arises to obtain a pleasure that is wholly wrong in itself. In either case this inclination is both *indeliberate* (arising without or despite our desire) and *inordinate* (against the dictates of right reason obedient to God's laws). Because an act of concupiscence understood in this strict sense is indeliberate, in itself it is no sin. If conquered, it is an occasion to gain merit. But it can frequently lessen the fervor with which a good action is performed. In the words of the Council of

Trent, "The Holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church never understood that this concupiscence which the Apostle sometimes calls sin (Rom. 6:12 ff.) is called sin because it is truly and properly sin in those reborn, but because it is from sin, and it inclines to sin." ²⁷

Freedom from concupiscence can be defined as "The rectitude according to which the sensitive appetite is perfectly subordinated to reason, so that it in no way moves the will toward an object contrary to reason." ²⁸ Such rectitude can occur either because the inclination to sin is restrained, or, what is greater, because it is totally removed or extinguished. The latter occurred in the case of our Lady, because the disorder of concupiscence is a sequel of original sin, and Mary was conceived without original sin. Hence, she never inherited the power and propensity which inclined to disordered movements.

But St. Joseph was not conceived without original sin. Therefore, such a *propensity* did exist in him, even though—in the present supposition—there occurred no *actual* sense movement anticipating and resisting the rule of reason. Llamera advises great care in making this claim for St. Joseph. "Authors are not lacking who, without making their words precise, repeat the phrase of Gerson, who said that concupiscence might be completely *extinguished* at the moment of conception for one who did not contract original sin, as happened in the case of our Lady. It might be *ligated*, i.e.,

restrained by God's grace, as we claim in the case of St. Joseph, who did contract original sin and consequently also contracted the concupiscence that is the effect of sin." ²⁹

Here, then, is the exact question: Did the grace of God bring it about that St. Joseph never felt the sting and rebellion of concupiscence? We can argue only from fitness, and as has been mentioned earlier, no more than reasonable probability is claimed for this argument. None the less, it seems undeniable that the virginal husband of Mary and the virginal father of Jesus *ought* to have been protected from the downward pull of a deprived nature. This reasoning is so cogent that no competent Catholic theologian would admit that St. Joseph at any time felt the slightest improper tendency toward our Lady. The very idea is repugnant, and one instinctively shrinks from mentioning it. We should never forget that as far as solid logic permits, we must think of Joseph as much like Mary as possible. In a man with so superlative a relationship to Jesus and Mary even the indeliberate tendency to commit sin in *any* period of his life appears contrary to his vocation. The fault seems rather to be with us for failing to put a proper appraisal on the exalted heights to which God called St. Joseph and for which He prepared him.

Moreover, the reactions of concupiscence can lessen the fervor of the love of God even though sin itself is not committed. In this way they indirectly retard the acquisition of merit. Since Joseph's holi-

ness and merit are to be accepted as supreme (after Mary), all concupiscence and similar elements that would retard the Saint's growth in merit are generally to be excluded. Although the restraining of concupiscence would be a most unusual gift freely bestowed by God, in granting it God would foresee the perfect manner in which Joseph would co-operate with the grace.

Regarding deliberate and semideliberate venial sin, Lepicier and those who agree with him hold that the Saint failed in no way at any time in his life. To support their opinion, they apply the above arguments for the restraining of concupiscence even more strictly with respect to venial sin. To put the fact simply, St. Joseph would seem to have been unfit for his office as virginal husband and virginal father if he had *ever* sinned *even* venially at *any* time in his life. Freedom from all sin would be required not only during the time of his mission, but equally during the time of his preparation so that he could worthily fulfill his office.

The honor of parents falls on their children (Prov. 17:6); equally so, their disgrace. Jesus belonged to Joseph as a son to his father; Jesus is the source of all holiness. How could He have chosen a father on earth who at some time or other turned away from Him even in slight infidelity? We are underestimating the dignity and intimacy of the bond between St. Joseph and our Lord, so it appears, if we suppose the existence of actual sin at *any* time in the father's life, before or during his life

with his divine foster Son. Similarly, the idea of actual sin, even venial sin, seems repugnant to Joseph's close family life with Mary, before, no less than during that marriage.

Holy Scripture gives not the slightest indication that Joseph ever sinned. The body of Church writers in commenting on the Gospels have never accused Joseph of fault or imperfection in the actions narrated of him. With the evidence at least hinting that Joseph far excelled ordinary men, we ought not to prefer the ordinary law of human frailty to signs pointing to an all-sinless life in the man most Christlike.

Theologians commonly agree that the apostles and John the Baptist were confirmed in grace. Because of the special providence of God, their wills were shielded from falling into grievous sin, and probably from falling into deliberate venial sin. All agree that St. Joseph *in some way* is included in this class at the minimum. *A fortiori*, should we refuse to grant Joseph's freedom from all actual sin, realizing that his holiness far surpasses even that of these great saints?

Cantera adds a new and original reason for holding this view.³⁰ There are many authors, he writes, who affirm the ligation of concupiscence in St. Joseph, not hesitating to concede this privilege to him as a necessary premise for the freedom from actual sin which they recognize in him. According to the ordinary arguments, as we have seen, it would be improper and unfitting if the one chosen to pro-

tect the virginity of Mary and the man closest to Jesus felt sinful inclinations or gave in to them. Even more, such concupiscence and sin would be a barrier to the Saint's recognized holiness after Mary. But to consider this logic more carefully, is not such a manner of thinking unworthy of Jesus and Mary no less than of Joseph? The purity of Mary was so great, her humility so deep, her modesty so pronounced, that far from provoking any sinful thought she must have inflamed hearts with the love of God. Contact, too, with Jesus would not tend to incite selfish reactions; the very opposite would be true. Hence, Cantera suggests, the ultimate reason for defending so extraordinary a prerogative as the repression of concupiscence in St. Joseph and the freedom from all mortal and venial sin lies in St. Joseph's dignity, in his ministry, in his character of husband of the Virgin and "father of God," as St. Ephrem called him centuries ago.³¹

As for the time, then, when Joseph would be given this privilege, we can make no certain decision. The more likely occasion would be when he began to use his reason. That would be when concupiscence would normally first begin to stir. If we were to delay Joseph's freedom from actual inclination to sin, and, more so, if we were to delay Joseph's freedom from all sin until the time of his marriage to our Lady, we would be forced to admit the presence of a disgraceful fact in his youth—an element that seems to make him unworthy to become husband and father of the Holy Family.³²

*The Resurrection and
Assumption of St. Joseph*

Independently of any reference in Scripture, the doctrine on the resurrection of St. Joseph and the assumption of his glorified body into heaven could be proposed on grounds of fitness. Usually, however, it has been based on the words of St. Matthew, "Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection, they came into the holy city and appeared to many" (27:52, 53).

The interpretation has been widely adopted that these words do not describe what happened at the instant Christ died and was placed in the tomb, but that they are in anticipation of what happened after Jesus rose from the dead.³³ Scripture scholars point out that Matthew often manifests the trait of describing at one time events that were actually quite removed from each other when they occurred.

But for us the important question concerns the "resurrection" of these "saints." From the time of the Fathers of the Church the predominant opinion has been that these souls were reunited to their bodies, never to die again; and that when Christ ascended into heaven, they entered heaven with Him, body and soul, for all eternity. Hence, their resurrection would not be a mere return to earthly life, but a revivifying and glorification of their bodies as will happen on the Last Day to the rest of the just. If this interpretation is correct, it is logical to assume (as numerous authors have done) that St. Joseph

was granted the glorification of his body at the moment of Christ's resurrection. Of all, he would surpassingly deserve the privilege.

Contrariwise, St. Augustine wished to understand that the Easter resurrection of the just was merely temporary (as in the case of Lazarus), and that these persons had to die once again. Otherwise, he asks, how could Peter assert to the Jews (Acts 2:29, 35) that "it was predicted not of David but of Christ that His body would not see corruption, since David's tomb was in their midst; and thus he did not convince them if David's body was no longer there? Now, it seems rigorous that David, from whose seed Christ is descended, would not be in that rising of the just, if an eternal resurrection was conferred on them. Also, that saying in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'that they should not be perfected without us' (11:40), regarding the just of the Old Testament would be hard to explain, if they were already established in that incorruption of the resurrection which is promised for the end when we shall be made perfect." ³⁴ "Many bodies of the saints arose for a time." ³⁵

St. Thomas had asserted in his earlier years that these saints arose "as entering heaven with Christ." ³⁶ He later deserted this view and thought that "Augustine's reasons seem much more cogent." ³⁷

Augustine's objections, however, have been met with a group of replies. Since this particular point can have so strong an influence on the doc-

trine of St. Joseph's assumption, it is worth our while to explain it at some length. In the first place, Augustine begins by presupposing that if the just arose at the time of our Lord's resurrection, David *must have been* in their number. There is no proof for this conjecture. Instead, the gospel intimates that those who arose were contemporaries of the living, and were recognized as such.

Second, St. Peter's sermon to the people (Acts 2:29-35) *does not claim* that David's body is still on this earth. Peter merely refers to David's *tomb*, so that even if the body had been miraculously taken from it, no contradiction or false claim would have been involved.

Finally, multiple interpretations exist of the text Augustine invoked from the Epistle to the Hebrews, "That they should not be perfected without us." In context the phrase appears to say that the just of the Old Testament did not share in their time in the blessings of Christ, but through Him they did so later. In the Knox translation, "We were needed, to make the history of their lives complete"; or according to Lilly, "God would not have them reach perfection apart from us."³⁸

Accordingly, in his work on the assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Jugie does not hesitate to adopt the interpretation opposite to that of St. Augustine. He calls it more probable and quasi-certain that the just souls mentioned by Matthew rose with Christ, to die no more.³⁹

Since these saints of the Old Testament had died in the friendship of God, their souls had been supernaturally beatified ever since the moment of Christ's death, when His soul descended into limbo. Now, if on Easter they had been reunited to their bodies, only to re-enter mortal life (as Lazarus had done), they would have become pilgrims on earth once again, even though they possessed the beatific vision—they would have been mortal bodies animated by beatified souls. Suarez justly remarks that only a glorified body belongs to a beatified soul.⁴⁰ Moreover, these resurrected saints were not seen by everyone as were Lazarus and other people whom Christ brought back to life during His Public Life. Instead, they appeared only in a limited way as did Christ Himself after His own resurrection. In working this miracle God evidently wished to provide an additional proof of the resurrection of the body. It is difficult to perceive reasons for a temporary revivification; while on the other hand, the definitive resurrection of these souls would highlight the fact that ordinary humans as well as our Lord can obtain the glorification of the body.

In Jugie's analysis of the Fathers and theologians who favor this opinion, he writes, "If we had to decide this question simply by authorities, it seems that the thesis of a permanent resurrection would be brought to the fore both by the quality and the number of the commentators who have upheld it in the past and still uphold it in our own times. In our own day it has clearly prevailed."⁴¹

Concerning the assumption of St. Joseph into heaven, the strongest contrary view is that of Benedict XIV, speaking as a private theologian: "It cannot safely be asserted that St. Joseph ascended into heaven with body and soul."⁴² Prat calls the belief "an empty conjecture," if we suppose that Joseph or any other saint was brought back to life on Easter Day and taken with Christ into heaven forty days later.⁴³

Jugie styles this as "somewhat harsh," adding, "We do not think that Suarez, Francis de Sales, and Cardinal Lepicier made 'an empty conjecture' in conjecturing that St. Joseph was among those brought back to life."⁴⁴ An impressive number of modern authors present Joseph's assumption as at least probable, even as a "sufficiently authoritative tradition."⁴⁵ Holzmeister, however, thinks that if commentators on Matthew 27:52 make no mention of St. Joseph, their silence indicates their disapproval of the doctrine of the Saint's assumption.⁴⁶

This reasoning seems extreme. Only an explicit statement that the Saint's assumption is probable or improbable should be accepted. Silence on the point can easily mean that the mention of St. Joseph did not fall within the projected scope of a theological or scriptural study and was therefore omitted. The positive arguments for Joseph's assumption appear in John Gerson, Bernardine of Siena, Suarez, and Francis de Sales.

Gerson proposed the belief in his sermon at Constance in 1416. "We read that when Christ died, many bodies of the saints arose, entered the holy

city Jerusalem, and appeared to many. Perhaps it is with reference to this that the Apostle says, 'Women had their dead restored to them by resurrection' (Hebr. 11:35). Let pious belief ponder, I beg of you, whether we should not assume that Joseph was one of these, that he appeared to his dearest spouse Mary and consoled her, and that finally he ascended with Christ into heaven—doubtless in soul, and I know not but God knows if in body also—and that he receives his place at the right hand of Jesus Himself, that is, in greatest beatitude."⁴⁷

Bernardine of Siena gives a long portrayal of Joseph's assumption. "It may be accepted in pious faith, not however affirmed as certain, that the perfect divine son Jesus distinguished His foster father with the same privilege as His most holy mother; that just as He assumed her gloriously into heaven with body and soul, so on the day of Resurrection He likewise took most holy Joseph with Himself in the glory of the Resurrection. Thus, just as this holy family—Christ, the Virgin, and Joseph—lived together in laborious life and affectionate grace on earth, so do they now rule in affectionate glory in heaven with body and soul.

"According to the norm of the Apostle, 'As you are partakers of the sufferings, so will you also be of the consolation' (2 Cor. 1:7). For it is written in Matthew 27: 'Many bodies of the saints arose, who had fallen asleep,' that is, were dead. According to Jerome⁴⁸ this happened when the Lord arose, because the Lord was the 'firstborn of the dead and

the ruler of the kings of the earth,' as is said in the Apocalypse (1:5). This nevertheless is narrated by anticipation, to show that this event took place by the power and merit of His Passion. These souls arose with Christ, I say, as witnesses of His Resurrection. Matthew plainly adds this when he says, 'And coming forth out of the tombs after His Resurrection, they came into the holy city and appeared to many.' We may piously believe that among these risen ones was this most holy man [Joseph]. . . . If then for a reasonable cause and by a special privilege, the resurrection of both body and soul was hastened for Joseph and some others, there is no disturbance of order; nay more, it is according to reason. For it is proper that ordinary events be kept in their order in such a way that they can still give place to the privilege of the great king." ⁴⁹

Suarez presents the assumption of St. Joseph as solidly probable. "I will not neglect to call attention to the rather general belief that it is probable that this saint gloriously reigns with Christ in soul and body. Since he died before Christ, it is very likely that he was one of those who arose at the time of the death or resurrection of Christ and who, as many believe, passed on to the immortal life of the soul and body." ⁵⁰

No one has ever proposed the doctrine more vigorously than Francis de Sales, Saint and Doctor of the Church. "What more remains to be said," he asks, "except that we can never for a moment doubt that this glorious saint has great influence in

heaven with Him who raised him there in body and soul—a fact which is the more probable because we have no relic of that body left us here below? Indeed, it seems to me that no one can doubt this as a truth, for how could He who had been so obedient to St. Joseph all through His life refuse him this grace?

“Doubtless, when our Lord descended into limbo, He was addressed by St. Joseph in this fashion: ‘Lord, remember, please, that when You came down from heaven to earth, I received You into my house and into my family, and that at the moment of Your birth I received You into my arms. Now that You are returning to heaven, take me there with You. I received You into my family; receive me now into Yours. I carried You in my arms; take me into Yours. And as I carefully nourished and protected You in Your mortal life, take care of me and lead me into life immortal.’

“And if it is true, as we are bound to believe, that in virtue of the Blessed Sacrament which we receive, our bodies will come to life again on the day of judgment, how can we doubt that our Lord did as much for him, making St. Joseph rise into heaven in body and soul? For he had the honor and the grace of carrying Him so often in his blessed arms, those arms in which our Lord took so much pleasure. Oh, how many tender kisses His sacred lips bestowed on him, to reward him for his toils and labors! Yes, St. Joseph is in heaven in body and soul; there is no doubt.”⁵¹

To summarize this view, the doctrine of the resurrection and assumption of St. Joseph into heaven in body and soul is put forward as theologically probable, and is based on grounds of fitness. Good reason exists for holding that according to the text from Matthew's gospel (27:52) certain souls were united to their bodies when Christ rose from the dead, and that they were later taken into heaven when Jesus ascended there. Joseph's intimacy with the sacred body of our Lord, as well as his spiritual likeness to Mary afford special reason to think he was granted this privilege. It is true that theology does not have at its disposal any means of deciding on the ultimate certainty of St. Joseph's assumption. It would appear that if anyone in addition to our Blessed Lady has ever been taken up into heaven in body and soul, that person would be her virginal husband, St. Joseph.

Of great interest is the fact that John XXIII referred to the assumption of St. Joseph as acceptable in pious belief (*così piamente noi possiamo credere.*) His statements were made in a homily which he delivered on the feast of the Ascension, May 26, 1960. Here, too, he cited the text of Aquinas which we have earlier mentioned, namely, that the saints who arose at the time of Christ's Resurrection did so "as entering heaven with Christ." The pope's words indicate his personal acceptance of this honor given to St. Joseph—"one of the two intimates of Jesus during His life: John the Baptist, the Forerunner, and Joseph of Nazareth, His foster father and guardian."⁵²

CHAPTER
TWENTY

ST. JOSEPH'S PATRONAGE

Like every patron saint, Joseph receives from God a quasi-right to protect his clients.¹ This precise relationship of patron saint to client is difficult to express in our language, but the fact is certain. The patron is like a father toward his charge, and a strong note of fatherly love characterizes his watchful care. Etymologically, the word "patron" means he who has the place of father and who frees us from danger, defends our rights, and helps us in our needs. Only Jesus Christ is our primary mediator or "patron" with God. However, far from suffering damage to the unique headship He possesses, Jesus

is all the more glorified and exalted by the invocation of the saints as patrons and as secondary mediators.

The communion of saints is the bond that unites the Church Triumphant with the Church Militant and the Church Suffering. Because of this bond God grants the saints in heaven a special intercessory power so that they can further by their prayers the spiritual and temporal interests of their brethren on earth. They invoke the merits they gained during their time of pilgrimage, and by an act of supplication they present to God their requests for their clients. In this interest and help we rightly discern a manifestation of the all-embracing love which Christ desires to flourish in His Church.

Individual saints can freely be chosen as patrons by anyone. In the case of some, however, it is fitting that they specially watch over particular groups of people or types of enterprises. Ordinarily, this fitness exists because of a circumstance of the saints' lives or some providential direction of their energies and prayers. Thus, the patrons' interests are more specifically those of their clients.

Papal Pronouncements

In the case of St. Joseph his patronage is the logical extension of his duties on earth. Although he was officially declared Patron of the Universal Church by Pius IX in 1870, Pius did not actually create him as such. The Pope proclaimed what had already been a reality. St. Joseph's office as Patron of the Universal Church as well as the dignity be-

longing to this title was a corollary of the office and the dignity which God bestowed on him in making Joseph the head of the Holy Family.

The decree of Pius IX makes this clear. "Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on His most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised Blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble. . . . Pius IX, Pope, has therefore declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church." The same terminology of "declaring" the Saint's patronage occurs in the Pope's decree of 1871.²

Even more detailed is Leo XIII's encyclical on St. Joseph. We read in it the same classic and oft-repeated passages, "There are special reasons why Blessed Joseph should be explicitly named the Patron of the Church, and why the Church in turn should expect much from his patronage and guardianship. For he indeed was the husband of Mary, and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ. From this arise all his dignity, grace, holiness, and glory. . . .

"The divine household which Joseph governed as with paternal authority contained the beginnings of the new Church. The Virgin most holy is the mother of all Christians, since she is the mother of Jesus and since she gave birth to them on the mount of Calvary amid the indescribable sufferings of the Redeemer. Jesus is, as it were, the firstborn of Christians, who are His brothers by adoption and redemption.

“From these considerations we conclude that the Blessed Patriarch must regard all the multitude of Christians who constitute the Church as confided to his care in a certain special manner. This is his numberless family scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority, because he is the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is conformable to reason and in every way becoming to Blessed Joseph that as once it was his sacred trust to guard with watchful care the family of Nazareth, no matter what befell, so now by virtue of his heavenly patronage he is in turn to protect and to defend the Church of Christ.”³

The History of St. Joseph's Patronage

This concept of St. Joseph's relationship to the Church lay hidden and unnoticed for centuries. Certainly among the first men to call attention to it were John Gerson and St. Bernardine of Siena. However, in view of recent data concerning St. Bernardine's literary sources—Peter Olivi, Ubertine of Casale and to some extent, Bartholomew of Pisa—it would seem that we can push back the first mention of Joseph's patronage into the fourteenth century. An early mention is found in a book by Bartholomew of Pisa (* 1401) in the following words: “Our mother the Church is in every way in debt toward Blessed Mary, from whom she received Christ; immediately next, she is in debt to Joseph.”⁴ This idea appears in the sermon of Bernardine, the brother Franciscan who flourished some fifty years

after Bartholomew: "If the entire Church is in debt to the Virgin Mother, since it is by means of Mary that she has been rendered worthy to receive the Savior, likewise, after her she owes gratitude and singular reverence to this man [Joseph]." ⁵

However, the formal proposal of St. Joseph's guardianship of the Church was made in Gerson's sermon at the Council of Constance in 1416. This sermon had as its purpose the adoption of a feast of the espousal of Joseph and Mary. With deep anxiety the chancellor noted the disastrous results of the great Western Schism of 1378, a wound to the Church which was still unhealed. Gerson asked the approval of the feast of the espousal "in order that through the merits of Mary and through the intercession of so great, so powerful, and in a certain way so omnipotent an intercessor with his bride . . . the Church might be led to her only true and safe Lord, the supreme pastor, her spouse in place of Christ." ⁶ The suggestion made by Gerson was not acted on, but once it had been put forth, the idea continued to recur to others. What really began to receive marked emphasis was Joseph's part as guardian of the Holy Family. This contained in germ the concept of Joseph's further guardianship of Christ's Church.

It was next elaborated in the *Summa of the Gifts of St. Joseph*, a short theological work in Latin written by the Dominican Isidore de Isolani in 1522. When depicting the exceptional honors he felt sure would be granted the saint, Isidore heralded the

future with this prophecy: "For the honor of His name God has chosen St. Joseph as head and special patron of the Church Militant." ⁷

The theme of Joseph's guidance of the Holy Family and the Church continued to run through the devotion as it flourished up to the middle of the eighteenth century. Here, in common with the temporal fortunes of the Church, it suffered a relapse; but with the reign of Pius IX, a hundred years later, it again surged forward. During the 1860's, various petitions from bishops, priests, and the faithful were sent to the Holy See, asking for St. Joseph's full glorification in the liturgy and for the declaration of his Patronage of the Universal Church. Three special petitions were presented to the Vatican Council in 1869-1870. It seems that these three were the petitions which immediately led Pius IX to make his declaration on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1870. ⁸

St. Joseph As Patriarch

Closely related to Joseph's title as Patron of the Universal Church is his title of Patriarch. Ordinarily, the name "patriarch" is reserved for a man who is the father of numerous descendants. The patriarchs of the Old Testament deserve the title not only because of their venerable fatherhood, but also (in a spiritual manner) because of the Messiah who was to be born of their line. They were literally "patriarchs in preparation" in view of God's promise of the Savior who was to spring from the Jewish people.

St. Joseph was a patriarch in the full sense, understanding the term in this spiritual meaning. Our Lord took human nature of the virginal wife of Joseph, and in this way the Saint exercised the rights of father over Him whose spiritual posterity would embrace all the elect.

Leo XIII explains in his encyclical how Joseph's position as patriarch is linked with his office as patron. "Conformably with the Church's sacred liturgy, the opinion has been held by not a few Fathers of the Church that the ancient Joseph, son of the Patriarch Jacob, foreshadowed both in person and in office our own St. Joseph. By his glory he was a prototype of the grandeur of the future guardian of the Holy Family. In addition to the circumstance that both men bore the same name—a name by no means devoid of significance—it is well known to you that they resembled each other very closely in other ways as well. Notable in this regard are the facts that the earlier Joseph received special favor and benevolence from his lord, and that, when placed by him as ruler over his household, fortune and prosperity abundantly accrued to the master's house because of Joseph.

"There was even a more evident similarity when by the king's order he was given supreme power over the entire kingdom. When calamity brought on a deficient harvest and a scarcity of grain, he exercised such excellent foresight in behalf of the Egyptians and their neighbors that the king decreed he should be styled 'savior of the

world.' Thus in that ancient patriarch we may recognize the distinct image of St. Joseph. As the one was prosperous and successful in the domestic concerns of his lord and in an exceptional manner was set over the whole kingdom, so the other, destined to guard the name of Christ, could well be chosen to defend and to protect the Church, which is truly the house of God and the kingdom of God on earth." 9

In the early 1700's, the Holy See was considering the reinsertion of the Saint's name into the Litany of the Saints, from which it had been dropped at some earlier date. In the study of this question Cardinal Lambertini (the future Benedict XIV) published a strong defense of Joseph's position as patriarch. He wrote, "That St. Joseph can be called patriarch is proved from the fact that the patriarchs, according to the Holy Fathers and both ancient and more recent writers, were those who were the progenitors of the families of the Chosen People. Since, therefore, St. Joseph was the putative father of Christ our Lord, who is the head of the predestined and of the elect, the name of patriarch is for this reason rightly and deservedly attributed to St. Joseph, and by this very name is he addressed by most writers.

"St. Joseph was not the natural father of Christ our Lord and did not generate Him, but this can prove only that he was not the father of the faithful by natural generation, as were the other patriarchs. It does not hinder him from being patriarch in

a more perfect and more exalted manner according to the explanation we have already given."¹⁰

In our own day this title has been more or less superseded by direct references to the Saint as husband of Mary and foster father or virginal father of Jesus. Probably the main reason for this evolution in popular usage is that the older word brings to mind the picture of a man who is very advanced in years. Catholics long since have rightly rejected the legendary picture of St. Joseph as an old, old man because such a picture does not agree with his vocation and its requirements as explained in the gospels. Another possible reason is the implicit linkage with the Old Testament which is contained in the title of patriarch. More and more, St. Joseph's closeness to Christ has been recognized; and in the same proportion he tends to recede from the Old Testament setting given him in earlier years.

The Dignity and Efficacy of the Patronage

Joseph's patronage, as we mentioned in an earlier chapter, is one of the indications of the Saint's exalted dignity, for his titles both as patriarch and as Patron of the Universal Church recognize in him an excellence that is absent in other men. The wider the extent of the patronage, so much the greater is its dignity; and since Joseph's patronage is concerned with the entire Church, as patron he is revered to a degree subordinate only to the honor given Mary. The patronage also is a measure of the Saint's dignity on the score of the perfection on

which it is based. Joseph's role is not based merely on a certain fittingness, as is the case with other patron saints. Instead, his God-given position as husband of Mary and father in Jesus' family directly places the interests of Christ's Church close to his heart.

But what of efficacy? The power of Joseph's intercession appears from his holiness as well as from his position on earth and his glory in heaven. The higher a soul exists in glory, by so much is that soul acceptable to God. Joseph's holiness and glory, as second only to Mary's, would point to equally powerful intercession with God for Joseph's clients. As for Joseph's office on earth, he alone of all men exercised paternal authority over Christ; and he alone shared family life with the blessed Mediatrix of all graces as her virginal husband. This relationship on earth, continued in a certain way in heaven, gives St. Joseph a tremendous intercessory power which the Church has officially recognized. One of the most indicative actions has been the approval and indulgencing of a *Memorare* in imitation of the same type of prayer exclusively addressed to our Lady: "Remember, O most pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, my beloved patron, that never has it been heard that anyone invoked thy patronage and sought thy aid without being comforted. Inspired by this confidence, I come to thee and fervently commend myself to thee. O despise not my petition, dear foster father of our Redeemer, but accept it graciously. Amen." ¹¹

The Universality of the Patronage

It would appear that St. Joseph's patronage as understood in its full extent embraces all those who owe their salvation to the redemptive work of Jesus and to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. The reason is clear. Joseph was chosen to be virginal father and virginal husband in order that the redemptive work of our Lord in co-operation with Mary might be accomplished. Hence, the Saint's guardianship (which is the outgrowth of his protection of Jesus and our Lady) logically embraces all who participate in the fruits of the Redemption.

Meditative consideration of the full meaning of Joseph's title reveals still further consequences in another direction. Since the Saint is patron of the whole Church, his interests must be more universal than those of other saints. Other patrons concern themselves with one group of persons; Joseph is patron of all. Hence, writers have amplified his title so that they describe him as *universal* patron *because* Patron of the Universal Church. In this respect it is fortunate that from the very first petitions sent to the Holy See in the past century, the requests from the bishops, priests, and lay people used the words "Universal Church" instead of "Catholic Church." True as it is that "catholic" and "universal" mean the same, "catholic" has taken on a popular connotation more as a proper adjective designating the Church but not implying its universality. More exactly, perhaps we should say that the popular mind does not advert to the "universal"

meaning of "catholic." At any rate, the choice of language was a happy one, and the Church documents have retained the wording of the original petitions which emphasize St. Joseph as the patron *of all and for all*.

Because Joseph was a member of an impoverished family of kings, the story of his life heartens all who suffer financial reverses. Earning his livelihood and supporting his holy charges at the carpenter's bench, he fittingly inspires all who work for a living. In his actions we can discover a guiding principle that can hold true for every employer. He can look to Joseph, who while superior in authority, recognized that he was inferior in dignity and used his authority with the utmost moderation and prudence. Thus, while on the one hand St. Joseph inspires employers to give just wages and to provide healthful working conditions, on the other hand his example reminds employees to return fair and industrious services for wages received, all in an atmosphere of charity and harmony and common working together for the common good.

Against the purveyors of the false ideologies of our day, Joseph stands out as the antithesis of racial prejudice and international hatred. Himself a Jew, he suffered because of the political dreams of Herod, a monarch mad for power at any cost. Welcoming the foreign Magi and then living in exile in a not too friendly land, he witnessed the distress caused by prejudice against color and against race.

Joseph's place as father in the Holy Family shows all fathers how steadfastly they must strive to imitate him in cherishing and educating their children. No husband can ever offer his wife a degree of fidelity and self-sacrifice greater than that which Joseph offered our Lady. Hence, in him we behold the worthy patron of the Christian family. The close union of souls between the father and mother in the Holy Family is the goal which every Christian husband and wife should look to. If they attain success in imitating such love, they will find that their true love shows itself in *every* aspect of their life together.

As head of Nazareth, the first Christian religious community, St. Joseph exemplifies the ideal religious superior, the servant of the servants of God. Simultaneously his absolute and unquestioning obedience to the messengers of God marks him out as the model for priests and for religious. When the end comes to the period of service, Joseph by his death in the presence of Jesus and Mary is made the grand protector in the hour of death for other men—the friend who leads departing souls peacefully to their Judge.

In our own age St. Joseph's patronage of labor has been particularly emphasized together with Joseph's patronage of the family. Closely coupled with the former emphasis was the honor granted to him in 1937 by Pius XI. At that time the Pope declared him the patron of the Church's campaign against atheistic communism, for "he belongs to the working-class, and he bore the burdens of poverty

for himself and the Holy Family, whose tender and vigilant head he was.”¹² The great contribution of Pius XII was made on May 1, 1955, when he announced his intention of instituting the new feast of St. Joseph the Worker in order to christianize secularistic May Day attitudes toward management and labor. With the position of Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, it was all the more fitting for John XXIII to proclaim the Saint “heavenly protector” of the Second Vatican Council, on March 19, 1961.

We possess sound Church authority for claiming St. Joseph as the universal patron in the Church. Leo XIII's encyclical, after tracing the Saint's present position to his earlier vocation on earth, continues, “This is the reason why the faithful of all places and conditions commend and confide themselves to the guardianship of Blessed Joseph. In Joseph fathers of families have an eminent model of paternal care and providence. Married couples find in him the perfect image of love, harmony, and conjugal loyalty. Virgins can look to him for their pattern and as the guardian of virginal integrity. With the picture of Joseph set before them, those of noble lineage can learn to preserve their dignity even under adverse circumstances. Let the wealthy understand what goods they should chiefly seek and earnestly amass, while with no less special right the needy, the laborers, and all possessed of merely modest means should fly to his protection and learn to imitate him.”¹³ The same pope's letter on the Holy Family is entirely devoted to the subject of

family life, placing Joseph with Mary and Jesus as a family exemplar.¹⁴

In the words of Benedict XV, "Since Joseph, whose death took place in the presence of Jesus and Mary, is justly regarded as the most efficacious protector of the dying, it is our purpose here to lay a special injunction on Our Venerable Brethren that they assist in every possible manner those pious associations which have been instituted to obtain the intercession of St. Joseph for the dying."¹⁵

St. Joseph and St. Michael

It is logical to wonder how the patronage of St. Joseph differs, if at all, from the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel over the Church. Following Bialas, we would agree that both saints are "Patrons" of the Universal Church, but St. Joseph "has been the only one to receive *solemn* declaration."

Moreover, "as an *angelic spirit*, the Archangel Michael excels St. Joseph, who is *human* by nature. St. Michael excels in that he can help his clients by his natural powers of 'movement.' In the *supernatural order*, however, and especially in his power of intercession, considering his dignity, St. Joseph could excel St. Michael." The reasons for believing that Joseph does excel have been already stated. But how do the patronages of St. Joseph and St. Michael differ?

The differentiating element seems to be that Michael obtains his results more as a warrior for the Church; St. Joseph accomplishes his, as a father.

“Joseph fights evil but in a rather positive way, i.e., by promoting the good . . . the Archangel is more of the Champion and Warrior type; he resists evil by getting at the evil—he openly resists to conquer the enemy, as he did against Lucifer and his devils; he is aggressive; he does things by leadership—by leading forces against the enemy before the latter even attacks . . . he fortifies, defends, and guards.”¹⁶

The Litany of St. Joseph

The shortest official summary of the Saint's patronage is found in the Litany of St. Joseph, approved by Pius X in 1909. This Litany condenses, as it were, Leo XIII's earlier catalogue of Joseph's clients—“all the faithful of all places and conditions.”

The action of Pius X in sanctioning the Litany of St. Joseph for use in public services gave Joseph one of his most exclusive honors. Only five other litanies have been granted this rare and signal approval—the Litanies of the Sacred Heart, the Precious Blood, and the Holy Name of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin's Litany of Loreto, and the Litany of the Saints (with its adaptations for Holy Saturday and for the commendation of a departing soul).

The use of a litany as a form of prayer dates from the very earliest days of the Church itself. The word comes from the Greek term *lissomai*, “I pray.” The first Christians probably modeled their litanies on Psalm 135, “Praise the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever.” Here, after each statement of the Psalmist, the phrase is repeated, “for

His mercy endures forever." This repetition of the same prayer has passed over into our modern litanies. When addressing God, we beg, "Have mercy on us"; when petitioning the saints' intercession, we say, "Pray for us." In this manner God or our Lady or St. Joseph can be honored under different titles but always with the same petition.

We can well understand the reason for the Church's strictness in limiting the number of litanies for public use. In 1600 there were more than eighty varieties in circulation. Some of these were conducive to pompous, stilted formalism rather than genuine piety. Only the age-old Litany of the Saints and our Lady's Litany of Loreto were permitted to remain. During the past century the Litanies of the Holy Name, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and of the Precious Blood were added.

This brief consideration of the history of litanies in the Church is necessary to appreciate how unusual is the honor given St. Joseph. In the decree of St. Pius sanctioning the Litany of St. Joseph, the Holy Father mentioned his special devotion to St. Joseph, whose name he received at baptism. Then he stated his willingness to accede to the petition signed by many bishops and heads of Religious Orders. He wished to follow the course begun by his predecessors, Pius IX and Leo XIII. The Holy Father's special reason, so his decree stated, lay in his desire to urge the faithful to imitate more closely the virtues of St. Joseph. Therefore, St. Pius approved and indulgenced the new litany.¹⁷

There is a very interesting feature about the Litany of St. Joseph. Unlike the older litanies which grew up out of separate and more or less unrelated invocations, the Litany of St. Joseph is divided into rigidly logical groups:

I. Seven titles depict the role Joseph played on earth:

- a) Two concern his royal ancestry in preparation for the Messiah:
 - “Illustrious descendant of David”;
 - “Light of patriarchs”;
- b) Two, his relationship to Mary:
 - “Spouse of the Mother of God”;
 - “Chaste guardian of the Virgin”;
- c) Two, his relationship to Jesus:
 - “Foster father of the Son of God”;
 - “Watchful defender of Christ”;
- d) and finally one title as:
 - “Head of the Holy Family.”

II. In the second group of invocations, six list Joseph's special virtues: justice, chastity, prudence, valiance, obedience, and faith.

III. The final group consists of eleven titles.

- a) Four address him as exemplar:
 - “Mirror of patience”;
 - “Lover of poverty”;
 - “Model of workmen”;
 - “Ornament of domestic life”;
- b) and seven invoke him as a protecting patron:

“Guardian of virgins”;
“Safeguard of families”;
“Consolation of the poor”;
“Hope of the sick”;
“Patron of the dying”;
“Terror of demons”;
“Protector of Holy Church.”

But for the final word on the patronage of St. Joseph, probably no tribute to the Saint's widespread and powerful help and friendship will ever surpass the words of St. Teresa of Avila, long become classic: “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 us 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.”¹⁸

CHAPTER
TWENTY - ONE

THE PETITIONS FOR
ST. JOSEPH'S ADVANCE
IN THE LITURGY

On November 13, 1962, the news media of the world flashed the report that Pope John XXIII had ordered St. Joseph's name to be included in the Canon of the mass. The pope's decision was indicated publicly at the eighteenth general session of the Second Vatican Council, when Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, president of the Council's Secretariat for Extraordinary Affairs, made the announcement that the change would go into effect as of December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. A touching

fittingness about this decision was the fact that in 1870 Pius IX had made his proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church also on December 8.

Thus, a movement more than a century old culminated in a climax far beyond the wildest expectations of its first founders. It seems most likely that the insertion of St. Joseph's name in the *Communicantes* prayer after that of Mary will be followed by parallel recognition of St. Joseph in other parts of the liturgy. In retrospect now, we can afford to look back at the thinking and the activities which led to a result so ardently desired by millions of friends of St. Joseph.

Ever since 1815, various petitions from thousands of bishops, priests, and laymen were sent to the Holy See, requesting increased honors for St. Joseph in the liturgy. A major request in these petitions concerned the invocation of the Saint in the mass, particularly in the following prayers:

1. The Confession (*Confiteor*);
2. The "Receive, O Holy Trinity" (*Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*);
3. Within the Canon, the "Sharing and Venerating the Memory" (*Communicantes*);
4. And after the Canon, the "Deliver us, we beseech Thee" (*Libera nos, quaesumus*).

As is evident, the discussion was restricted to the Latin rite liturgy. The precise request had been that St. Joseph be invoked after our Blessed Lady in each of these prayers.

In 1870, Aloysius Marchesi, a Consultor of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, suggested that the prayers would read as follows: ¹

"I confess to almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever virgin, to St. Joseph her spouse, to Blessed Michael the archangel. . . . Therefore I beseech Blessed Mary ever virgin, St. Joseph her spouse, Blessed Michael the archangel. . . . to pray to the Lord our God for me."

"Receive, O holy Trinity, this offering we make to Thee in remembrance of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honor of Blessed Mary ever virgin, of her blessed spouse Joseph, of Blessed John the Baptist, of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, of these and of all the saints. . . ."

"Sharing and venerating the memory first of the glorious Mary ever virgin, mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, together with her spouse Blessed Joseph; likewise of Thy blessed apostles and martyrs. . . ."

"Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and to come; and by the intercession of the Blessed and glorious Mary ever virgin, Mother of God, together with Blessed Joseph her spouse, and with Thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul and Andrew and all the Saints. . . ."

The best known of all the petitions were circulated by Father Cyprian Macabiau, S.J., from 1887 to 1908, although we are in doubt when or even whether he might have submitted them for-

mally to the Holy See. Much confusion has arisen over the identity of this promoter because of his pseudonym of "C.M." and "C. Mariani." Actually, he was a professor of theology and a writer (1846-1915), a "man of one book and one task"—to promote the devotion to St. Joseph, and particularly to obtain for St. Joseph the honors of a cultus of *protodulia*. The author usually signed only his initials; but he evidently hoped that his work would have more authority if he adopted the pseudonym of C. Mariani and—so it would seem—if people would suppose him to be a prominent Roman church official of that name. 2

Macabiau's petitions grew out of the three earlier petitions submitted to the Vatican Council in 1870. Two of these, signed respectively by 118 bishops and 43 superiors-general of religious orders, asked that St. Joseph be granted special honors in the liturgy, and that he be proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church. The third petition more specifically asked that St. Joseph be proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church, and also that the cultus of *protodulia* be granted him. The list of signers was impressive: 38 cardinals of the 42 at the Council, including the future Leo XIII, and 217 patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops. Their petition did not use the precise word *protodulia* but read, "The public cultus of *dulia*, second to the Blessed Mother and before all other saints." This concept came to be called *protodulia*, that is, "first veneration," to parallel the *hyperdulia* given our Blessed Lady.

By way of digression, we must explain that the insistence of some theologians that St. Joseph be given a *protodulia* specifically superior to the veneration given other saints seems to have been an obstacle hindering further honors for St. Joseph. The final word on the subject must come from the Holy See in case a decision ever becomes necessary. The important fact to be remembered is that Joseph's cultus, whether called *protodulia* or by any other name, must not imply his intrinsic co-operation in the Incarnation of our Lord. Mary alone accomplished this.³ However, it is striking to note that the Church now ranks St. Joseph second to Mary in many recent prayers, and Leo XIII's oft-quoted words in *Quamquam Pluries* clearly designate Joseph as second to Mary in dignity. Hence, it seems that the Holy See does not wish to be involved in any way in deciding whether Joseph's veneration is to be specifically or merely quantitatively superior to that of other saints. In practice, St. Joseph is now given a rank second only to Mary.

As it eventuated, the Vatican Council did not act on the petitions submitted to it, but Pius IX responded by proclaiming St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. Nothing further was done concerning the request for *protodulia* until Macabiau took up the matter in 1887. He amplified the original petition of 1870, and sent it for signatures to 900 prelates of the Latin rite. Of these, no fewer than 632 cardinals and bishops—among them the future St. Pius X—gave their support. Meanwhile, Leo XIII issued his monumental encyclical on St. Joseph, the

first lengthy document of the Church concerning the Saint. The outlook for new honors was, therefore, bright indeed when there suddenly appeared the decree of August 15, 1892. This action of the Congregation of Sacred Rites indicated that the Holy See wished no changes at the time. The wording of the decree should be noted carefully. It does not criticize the soundness of the theological doctrine on which the petitions for St. Joseph's advancement rested. There is only the question whether or not a change at that time is expedient:

"From all sides petitions have been sent to the Apostolic See, asking that St. Joseph be honored in the sacred liturgy with a cultus of higher rank. His Holiness was filled with the greatest joy because of these supplications which were presented to him. . . nevertheless he did not think fit to bestow on the holy Patriarch a higher liturgical cultus which would alter the status wisely established in the Church over a long period." ⁴

Evidently because of this decree Macabiau withheld his petition, deeming it prudent to await a more propitious moment. In 1908 he finally published it in amplified book form addressed to Pope St. Pius X and entitled, *De Cultu Sancti Josephi Amplificando*—"On Advancing the Cultus of St. Joseph." The first part of his petition was practically the same as that of the 1870 request for *protodulia*. To it was added a second section which asked "that the venerable name of Joseph, as the supreme Patron of the Universal Church, second to the Mother

of God, should be invoked in the Sacrifice of the mass, namely, in the *Confiteor* and in the prayers *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas, Communicantes, and Libera Nos*, following the most sweet name of Mary.”⁵

Yet even this did not represent all the petitions of which we are aware. Among the more notable ones was the 1866 request, signed by 150,000 Italian clergy and laity; a 1935 document with 40,000 signatures from the German-speaking faithful of Germany, Austria, and German communities in the two Americas; and in 1960 an astounding 100,000-plus petition circulated by the parishioners of St. Joseph's parish, Capitola, California, supporting the private letter on this subject of their pastor, Msgr. Joseph M. Phelan.

Reasons Against the Changes

Strong objections were brought forward against making the changes suggested in the petitions. Some theologians claimed that since Joseph died before the Passion of our Lord, it would not be fitting in the mystical sacrifice of the Cross to invoke a saint whose death preceded Calvary. Others said that only those who shed their blood for Christ should be invoked in the important prayers of the mass, and this reasoning would exclude St. Joseph, who was both patriarch and confessor. Finally, the approbation of such a novelty as “greatly unessential additions” (as Jungmann characterizes them in his work on the mass)⁶ might open the way to claims for all sorts of saints. Venerated age-old traditions should not be recklessly flaunted. Above

all, so the arguments ran, such a change would be against the mind of the Church. In 1815 Pius VII did not see fit to grant a request to place St. Joseph's name in the Canon of the mass. The 1892 decree of the Congregation of Sacred Rites made it clear that Leo XIII disapproved of tampering with the long-standing traditions of the Roman mass.

Even in times closer to our day, these objections have continued. Dom Gaston Démaret, O.S.B., wrote in 1939, "To modify, even to embellish and to enrich the ancient formulae of the liturgy is something repugnant to Rome. It is very circumspect . . . and the ordinary of the mass and especially the Canon are for her the holy arch which no one is permitted to touch. One adds nothing, not even a stone which would decorate it, to the masterpiece which has come down to us from antiquity. It would be a sort of profanation." He adds that since St. Gregory the Great the Canon has "undergone no modification or addition of any sort," and it was for this reason that Dom Couturier, successor of Dom Gueranger refused to sign Macabiau's petition at Solesmes, despite his tender and confident devotion to St. Joseph.⁷

As is manifest, the two rejections of the petitions by the Church were for the moment, and did not necessarily prevent renewed petitions in the future. As for the objections against St. Joseph as a saint of the Old Testament, they might with equal reason be directed against Abraham or Melchisedech, who also are mentioned in the Canon of the

mass! Actually, the many objections reduced to one valid principle: Age-old tradition should be respected. In the case of St. Joseph's petitions the principle still holds. Customs handed down through the centuries should not be changed without a grave reason. In this instance such a grave reason seems to exist. By the providence of God St. Joseph was not explicitly honored in the mass in past times. In our own day because of changed circumstances one might have reason to think that the moment for his full public veneration has arrived. What are the positive data that urge such a step?

First of all, there is the fact of St. Joseph's dignity. The Church now teaches and in practice venerates the Saint as second only to Mary. Hence, corresponding honor should be paid him in the Church's supreme act of worship. No one today denies that St. Joseph's name would have been listed directly after that of our Lady if the Canon of the mass had been composed in our own time. In Jungmann's study of the origins of the mass, the author (who seems to show himself unsympathetic to the changes) admits that "under Leo XIII because of a French petition it was an almost accomplished fact that the name of St. Joseph was to be added in the *Confiteor*, *Suscipe S. Trinitas*, *Communicantes*, and *Libera Nos*." ⁸ It can even be said that this insertion would probably have been made long ago if the Saint's excellence had been explicitly recognized in the days of the mass' composition.

The argument from consideration of Joseph's dignity gains in force when we consider the dignity of other saints of the mass. In the case of most of them we do not know exactly why their names were included in the Canon in preference to all others. Perhaps it was because of their connection with the early Church or because of their martyrdom or because the faithful at Rome honored their memory with particular devotion. At the time their names were listed in the mass prayers, the chief cause for this action was a desire to show them honor. Throughout all Christian centuries this mention in the Canon was looked upon as a great mark of recognized dignity. The same principle, it seems, should hold for St. Joseph.

As for the objection that the Saint is not sufficiently linked with the sacrifice of the mass, only one answer need be given: a forthright denial. Next to the Blessed Virgin no one more than St. Joseph co-operated in preparing for the Redemption. Jesus took His human nature within the bonds of Joseph's virginal marriage to our Lady, and this was a necessary prelude according to God's plans. Jesus was reared to full manhood by St. Joseph. This vocation of Joseph was directly chosen by God to fit into the divine plan of the Redemption also. Finally, the fact of Joseph's holiness shows how generously the Saint united himself to Mary's offering, so that the two parents of Jesus were one in purpose with their Son. The lack of martyrdom by sword or by fire should not harm Joseph's privilege to be closely associated with the "mass of the martyrs" any more

than the absence of physical martyrdom fails to detract from the glory of Mary's title of Queen of Martyrs.

Joseph's intimacy with Mary brings to mind another thought that he be linked with her in the mass as well. As a general rubric, SS. Peter and Paul are not to be separated when liturgical honors are paid one or the other. How much more compelling is the reason for the names of Mary and Joseph, virginal wife and virginal husband and virginal parents of Jesus, to be at least *occasionally* united in the greatest act of communal worship in Christ's Church!

Joseph's relationship to the Church affords the most pertinent and most pressing of all grounds that he should be recognized in the mass. At the impulse of the Holy Spirit the Church proclaimed St. Joseph its special and universal patron. A universal patron, however, should be invoked by all his clients in all fitting circumstances. No occasion is more fitting than the Church's supreme act of sacrifice and prayer. If St. Joseph's name is not included in the prayers of the mass, it would appear that the Church had proclaimed for itself a patron saint whom it does not invoke on the most proper occasion, or a patron whom it does not invoke while it is paying honor to many minor and obscure saints.

Again and again in history additions were made to the mass on the occasion of growing evils. If ever any century in the world's history called for special help from God to fight the forces of evil, certainly the present one does so. Pius IX's declaration

of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church was to a great extent prompted by the dire need of Joseph's aid. Pius XI declared the Saint patron to help the Church fight atheistic communism. Leo XIII and Benedict XV pointed out how devotion to Mary and devotion to Joseph go hand in hand. Ought not St. Joseph be invoked proportionately?

The question of adding the name of the Saint to the prayers of the mass does not incur any difficulty as far as the dogmas of the Church are concerned. The rites of the Church—and particularly the Latin mass—have been changed in the past by Roman Pontiffs, and can be changed now. Such additions or revisions are thoroughly within the power of the popes.

A Mass Unchanged from Antiquity?

One possibly serious difficulty calls for fuller discussion. Have the rites of the mass been handed down to us unchanged from antiquity? The answer is that the mass has been static only since the time of Pope St. Pius V (that is from the second half of the sixteenth century). Many changes were made in mass prayers during the Middle Ages. Bover, relying on Batiffol, says, "Anyone who would think that the modern mass formulary was compiled in its entirety by St. Gregory I would be in grievous error."⁹ Some of these changes can be listed briefly here:

a) The *Confiteor* was not recited in the mass before the tenth or eleventh century. During the Middle Ages innumerable formulae of the prayer

were used, and it was only in the fourteenth century that the names of St. Michael and St. John the Baptist were added to those of the Apostles Peter and Paul. ¹⁰

b) In the case of the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* the prayer itself did not come into common use until the eleventh century, and even then its formula was not the one recited today. ¹¹

c) The prayer of the Canon, *Communicantes*, offers need for the greatest reverence as the most ancient of the prayers under discussion. It seems to have been edited by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century. Hence, the prayer now recited is not the primitive Roman formula. ¹² Not only was its catalog of saints changed throughout the centuries; during the Middle Ages it was an approved practice to insert the name of the saint whose feast was celebrated or whose relics were reserved in the Church where mass was being offered. ¹³

d) As for the *Libera Nos, Quaesumus*, as late as the eleventh century a rubric permitted the priest to substitute after the name of St. Andrew any or as many names of other saints as he wished to mention. In this as well as in the preceding prayer we have mentioned, no universal invocation of John the Baptist occurred. ¹⁴

Still another objection to any further advancement of St. Joseph in the liturgy has been raised by certain Catholic participants in the ecumenical movement. They have expressed their fears that such continued exaltation of Joseph would consti-

tute an added and unnecessary obstacle to closer Protestant-Catholic cooperation. In justice, it must be claimed that this attitude is by no means common to all Catholic ecumenists, nor does it stand examination as far as any common Protestant reaction would be concerned. Certainly, Protestant coolness and even opposition to St. Joseph's position exists; but so does a parallel coolness exist among some Catholics, as far as penetrating appreciation of Joseph's vocation and dignity is concerned. Therefore, instead of fruitlessly citing pros to balance cons among the Protestant ranks, we content ourself here with quoting the opinion of Karl Barth, hailed as the world's "Number One Protestant theologian." In a conversation in Chicago with the author of the present book (April 27, 1962), Dr. Barth used substantially these words, "If I were a Roman Catholic theologian, I would lift Joseph up. He took care of the Child; he takes care of the Church."

The Litany of the Saints

Any discussion of the arguments for placing Joseph's name into the prayers of the mass naturally borders on the related petitions for the Saint's preferment in the Litany of the Saints. Because of the antiquity of this litany—it dates from the early days of the Church—the prayer was strongly influenced by the opinion of its times that St. Joseph should be kept in the background lest his unique position be misunderstood and imperil the doctrines pertaining to Christ and to Mary. It was only after 1726 that

the Saint's name was officially inserted into the Litany of the Saints, and even then it was placed after the archangels, the angels, and St. John the Baptist. St. Joseph apparently had been included in the litany in many places after Bologna set the example for other localities to follow in or about 1350.

But Joseph's name was dropped at some time during the sixteenth century—no record exists to explain precisely why. The most plausible explanation is given by Cardinal Prosper Lambertini, the scholar who later became Benedict XIV. After the reformation of the Roman Breviary in the pontificate of St. Pius V, he writes, the invocation of St. Joseph was no longer mentioned in the Greater Litanies, even though it is listed in such litanies printed in missals before this period. Evidently, he concludes, this omission was made because of the ignorance of the printers. They had been informed that the proper office of St. Joseph was suppressed by Pius V; and on their own authority they went ahead and deleted St. Joseph's name from the Greater Litanies.

Four reasons exist to justify this conclusion: first, these same printers *added* saints' names at their own whim to the litanies. Second, no decree can be discovered prohibiting St. Joseph's invocation; third, no plausible reason can be found to explain why Pius V would even wish to omit St. Joseph's name. Finally, a later pope, Paul V, confirmed and approved litanies for the blessing of holy water, as these were inserted in the *Roman Ritual*. In these the invocation of St. Joseph was

mentioned. Hence, we have additional proof that the Holy See never ordered the Saint's name deleted.¹⁵

The hundreds of Catholic bishops who in the past petitioned the Holy See to place Joseph's name second to Mary, eventually had their request admirably seconded by the approval of the Litany of St. Joseph, the Preface of St. Joseph, and the invocation of St. Joseph in the Divine Praises and in the prayers for the dying. These exclusive honors have led many prelates to believe that the Church will in time accord St. Joseph an equally significant position in the Litany of the Saints, directly following the invocation of our Lady.

Marchesi's suggestions, like those he made for St. Joseph in the mass are as follows:

"Lord, have mercy on us, Christ, have mercy on us, etc.," to: "Holy Mary, pray for us; Holy Mother of God, pray for us; Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us"; here he would insert: "Saint Joseph, pray for us; Spouse of the Virgin Mother, pray for us; Loving parents of Christ, pray for us."¹⁶ He adds that if misunderstanding were feared, the last title might be changed to "loving *virginal* parents of Christ." Then would follow the invocation of St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the angels; next, St. John the Baptist alone would be saluted before the invocation of all prophets and patriarchs, since St. Joseph in this arrangement would be moved next to Mary, as part of the Holy Family instead of being one of the patriarchs. But for what the future may

exactly bring, we need only note that the arguments for St. Joseph's advance in the Litany of the Saints coincide with the reasons for his inclusion in the prayers of the mass.

At this point, the following summary condenses the data offered into the following statements:

1. The difficulty of *rigid* antiquity of the prayers in question does not exist;
2. The popes have the authority to make the change;
3. The change would be anything but drastic—merely the relocating of one or two invocations in the Litany of the Saints, perhaps an addition of one or two titles to St. Joseph and the addition of four words, "St. Joseph, her spouse," in four prayers of the mass. Yet the question remains: Since the requests were twice refused, in 1815 and in 1892, how could devout Catholics have continued to hope that the Holy See would make an alteration?

The actions of the Holy See are the best answer. At the time when the first petitions were presented, historical facts which are now admitted concerning the origins of the mass had not yet been ascertained. Moreover, it must be conceded in all fairness that the doctrines held by some of the promoters of the petitions came close to exaggerating the limits of St. Joseph's magnificence, perhaps even infringing on the dignity of Mary or that of the eternal Father. Above all, the Church acts with the utmost caution and prudence, knowing that it is always guided by the Holy Spirit. In God's own time,

if the changes in the mass were to be made in St. Joseph's favor, these would be brought about by the legitimate channels which God in His well-ordered providence would use. It is most striking that the Church had given St. Joseph equivalently all honors requested by early petitioners *except* this final honor of placing the Saint's name in the mass. In fact, the Church had gone much farther than requested. St. Joseph had been given two feasts of exclusive rank and distinction. The Church had been asked to declare his veneration one of *protodulia*, but instead of making the explicit declaration in such a way as to settle a theological controversy, the Church in practice venerates Joseph after Mary. Such is the tenor of the decrees of Pius IX, of Leo XIII's encyclical, of John XXIII, and of the changes in the Church's public prayers we have already noted.

Mediator Dei

Up to this point we have presented the substance of arguments advanced since 1870 to the present. One is surprised to compare the principles on which they are based with the principles set forth in *Mediator Dei*, the great encyclical of Pius XII issued in 1947 concerning the liturgy, and to find how much they agree:

1. In the first place, Pius indicates that the liturgy is not static but is susceptible of proper growth: "The Sacred Liturgy does in fact include divine as well as human elements. The former, instituted as they have been by God, cannot be

changed in any way by men. But the human components admit of various modifications, as the needs of the age, circumstances, and the good of souls may require, and as the ecclesiastical hierarchy under guidance of the Holy Spirit may have authorized."¹⁷

2. The Pope further explains that some of these human elements in the liturgy have developed because of disciplinary modifications, a more explicit formulation of doctrine, the development of the fine arts, and nonliturgical practices. Here he mentions the part of the devotions "which began to appear by God's wonderful design in later periods and grew to be so popular. We may instance the spread and ever mounting ardor of devotion to the Blessed Eucharist, devotion to the most bitter Passion of our Redeemer, devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the Virgin Mother of God, and to her most chaste spouse."¹⁸

3. The Holy Father clearly disapproves of exaggerated attachment to ancient rites and excessive archaism: "Ancient usage must not be esteemed more suitable and proper, either in its own right or in its significance for later times and new situations, on the simple ground that it carries the savor and aroma of antiquity. . . . It is neither wise nor laudable to reduce everything to antiquity by every possible device."¹⁹

4. Finally, changes are on no account to be made according to private judgment: "The Sovereign Pontiff alone enjoys the right to recognize and establish any practice touching the worship of God,

to introduce and approve new rites, as also to modify those he judges to require modification.”²⁰

The Petitions of 1961

In August, 1961, a 75-page Memorandum was circulated among the Catholic bishops of the world, documenting the historical, liturgical and doctrinal aspects of the questions of inserting St. Joseph's name into the mass. Originating as a joint-authorship project from the Research and Documentation Center at St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, it was released simultaneously also by the Josephology Centers in Valladolid, Spain, and Viterbo, Italy. As background material for formal petitions from the hierarchy, it appeared in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and English; and in a German summary as well.

The Canadian, Spanish, and Italian Centers then distributed the Memorandum together with the following petition, primarily among the cardinals, archbishops, and other ordinaries of the Church. At least four hundred members of the episcopate responded affirmatively in signing the petition, a striking manifestation which drew all the more worldwide notice because of the report in the international editions of *Time* magazine for November 17, 1961. The text of the petition, as addressed to His Holiness, John XXIII, read as follows:

I place myself at the feet of Your Holiness, who are President of the Central Commission of the forthcoming Vatican Council and so

greatly devoted to St. Joseph, your patron and the patron of the Universal Church; and together with many other cardinals, archbishops, and bishops of the Catholic world, I humbly request that among the many questions to be treated by the approaching universal council, this question would also be included: Whether it is permissible and fitting that the name of Blessed Joseph be inserted into the prayers of the mass.

In your Apostolic Letter of March 19 concerning the devotion to Blessed Joseph, Your Holiness already recalled certain petitions sent from fathers of the First Vatican Council to the Supreme Pontiff of holy memory, Pius IX, that he might deign to grant liturgical honors proportionate to Joseph's exalted holiness and great dignity. After that holy pontiff accepted the purpose of the petitions with kind favor and declared Blessed Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, December 8, 1870, the liturgical honors for him grew apace. However, since the name of St. Joseph is still not mentioned in any prayer of the Mass together with the other patrons of the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and St. Michael the Archangel, perhaps that degree of honor has not appeared in the group veneration of the faithful which is proper to Joseph's dignity.

Ever since 1815, many petitions have been directed to your Holy See from hundreds of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, and many thousands of the faithful, asking that the name of Blessed Joseph would be inserted into certain prayers of the mass after that of his most holy spouse (for example, in the *Confiteor*, the "Receive, Holy Trinity," the "Sharing the memory," and the "Deliver Us"). From the time of the first petitions to the present, the question has repeatedly hung in the balance, with no decision made. Of the four consultors who examined the proposal, three rendered a favorable verdict; the fourth, in judging it negatively, did not deny the possibility of the grant.

Therefore, at the feet of Your Holiness, I humbly and with my whole heart ask that you would deign to arrange to have this included among the projects to be discussed by the competent commission of the forthcoming council, so that the fathers of the council might be able to weigh the expediency of granting Blessed Joseph the veneration that is worthy of the doctrine and acts proposed by the Supreme Pontiffs of our times and particularly contained in the Apostolic Letter of Your Holiness of March 19, 1961.²¹

The action of John XXIII, placing Joseph's name in the Canon and announced on November 13, 1962, was the answer. The pope's explicit intention was to put it on record that the Second Vati-

can Council so honored its patron, St. Joseph; and the pope made his decision in the name of the Council fathers because the petitions sent to him had shown that the action was so widely desired.

Not all Catholic reaction was unanimously and warmly enthusiastic. An objection representative of a reluctant minority was quoted in *Time* magazine (November 23, 1962) in the words of an anonymous theologian at Rome: "Half the world doesn't even believe in God, and we worry about St. Joseph."

To which we can only reply, "More things are wrought by prayer—and by prayer to God through Mary and Joseph—than this world dreams of."

EARLY CENTURIES AND
THE BYZANTINE CHURCH

PART VI

THE HISTORY OF THE
DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

TABLE

THE HISTORY OF THE
DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

CHAPTER
TWENTY-TWO

EARLY CENTURIES AND
THE BYZANTINE CHURCH

*Traces of the Devotion
in the First Centuries*

The degree in which St. Joseph was outwardly venerated during the first centuries of Christianity was more or less proportionate to the notice accorded him in the literature of the period. Owing to the importance of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies with the heretics, Joseph was given scant attention. We must not conclude, however, that at any time in the life of the Church the faithful refused him veneration. Such an impression would be highly erroneous. The truth is that we possess only meager evidence to indicate their attitude

toward him. What testimony there is shows that St. Joseph was commemorated in connection with the veneration of Mary and the adoration of Jesus. Although he received no special honors, he was accepted as a true member of the Holy Family, whose life was closely bound up with the mysteries of Christ's infancy and childhood. In this attitude we can legitimately discern the implicit recognition of Joseph's nobility and sanctity, on which was founded the explicit devotion of later centuries that lavishly paid him tribute.

In Christian sculpture Joseph's image is not to be found until the third century. At various times certain representations in the catacombs were claimed to be pictures of the Saint, but these claims could not be substantiated by expert archeologists. A single memorial, from the cemetery of Priscilla, was accepted as genuine. This is a marble slab from the grave of a certain Severa, inscribed, "Severa, thou livest in God." To the right of the Latin inscription is a rough drawing of the Magi scene with the Child Jesus sitting on Mary's lap and St. Joseph directly behind, pointing to the Christmas star.

Among the large number of extant Christian tombstones of the fifth and sixth centuries, Joseph's likeness appears only rarely, and then in the Magi scenes. He is represented as a dignified, bearded man in full maturity, neither old nor feeble. There is also a long series of tombstones portraying the adoration of the shepherds; but since archeologists disagree as to whether or not a typical figure next

to our Lady and the crib represents Joseph or a shepherd, we cannot claim this as a commemoration of the Saint.

His identity is, however, certain in a notable series of six mosaics on the triumphal arch of the church of St. Mary Major at Rome, built in 435 by Pope Sixtus III in memory of the Council of Ephesus. The mosaics have as their purpose the glorification of our Lady as the mother of God, since the Council had solemnly defined Mary's motherhood as a dogma of the Faith. In their picturization Joseph appears at the Annunciation, the Presentation, and what seems to be the Entry into Egypt. Elsewhere in works of the fifth and sixth centuries, his figure is carved in ivories such as the cover of a Milanese Gospel-book and a chest from the abbey of Werden. In these scenes he is present at the Nativity.

Thus, the sculpture of early Christianity merely hints at the part Joseph played in the mysteries of our Redemption. We know of no certain representation of him before the third century, and thereafter he appears occasionally in the Magi's adoration and finally at the Nativity.

Joseph's memory was first commemorated at Nazareth. Before the reign of Constantine (313-337), Nazareth had been a tiny hamlet, but with the official Christianization of the Roman Empire it rose to importance. In honor of the Blessed Virgin one of Constantine's officials built a church which eager pilgrims visited in order to venerate the spot

where (according to local tradition) the Annunciation took place. The historian Nicephorus states that St. Helena had a church of St. Joseph erected amid the holy places.¹

Our first detailed information of Nazareth comes from the report of Bishop Arculf, who visited the Holy Land in the seventh century. In his time there existed at Nazareth two large churches—one commemorating the Annunciation and the other honoring the house in which Mary and Joseph lived. There is no question here of any special "devotion" to St. Joseph. All we can learn is that his memory was piously venerated by reason of his relation to Jesus and Mary. He received this honor as long as Christian pilgrims were able to visit Palestine.

Joseph was also commemorated indirectly in Egypt. Many were the claims of local tradition that the Holy Family had sojourned in certain districts. According to the French monk and pilgrim, Bernard, "In the city of Faramah there is a church in honor of holy Mary in the place to which Joseph fled with the Child and His mother at the angel's behest."² At Matareah—mentioned in the apocryphal *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*—the memory of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph was kept in connection with this legend: "They came to that sycamore which is called Matareah where the Lord Jesus caused a spring to bubble forth in Matareah, and here the Lady Mary washed His swaddling-clothes. But from the perspiration of the Lord which she washed out, came the balsam into that region." This

eneration existed about the seventh century. It must have had a much earlier origin.

“Jesus’ presence in Hermopolis finds mention not only in the apocrypha but also in certain of the Fathers. Here, so the fables run, a tree bent down to adore the Son of God, and the idols fell to the ground and were smashed when He entered. These tales are retold by Rufinus and Palladius in his *Life of the Abbot Apollo*; and following this by Sozomen and Cassiodorus, in their church histories. Cassiodorus made these legends domestic to the Occident, but their real origin lies in local traditions, as Sozomen expressly states. This is not the place to offer a critical study of all such assertions; they merely suffice to establish the fact that in many places in Egypt, ever since earliest days, the memory of the Savior’s flight and indirectly thereby, the memory of St. Joseph, the servant of the mystery, had been kept alive.”³

Because of the propagandizing influence of the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* a Feast of St. Joseph was instituted among the Copts in the seventh century, perhaps even earlier. This feast commemorated Joseph’s death on July 20. Thus, the Copts—that is, Egyptian monophysites—became the first to honor Joseph with special and solemn rites, which seem to have been built around the apocryphal *History* which instigated the feast. While this legendary tale regrettably discredits Joseph’s sanctity and virginity by portraying him

as a querulous, feeble widower, yet certain passages indicate the sincere esteem of the Saint among these poor people. In its conclusion Christ is made to say, "Joseph, whoever sets down in writing the history of thy life, thy work, and thy departure from this world, him will I recommend to thy protection as long as he tarries in this life. But when his soul departs from the body and he must leave this world, I will burn the book of his offenses. But to every poor person who cannot perform anything of what has been mentioned, this is obligatory; if a son be born to him, he shall call his name Joseph, and in his house neither distress nor sudden death will enter for all time unto eternity."

The Feast of St. Joseph in the Byzantine Church

After the Age of the Fathers the Church in the East depended almost exclusively on the Greek Fathers as its theological authorities. While Augustine and Jerome were left unconsulted, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa ("The Three Cappadocians"), and particularly John Chrysostom were followed rigidly. It was characteristic of Eastern church writers to give the tradition from these Fathers untrammelled validity. Consequently their theology respecting St. Joseph remained static and sterile, failing to be developed beyond that which the Greek Fathers had unfolded.

A noteworthy trait among the Byzantine writers was their reliance on the apocrypha. Even the very men who professed to oppose these spurious gospels loyally kept many of the legends the apocrypha

contained. They used not only the apocrypha; they also accepted uncritically all those many writings composed by unknown authors but circulated under the names of the great Fathers. Although much of the material of these counterfeits was borrowed generously from the legends, it was nevertheless employed without qualm because of the authority of the names of its supposed creators. As a result of such a policy the historians and scriptural commentators methodically compiled the old tradition, little concerned whether or not this tradition was correct.

Under the pressure of pious curiosity the Greeks had an additional reason to favor the apocrypha. After the iconoclastic persecutions in the East, the veneration of our Lady (which had already reached great heights) now took hold of the faithful even more strongly. Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne, became the objects of special devotion. With a demand for extra details to supplement the gospel story of Mary's life, the apocrypha were adopted unhesitatingly despite their dubious origin.

Naturally, as far as St. Joseph was concerned, the opinions of the Greek writers were made to conform to the descriptions in the apocrypha. Already in the eighth century and thereafter, Joseph was consistently pictured as a widower of great age, among whose children were the "brethren of the Lord"; Mary was the sealed book which the illiterate Joseph could not read—an allusion to the prophecy (Isaiah 29:11, 12) which, according to the apocrypha, was supposed to signify that Joseph was not

truly Mary's husband, though Joseph was believed to have been chosen by the miraculous signs of the blooming rod (cf. p. 199). All these apocryphal touches recurred in a portrayal of Joseph which was sometimes not too flattering, at least when compared with the later Western picture of a vigorous, virginal Joseph, the intimate cooperater in the redemptive work of Jesus with Mary.

Yet we must not conclude that St. Joseph was not venerated in the East. His nobility of character seems to have been recognized rather as that belonging to a patriarch of the Old Testament. Throughout, he received liturgical honors only by reason of his service to Jesus and Mary, never independently. In this connection he was venerated with sincere piety and high praise, and the official feast of the Greek Church paid him honor long before the Western Church came to do so.

The beginnings of the Feast of St. Joseph in the East are shrouded in obscurity. Hitherto, its origin had been placed at A.D. 800, on the supposition that its acrostic canon of divine service had been composed by Joseph Melodus, a poet-monk who died at Constantinople under the Patriarch Photius. The deduction on which this was based overstepped the bounds of logic since the canon's acrostic merely indicated that a certain Joseph was its author. When Fathers Delehaye, S.J., and Martinov, S.J., published the Constantinople and Graeco-slavic calendars of the saints, they supplied contrary evidence by showing that no feast of St. Joseph existed during the life of Photius. The first calendars to mention

it were of tenth-century composition, and had been compiled not at Constantinople but at the Palestinian monastery of St. Sabas. This monastery was apparently the cradle of the feast of St. Joseph in the East. Various liturgical books show that the feast gradually spread in the East from the year 1000 onward.

A special custom existed in the Greek Church of linking a mystery of the Redemption with its participants rather than honoring the respective saints themselves with an independent celebration. Thus, the feast of St. Joseph was actually celebrated as an extension of the festivities of Christmas, and was generally observed on the Sunday after Christmas. Originally, the Sunday before Christmas anticipated the liturgy of the Nativity by commemorating the "Holy Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Job," and in some localities, the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace. In succeeding years this became a general feast of "all those who have pleased God from the beginning, from Adam to Joseph, the spouse of the all-blessed mother of God, according to the genealogy which Luke the evangelist has set forth in its historical succession; and also of all prophets and prophetesses." This was called the Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

By an extension of these ideas the Sunday after Christmas came to be devoted to the two most outstanding patriarchs, King David and St. Joseph. Occasionally, in the spirit of the apocrypha, St. James, "the brother of the Lord," was associated with his

supposed father Joseph. Thus, Joseph's feast was not a separate celebration, as it later came to be in the West, but rather a prolongation of the solemnities of Christmas.

Judging from the date of origin of the feast, as set by the calendars of the saints, it is highly probable that the Joseph who composed its canon (a liturgical hymnlike poem) was a certain monk of Grottaferrata, the Greek monastery near Rome. Although we cannot be certain of this authorship, the conjecture that the canon was written at Grottaferrata is confirmed by a variety of internal evidence.⁴ While the canon had not always been used in connection with the feast, as numerous documents show, it became definitely associated with it after the sixteenth century when the Greek liturgical books were printed at Venice. From that time forward, this hymn was never omitted in the celebration of the feast.

It is this canon which contains the most sublime praise of St. Joseph to be found in any of the liturgical books of the Byzantine Church. Joseph, it says, as the father of Christ, shares with the Eternal Father the honor of His name and surpasses in so far the angels, being made to partake by such an honor in the secrets of the most exalted mystery of the Incarnation: "To Gabriel alone in Heaven and to thee alone, O highly praised and blessed Joseph, after the Virgin only was the all-unique and fearsome mystery confided which hurled back the lone corrupter and prince of darkness."

Joseph—to quote further the eulogies of this author—was “wholly sanctified ever since his childhood and therefore was a holy protector of the all-blessed one”; he was “preferred before all earth-born men to be espoused to Mary”; at his death “he went gloriously to his fathers as the greatest of all, held as the father of Him who shines out from the Father”; and finally in heaven he is “truly associated, equal in honor, with the angels, the prophets, the martyrs, and the wise apostles.”⁵

CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE

THE DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH
IN THE WESTERN CHURCH
BEFORE 1550

Inclusion of St. Joseph in the Martyrology

The first liturgical recognition of St. Joseph in the Western Church was his inclusion in the martyrology. This chapter in the marvelous growth of the devotion is not only important as recording the first public veneration accorded him in the West, but it also possesses an interesting element in the rather unusual process by which his name seems to have been slipped in with those of other saints.

Strictly speaking, a martyrology is a list of those who died for the Faith. Originally each locality had its own martyrology, for the widespread persecutions affected every portion of the Church. At the present day the Roman Martyrology is the revised compilation of confessors and virgins as well as martyrs, and when the divine office is chanted in choir, it is read at the hour of Prime.

Soon after the death of St. Jerome in 420, a cleverly forged martyrology appeared in Italy, bearing his name as its author. This document was apparently the work of the man who wrote the apocryphal *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, for the writer offered *Pseudo-Matthew* as Jerome's Latin translation of a gospel of St. Matthew. A fictitious interchange of letters prefaced both *Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Martyrology*, in which "Bishop Chromatus of Aquileia" and "Heliodorus of Altinum" entreated St. Jerome to compose two books. One of these was to be an authentic history of the life of Mary and the childhood of Jesus, in order to offset the heretical writings on that subject. The other was to be a calendar of all the saints and martyrs, to be read in the churches as a source of public edification.

Jerome accordingly was described as acceding to the request of the godly bishops. For the "gospel" which he offered, he allegedly cited a hitherto unknown manuscript of the apostle Matthew. The calendar of the saints was based, he said, on the history of Eusebius of Caesarea. Of course, the two

works were forgeries, although their undoubtedly orthodox tendencies spare them harsh condemnation. After all, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Hieronymite Martyrology* (as it came to be called) sprang up in an era when legends grew luxuriously and when no great censure was attached to such fabrications under an assumed name, provided they were orthodox and had the intention of edifying the faithful.

The *Hieronymite Martyrology*, unlike its fellow counterfeit, was not a wholly legendary work. Although it was interspersed with some fabulous tales, it was in general based on the lives of the true martyrs. The oldest copy of it about which we know was made at Auxerre in France between 592 and 599. At that period the original martyrology was being abridged but was soon to be supplemented with the names of other saints and holy monks.

Meanwhile the Western world was in the throes of the barbarian infiltration. Culture and knowledge were threatened with total obliteration. Certainly some such catastrophe would have befallen Europe had it not been for the heroic efforts of the Benedictine monks who in their secluded abbeys collected and copied old manuscripts and thus preserved for posterity the intellectual advances of previous centuries. Many of the abbots of these Benedictine monasteries must also be credited with fostering a deep love and veneration of our Lady which included sincere esteem for St. Joseph. Although scripture commentators in the monas-

teries preferred to adopt Augustine's and Jerome's thoughts as they stood, rather than develop them further, they consistently brought to the fore the facts of Joseph's virginity, dignity and unique sanctity. St. Bede the Venerable, Alcuin, Rabanus Maurus of Fulda, Paschasius Radbertus, Walafried Strabo, Remigius of Autun—these were the great names during the years that stretched from the era of Gregory the Great to the Dark Age of the tenth century. The writings of these men set the stage for the favorable introduction of St. Joseph into the martyrologies of many abbeys of Europe.

It is true that they failed to appreciate St. Augustine's explanation of the true marriage between Mary and Joseph. Augustine had based his theory on the Roman law, which placed the essence of marriage in the union of wills of husband and wife. These writers, however, knew only Teutonic law, which looked to the external consummation of marriage rather than its interior ratification. Consequently, although they believed that Joseph and Mary were truly husband and wife, they lacked the basic principles for enunciating the fact clearly.

Their esteem for Joseph was, however, unbounded. Walafried Strabo, abbot of Reichenau (from 838 to 849), linked Joseph with Mary and Jesus in a manner which early centuries had never dared to do. "The shepherds found Mary, Joseph, and the Child; through these three the world was healed."¹ Remigius of Autun (about 900) likewise made Joseph an intimate co-operator in the work

of our Redemption. "Joseph awoke from sleep and did as the angel commanded. By the same way that death entered, life returns, that is, through a virginal woman and an obedient man. Adam was created out of virginal earth, Christ was born of a virginal woman. Through the disobedience of Adam we all perished; through the value of Joseph's obedience we were all restored to our former state, for the great virtue of obedience is recommended to us in the words, 'He did as the angel commanded.'" ² These were the first occasions on which Joseph was pictured as a member of the earthly "trinity" whose head effected our salvation.

With incentive such as this to call St. Joseph to mind, the Benedictine monastery of Reichenau was among the first to introduce St. Joseph into the liturgy, and had earlier been thought to be the very first, as indicated by available manuscripts of the *Hieronymite Martyrology*. In two extant copies of martyrologies from Reichenau, written between 827 and 842, this commemoration is attached to March 19: "The fourteenth day of the Calends of April. At Bethlehem, [the commemoration] of St. Joseph, foster father of the Lord." This commemoration would indicate that March 19 was held to be the day of death of St. Joseph. Since earlier Reichenau manuscripts may have been lost, the date of this introduction can be set at ten or even twenty years before 827 as a possibility.

None the less, even Reichenau no longer seems to have been the first to mention St. Joseph. One

such possibility occurs in the Irish *Felire* (festival book or martyrology) of Oengus, which mentions Joseph thus on March 19: "Joseph, name that is noble, Jesu's pleasant fosterer." This Irish reference in its turn appears to have depended on an even more remote martyrology of the 700's, which at present offers *the first known independent commemoration of St. Joseph*. It stems from an unknown church in northern France or Belgium, and lists the Saint as "spouse of Mary."³ The date assigned is March 20.

The actual choice of March 19 as St. Joseph's day may have been made by mere coincidence and suggestion! In the first place, all the old *Hieronymite Martyrologies* made this simple commemoration for March 20: "The thirteenth day of the Calends of April. In Antioch, of St. Joseph." This was a reference to a primitive martyr named after the patriarch of the Old Testament; yet in a monastery recognizing the hitherto obscure virtue of St. Joseph, the name of Joseph might have immediately called attention to the need for mentioning the husband of Mary in the liturgy. Eventually, as the new St. Joseph's veneration on the previous day steadily grew, the name of the Eastern martyr actually did pass into obscurity, although it was retained in most martyrologies for several centuries. Even before the time of its omission, copyists of some manuscripts merged the two days by mistake, to such an extent that our St. Joseph was made out to be a martyr at Antioch, commemorated on March 19.

Even this confusion, however, was surpassed by the errors of other copyists who in misspelling and misplacing a name similar to Joseph paved the way for the commemoration as we know it. The earliest of these manuscripts mention a group of African martyrs on March 19: "In Africa, of Bassus, Lucellus, Fiscianus, Pomerus, Joserus, Appolonus, Saturninus, Bassus, Basilia, and seven others." Among these the name "Joserus" was bandied about by various copyists so that in later manuscripts it read "Jusserus," "Josenus," and finally "Josippus." Josippus was so highly suggestive of Josephus that erroneous punctuation and the new spelling seem to have broken up the series of African martyrs and to have isolated the name of Joseph. Anyone ignorant of the Africans could have seen here an allusion to the father of Jesus on earth; and the actual fact is that in the Reichenau martyrologies which commemorate St. Joseph on March 19, the "Joserus" of the African series is missing and is substituted at the head of the series as Joseph, the foster father of Jesus Christ.

In general, later manuscripts which speak of St. Joseph also omit mentioning Joserus. There is evidence, too, that the influence of the apocrypha was not lacking, for the *Protoevangel of James*, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* are the only sources to claim that Joseph lived at Bethlehem. In concluding this account of how Joseph came to be inserted in the martyrology, it might be well to emphasize that the steps in the appearance of Joseph's name for March

19 are not deduced as having probably or possibly occurred; rather, a whole series of manuscripts ranging from two centuries before to seven centuries after the change offers concrete evidence. Reichenau's influence on neighboring and daughter monasteries certainly contributed to the addition of St. Joseph's name to their martyrologies, for tenth- and eleventh-century manuscripts mention his name regularly. Of course, there was no question of a feast in his honor; merely the commemoration in the martyrology read at the hour of Prime when the monks were about to chant the divine office in choir.

At the end of the first thousand years of the Christian era, a more convenient martyrology by the French monk Usuard began to supplant the Hieronymite version. Usuard revised the calendar of the saints, offered extra biographical information about his subjects, and distributed saints' names equally on individual days. Unfortunately, Usuard did not possess the Hieronymite martyrologies which included St. Joseph, and therefore he omitted to mention the Saint on March 19. A hundred years later, about 1150 and thereafter, the growing popularity of St. Joseph led to the insertion of his name in Usuardine martyrologies.

In the early 1400's Joseph was advanced to first place among the saints enumerated on March 19, and through the efforts of John Gerson and his friends a eulogy was added to the commemoration in some martyrologies. For example, a Brussels

codex of the middle of the century reads thus: "In Bethlehem, the commemoration of St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ; this his adopted Son decorated him with twelve eminent marks of honor as Lord Peter d'Ailly, Bishop of Cambrai and later Cardinal, has recorded." Some succeeding martyrologies (as of 1490 and 1515) combined everything from the past and honored Joseph with a memorial of his life and death: "The espousal of the glorious Mary ever Virgin, mother of God, to Saint Joseph. In Bethlehem, the passing of the same blessed Joseph, spouse of the mother of God, who also merited to be worthily called the adoptive father of our Savior."

Medieval Devotion to St. Joseph

The two thousand years of the Christian era can roughly be divided into four distinct and equal periods as regards devotion to St. Joseph. In the first five hundred years Joseph was neglected because of the pressure of dogmatic issues; in the second, his veneration as an individual first appeared remotely and obscurely in the monasteries; in the third, the formal devotion began to appear, together with a feast in the liturgy. Finally, within the last four hundred years and particularly since 1870, Joseph has entered into his glory on earth. The basis for Joseph's present eminence in the life of the Church certainly begins in the Middle Ages.

Since it is difficult to present a conspectus of the many aspects of the devotion, we shall follow this plan: first, to present the course of its develop-

ment in selected theological literature; then in devotional works; and finally in popular veneration. All these three influences—theological and devotional writings, and popular veneration—gave the impetus for the appearance of a feast in the liturgy devoted exclusively to the honor of St. Joseph.

Medieval Theological Literature

The quotations already made from various medieval theologians in themselves constitute a sort of implicit historical survey of contemporary opinion concerning St. Joseph; hence, there seems no necessity here to call attention again to Rupert of Deutz, Hugh of St. Victor, Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, or St. Thomas; but some explicit reference should be made to the contribution of St. Bernard. This was the comparison between Joseph of Egypt and Joseph of Nazareth, a comparison which after Bernard's time became quite common.⁴ Although the Fathers of the Church had often shown how the Joseph of the Old Testament prefigured Jesus our Savior, they had rarely drawn the apt analogy between the virtues and vocation of the ancient patriarch and those of the young husband of Mary. Bernard's exposition of Joseph's nobility (although still referring to Joseph as aged) is so choice that the Church has selected it to serve as readings of the Second Nocturn of the March 19 feast of St. Joseph.

Bernard is also the author of the warmly affectionate antiphon which the Church recommends to priests as a preparation for Mass: "O fortunate man, blessed Joseph, to whom it was given to see

the God whom many kings yearned to see and did not see, to hear the God whom many kings yearned to hear and did not hear; not only to see and hear, but to carry, to kiss, to clothe and protect Him!"⁵

One of the outstanding recent discoveries in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph concerns the writings of the Franciscan school, dependent ultimately on the thought of St. Bonaventure (*1274). Manuscript studies made by Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M., prove a direct literary development and dependence from St. Bonaventure through Peter John Olivi, Ubertine of Casale, and Bartholomew of Pisa to Bernardine of Siena (*1444.)⁶ Abbé Dusserre had already traced the classic sermon of Bernardine to Ubertine and Bartholomew; it remained for Fr. Ephrem to complete the chain of evidence to Peter John Olivi, and thence to Bonaventure.⁷

Bonaventure speaks of St. Joseph in his *Commentary on St. Luke*, his *Commentary on the Sentences*, and in several sermons. In his opinion, Mary and Joseph were united in the purest and most perfect of all unions. All that occurred was accomplished by the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. The marriage was most fitting on the grounds of relationship within the tribe of Juda, of Joseph's loyalty and faithfulness in serving Mary, and of the poverty of Joseph as carpenter. The genuinity of this virginal union must be upheld at all costs, since all the evidence proves it to be a true marriage of absolute purity and perfection. Throughout, Bonaventure speaks of Joseph in terms of great praise,

as for example when proposing him as the perfect exemplar of devotion to Jesus and Mary.⁸ This particularly appears in a sermon written about 1270; "had St. Bonaventure never pronounced naught but this sermon, in which he reveals the mystery of the interior life of Joseph and where he proposes Joseph solemnly as the model of the perfect life in Jesus and in Mary, he would have merited to be placed in the very first rank of the great devotees of St. Joseph."⁹

Peter John Olivi (*1298) was a disciple of St. Bonaventure at Paris from 1266 onward. Thus it was that he absorbed the thinking of the school of thought that formed around his master. "He is particularly celebrated for his complete fidelity to the message of Assisi. Nothing is more dangerous in a religious order than to preach the return to the primitive ideal or a reform. St. John of the Cross in his dungeon at Toledo felt this bitter experience. His confreres at Paris censured him. . . . and every attempt was made to have him condemned at the Council of Vienne and under John XXII in these darkest hours of Franciscan history."¹⁰ This eclipse and disgrace of Peter Olivi may well have been a prominent reason why his writings in honor of St. Joseph were not attributed to him even by St. Bernardine of Siena, who adopted them often word for word. The following excerpt from Bernardine's *Sermon on St. Joseph* is literally the work of Peter Olivi; it was used as a Lesson in the Second Nocturn of the first day within the octave of the former Solemnity of St. Joseph:

“If, therefore, the entire holy Church is in debt to the Virgin Mother because through her she was made worthy to receive Christ, after Mary she owes him gratitude and singular veneration. For he is the key of the Old Testament, in whom the dignity of the patriarchs and prophets attains its promised fruit. Moreover, he alone possessed bodily what the divine condescension had promised to them. There can be no doubt that in heaven Christ did not deny Joseph that familiarity, reverence, and exalted dignity which He tendered him as a son to his father while He lived among men. He rather increased and perfected it.”¹¹ This can serve as an example of the powerful influence Olivi exerted on his successors, and through them, on all subsequent writings concerning St. Joseph. Longpré holds that a manuscript of an otherwise unknown Franciscan, Peter de Trabibus, is actually the work of Olivi as a *Commentary on the Sentences*; it is absolutely faithful to the philosophical and theological doctrine of Olivi, including that on St. Joseph.

None the less, Olivi was not the direct channel through which this material was channeled to the faithful. His disciple and brilliant apologist, Ubertine of Casale, wrote *The Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus* in 1305, which had relatively wide circulation in the spiritual centers of Europe. Likewise, Peter Olivi influenced, although less directly, John of San Gemignano, O.F.M., who is now accepted as the author of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. This book powerfully determined much of medieval

European piety, as we shall note in a later section on popular devotional literature. It had wrongly been ascribed to Bonaventure.

Abbé Dusserre has given numerous examples to show how Bernardine of Siena followed Ubertine of Casale and still another Franciscan, Bartholomew of Pisa (*1410), who in their turn, as we have noted, were direct followers of Olivi. The effects of this Franciscan school stemming from Bonaventure do not stop with them; we must still mention Fra Eximic, O.F.M., bishop of Perpignan (*1408), whose immense *Life of Christ* still exists in manuscript form in Spanish and French. Fra Eximic is partially independent and original, yet he, too, often follows Ubertine. In the words of Longpré, "It is imprudent to study John Gerson without comparing him to his contemporary Fra Eximic. The immense work still remains to be done of writing a critical edition of texts and of theological studies in order to situate Peter Olivi and his school definitively within the history of the theology . . . of St. Joseph."¹²

The writings of all of these Franciscans may well be seen in their summit in the work of St. Bernardine of Siena (*1444) to which we have already alluded: the *Sermon on St. Joseph*. The words of Bernardine vie with those of St. Augustine and of St. Bernard in their warm praise of St. Joseph; but they now have double significance when viewed against the background of our knowledge that they

are at least the general thought and usually even the exact wording of Olivi, Ubertine, or Bartholomew.

For Bernardine, there is the usual logical process. Joseph was truly the husband of Mary, therefore he possessed unique holiness and privileges. Bernardine assumed the corporal resurrection and assumption of St. Joseph, in the text we have already quoted on page 426. We must not think that his sermon on St. Joseph was an isolated discourse, delivered once and then set aside in recorded form; rather, it was one of a series of outlines which he followed and which other preachers copied in their sermons among the people. Bernardine's was therefore a major influence in stimulating devotion to the Saint in the parts of Italy where he carried on his missionary work.

With the opening of the fifteenth century, there appeared one of the greatest proponents of the devotion to St. Joseph, John Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris. We shall meet Gerson later in connection with his strenuous efforts to inaugurate a feast of St. Joseph; for the present, let us limit ourselves to a brief consideration of the writings he produced in order to stimulate the veneration of his beloved Saint.

Gerson composed *Considerations on St. Joseph, Josephina* (a Latin poem celebrating the virtues and dignity of the Saint), and a special *Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary* which he delivered to the Fathers of the Council of

Constance on September 8, 1416. In this sermon Gerson urged the Council to invoke Joseph's intercession officially and to institute a feast in his honor in order to obtain unity in the Church, which was then suffering from the disastrous and deplorable Western Schism.

The chancellor's fundamental principle was the fact that Joseph was the true husband of the Mother of God.¹³ From this basic premise all the conclusions as to Joseph's dignity and holiness followed naturally. God in His providence directly made the choice of St. Joseph; therefore, the Saint was endowed with all the privileges and virtues that belonged to his office.

In the sermon at Constance, Gerson justified his line of reasoning. "From these premises," he said, "we can answer the question why Holy Scripture does not relate more of the praise, dignity, prerogatives, virtues, deeds, and behavior of Mary as well as of Joseph, for the whole world would not be able to contain the books written on the subject. On the basis of these premises a devout meditative soul discovers enough to be inspired to praise Mary and Joseph in every way by justly ascribing to them . . . all the glory that exists in other creatures, the angels included."

Gerson's logic may have been too premature in "venturing to affirm that Joseph like Mary was exalted above the angelic choirs in grace and glory," but to be fair to the chancellor we must carefully note the value he placed on his conjectures. He in no

wise wished to act contrary to the authoritative teaching of the Church, for, his sermon continues, "Our line of reasoning will follow the saintly and devout Fathers, who for the edification of pious souls have made many statements about holy persons and divine things which, as they well knew, might be held with the probability of conjecture rather than the firmness of faith. Accordingly, I should like most of what I say to be understood thus: it is not to be adduced as what really occurred, but rather as what can be accepted in pious faith without my voicing a presumptuous avowal or prejudicing the opinions of the Fathers."

Gerson held, for instance, that Joseph was sanctified in his mother's womb by a baptism of desire. This was a purely speculative claim based on Joseph's future intimacy with the source of holiness and its most perfect human imitation. Similarly he held that Joseph was likewise freed from concupiscence by reason of his liberation from original sin; his virginity was a logical consequence. The chancellor bluntly rejected the apocryphal picture of an old, feeble St. Joseph with an array of arguments of which we have already seen the best in an earlier chapter of this book.

In the *Considerations* as well as in his great sermon Gerson lingered over the affectionate family life that existed in the holy home at Nazareth. He showed that as a result of the loving intimacy Joseph possessed there, the Saint became an almost omnipotent intercessor in heaven. "Since grace and glory

do not destroy human nature but raise and perfect it, in pious devotion we may venture the following: if through a certain natural bond an obligation of the Son arises toward His mother, and likewise of the mother toward her spouse, and of both—the Son and the mother—toward their most loyal, vigilant, and energetic guardian and supporter, Joseph, and if the latter as head of Mary possessed a certain authority, rule, dominion, and power over Mary just as she in her turn possessed this over her son Jesus because of the right of natural motherhood, how great, then, must be this just Joseph in present glory and in heaven since he was so excellent and great here in poverty and on earth!”

Gerson's petitioning the Council of Constance, begging for help from St. Joseph in order to unify the disrupted Church, was the first obscure reference to one of the Saint's greatest titles today. The chancellor also proposed St. Joseph as the exemplar and special patron of all Christian families by reason of his office as head of the Holy Family. In addition, Joseph was the model of workmen because of his industrious, prayerful life; and finally, he was to be specially venerated by the nobility and by rulers in view of his descent from the royal family of David.

Gerson's concept of the part which the Saint should play in the life of the Church is strikingly similar to the role of St. Joseph as it is officially recognized in the Church today. Gerson, however, did not live to see his cherished dreams realized,

although one excellent result of his sermons at Constance was achieved immediately. In a spirit of emulation Cardinal Peter d'Ailly, a close friend and former teacher of Gerson, wrote an inspiring tractate on the twelve prerogatives of St. Joseph.¹⁴ The reputation of d'Ailly's book far surpassed that of Gerson's writings. Extracts from the work were included in many of the offices of various local feasts of St. Joseph, so that it can be said in all truth that Peter d'Ailly indirectly influenced the liturgy of the Church's feast of St. Joseph. Although d'Ailly relied solely on the gospels and did not even enter on the novel advanced ideas of his friend, his purpose was the same as that of Gerson, namely, to instigate the celebration of a special feast in Joseph's honor. According to his tractate the twelve special honors were the following: Joseph's royal ancestry, his blood relationship to Mary and Jesus (all three members of the Holy Family were of the house of David), his true marriage to Mary, his virginity, his call to the service of Mary and Jesus, his initiation into divine mysteries, his justice through faith, his naming of the Christ-child, his presence at the great mysteries of our Faith, his instruction by the new prophets, Simeon and Anna, his intimacy with Mary and Jesus, and, finally, Christ's obedience to him.

In the early sixteenth century the amount of literature on St. Joseph increased amazingly. Of these many productions we can mention here only the best—one of the first scholarly books devoted exclusively to the study of the life, death, and heaven-

ly glory of St. Joseph. This was the *Summa of the Gifts of St. Joseph*, which the Milanese Dominican Isidor de Isolani published in 1522. In this work Isidor aimed to assemble all the scattered data concerning St. Joseph and to fuse these into a "Summa" or compendium in imitation of the great *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Isidor set for himself strict standards. In his preface to the *Summa* he stated that "imaginary day-dreams, amusing fables, and what our emotions tell us amid the cajoling consent of our thought and without the consent of reason" were all to be excluded from his work. His book was probably the first comprehensive, scholarly, and theological estimate of all that had been hitherto said of St. Joseph. It was divided into four sections. The first of these sections treated of Joseph's life before his marriage; the second dealt with Joseph's marriage and with related questions; the third with all the blessings of the Old and New Testament to be fulfilled or already fulfilled in the Saint in a preeminent manner; and the fourth with Joseph's glory in eternity. Isidor's sources were Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and his own devout meditations, although he also used doctrines which had first been proposed by Gerson and Bernardine of Siena. The most striking feature of this *Summa* was the author's complete confidence that the devotion to St. Joseph would spread and would glorify the Saint far and wide. Isidor speaks in some passages like a prophet. "For the Holy Spirit will not rest from inciting the hearts of

the faithful until the entire kingdom of the Church Militant will heap new honors on godly Joseph and will erect monasteries, churches, and altars in his honor." "For the honor of His name God has chosen St. Joseph as head and special patron of the kingdom of the Church Militant. Before the day of judgment it must happen that all peoples know, honor, and adore the name of the Lord and the great gifts of God which He Himself has placed in St. Joseph and which He has left almost in obscurity throughout a long period [for definite providential reasons, Isidor adds elsewhere]. For this cause the name of St. Joseph will overflow with the gifts of all goods of the earth. Temples will be built in his honor; the people will celebrate feasts and offer vows to him, and he must fulfill these. The Lord will open the ears of the understanding, and great men will search out the inner gifts of God that are hidden in St. Joseph, and they will find an exceedingly precious treasure such as was never found in the fathers of the Old Testament. . . . The people who call on St. Joseph shall be repaid by him with interest from heaven while he himself in the majesty of his glory partakes of no mortal interest. His name shall be listed in the calendars of the saints, and no longer at the end but at the beginning. Then shall there be celebrated a supreme and venerable feast for him. At the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the vicar of Christ on earth will command that the feast of the adoptive father of Christ, the spouse of the Queen of Heaven, of this exceedingly holy man, will be celebrated in all parts

of the kingdom of the Church Militant. Thus, he who is over all in heaven will no longer be disregarded on earth.”¹⁵ And this was written in 1522!

Isidor's book marked a high point in the preliminary growth of the devotion to St. Joseph. Immediately after his time the Council of Trent instituted that reform in the liturgy and in the devotional literature of the Church which put the seal of the Church's official encouragement on public veneration of our Lady's spouse. In one respect it is disappointing to page through the acts of the Council of Trent without finding a single mention of St. Joseph; but since the Council was preoccupied with most urgent dogmatic and disciplinary matters, the reasons for this omission can easily be understood. As a matter of fact, Trent's great importance in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph lay in its decision to reform the breviary according to the customs of the Roman church. Thereby the devotion was officially introduced throughout the entire Catholic Church.

Popular and Devotional Literature

Paralleling all this literature of the theological schools and of the learned writers and preachers, there was another type of literature that grew up and attained tremendous popularity among the common folk. This was the series of lives of Mary in poetry and in prose that flourished for hundreds of years after the millennium. These innumerable tales exercised profound influence in stimulating devo-

tion to St. Joseph, for with the veneration of our Lady and the story of her life, the veneration of her spouse eventually went hand in hand.

Joseph was not thus raised to a pinnacle of honor at once. Just as the course of the theological literature showed a deeper and deeper insight into the true dignity of the Saint as the centuries passed, so did the portrayal of St. Joseph in the medieval lives of Mary and Jesus grow from that of the apocryphal aged widower into a picture of the virginal Saint. The ordinary people were undisturbed by the strife in the schools, where Joseph's most magnificent title lay in dispute. More interested in the outward circumstances of the career of Mary and Joseph, the people unhesitatingly fell back on the apocrypha in order to fill in the gospel story where it was too meager to satisfy their pious curiosity. The medieval common folk were deeply pious, and perhaps we can say that they were almost equally credulous. With a sort of childlike naiveté, their rich emotional life discerned poetical beauty and charm in the ancient apocryphal tales. Uncritically, they saw no reason to disbelieve the traditional legends, especially since the names of great saints of former ages recommended them (although spuriously). As one author of a poetic presentation of the legends argued, Jesus *could* have worked all the miracles attributed to Him in the apocrypha; therefore, why not believe them?

It is very important to understand this attitude of the medievals. We must not look down super-

ciliously on their indiscriminate acceptance of every pious legend, no matter how erroneous it might be historically. We should rather recognize their unshakable faith in the goodness and mercy of God, and their ardent love for Jesus and Mary and Joseph and for every servant of the mysteries of our Redemption.

With the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* set into Latin verse by Hroswitha, this apocryphal work now began its climb into a prominent place in medieval tradition. Combined with the *Protoevangel of James* and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, it subsequently became the source for all similar medieval poems. We find the traces of it also in the *Book of the Infancy of the Savior*, which in some manuscripts was added to *Pseudo-Matthew* as a supplement taken from the *Gospel of Thomas*.

By the twelfth century the influence of all these apocrypha had become almost limitless with the common folk. A French priest, Herman of Valenciennes, composed a popular poetic *Life of Our Lady*, consisting of seven thousand verses that were based on Holy Scripture and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*. Maistre Wace in 1150 followed with a similar work. Even Robert de Borron's French romance of the Holy Grail (about 1160) included apocryphal details of the life of Mary. In 1172 the Bavarian priest Wernher issued his life of Mary as drawn from *Pseudo-Matthew*.

This series of poems still continued in full force throughout the thirteenth century. On each occasion that a new biography of Mary or Jesus

was composed, the original apocryphal material was slightly improved upon. Here and there bizarre miracles might be omitted or their bluntness softened, and in general, the old tradition invested with new poetic and romantic charm. As an example, such interesting embellishment regarding the legends of St. Joseph can be noted in de Coinsy's French *Life of Our Lady* and *Life of Our Savior and His Childhood*.

In the former poem, according to the summary made by Seitz, "Mary receives the tidings of the Incarnation in the Temple when she is fourteen years old. In order to conceal her secret and to avoid punishment, she must be married; whereupon God announces the fact by a voice from heaven, and Mary gladly acquiesces. The high priest summons all unmarried men of the house of David to the Temple. Joseph is an old, white-bearded man of two hundred years. Leaning on his cane, he comes with the men solely out of obedience to the priest's command and inspired by the one wish, that he may see the pure and beautiful virgin from afar. Fatigued, he sits on a low pillar in the court, where he is laughed at by the young suitors, scorned by the temple servants, and consequently shrinks back into a corner. When the priest wishes to test the young men's suitability, God sends an angel who specifies as the sign of election the well-known miracles of the blooming staff and the dove. On hearing this, the youths hasten to procure staffs as green as possible but contemptuously give Joseph a withered switch. Joseph's is the one that blooms.

“During the trip to Bethlehem Joseph tells his spouse to rest on a stone outside the city while he enters to seek shelter. Because of the visitors there is no room, and in troubled spirit he returns to Mary. Now both of them go together into Bethlehem to see whether or not they can find some persons who for God’s sake would harbor them. On the road they meet the daughter of a rich man, Anasthasia by name.¹⁶ They ask her for a corner to shelter them since the day is now past. The maiden accompanies the pilgrims to her father, who after long delay accepts them and then lovingly cares for them. While he sends them food, the good-hearted damsel would gladly help prepare a suitable bed except that she has no hands. As the time of the Nativity approaches during the night, three golden lamps with three huge candlesticks appear from heaven and fill the room with light. Joseph is completely ravished with the sight. The newly-born Savior gives back her hands to His loving hostess, who serves Him now with the greatest happiness and places Him in the crib.”¹⁷ Our much-mentioned friend, Pseudo-Matthew, would have difficulty in recognizing his own pious fabrication in this variation on the original!

In England a grandiose Northumbrian poem of 30,000 verses appeared in the early 1300’s, based on Scripture, Pseudo-Matthew, and Maistre Wace. At the same period, in Germany, Conrad of Fussesbrun wrote *The Childhood of Jesus*. His source, as usual, was the apocrypha.

Most interesting is Conrad's treatment of the tale of the robbers, first spun out many centuries earlier in the old *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of Our Savior*. Conrad's version, as condensed by Seitz, can thus be briefly given: "Twelve robbers lie in wait for the Holy Family in the hope of obtaining rich loot. Disappointed by the victims' poverty, the robber to whom the captives are allotted is about to sell Mary into slavery and to kill the aged Joseph when a look from the sweet Child softens his heart and induces him to receive the trio as his guests. At home his wife prepares a bath for the Child, the water of which heals her leprous son. Meanwhile a sumptuous banquet is set before Joseph and Mary in the most beautiful part of the garden, and on the following day the robber leads his guests by a safe route. While they are living in Egypt, their former robber host is mortally wounded in a surprise attack but is immediately healed by the foam from the Christ-child's bath, which his wife had preserved. Returning from Egypt, Joseph visits him anew and is again greeted hospitably and guided toward home. This man (or his healed son) is the good thief who later died on the cross with Jesus."¹⁸ Such in general is the robber's tale as it was to appear in one or more variations for several centuries to come.

The content of the poetic lives of Mary did not however reach the common people as merely speculative tales. It appeared also in two of the most influential devotional works ever written—the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, falsely ascribed to

St. Bonaventure (but written, we now know, by John of San Gemignano, O.F.M.), and the *Life of Jesus Christ Our Redeemer*, by Ludolph the Carthusian of Saxony. Ludolph modeled his biography on the *Meditations* and, like the author of the *Meditations*, borrowed from apocryphal tradition wherever the Gospel story seemed too sketchy to suit him. Both of these devotional books manifested an exalted concept of St. Joseph. Their avowed goal was to inflame the hearts of their readers with love for Jesus and His mother and His saints; the sympathy they sought to arouse led them to portray Joseph in a most affectionate and worthy fashion. For example, in Chapter Seven of the *Meditations*, "How Joseph Wished to Dismiss Mary and How God Permits His Own to Suffer Tribulation," Joseph's joy at the angel's message is described in these words: "He asked her about the miraculous conception of the Son of God, and our Lady related it to him very carefully. He became joyful because of his blessed spouse and loved her with a chaste love more than we can say. Loyal-ly he cared for her, and our Lady lived with him trustfully, and both lived in happiness despite dire poverty." Both Pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolph helped perpetuate the traditional "old" St. Joseph. On the flight into Egypt, they said, Mary suffered because she was so young, but Joseph suffered even more because he was so old. Pseudo-Bonaventure invented a charming story which proved to be a treasure house of subject matter for artists. He wrote that after Mary's Purification the Holy Fami-

ly returned to Nazareth by way of the district where Elizabeth lived. They tarried there for some while, and John the Baptist met Jesus face to face. "When they came to her, they rejoiced greatly, especially because of the children. The boys, too, were happy with each other, and John behaved with the fullest respect for Jesus since he was a youth of discernment."

Almost contemporaneously with Ludolph, Simon of Casia composed a devotional life of Jesus based mainly on Holy Scripture. His comments on Joseph's justice show how St. Joseph was being presented to the people as the noble man he actually was. "He is just according to the law, just according to his good will, just according to his good deeds; and if we were to have nothing else to bear witness to his justice, it would be more than enough for us to know that he, himself a virgin, was chosen as spouse of the Virgin Mother and as the foster father of Christ." ¹⁹

There were also the two mystics, St. Gertrude of Helfta and St. Bridget of Sweden, who supported the poetic biographies of Mary in their praise of St. Joseph. In one of St. Gertrude's visions, "at the name of St. Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mother, all the saints made a profound inclination to him, testifying by the serenity and sweetness of their looks that they rejoiced with him for his exalted dignity." ²⁰ Bridget offered the following as Mary's praise of her spouse: "Joseph served me in such a way that never did a frivolous nor sullen nor angry word come from his mouth. For he was very patient

in poverty, careful in work, very meek toward scoffers, very docile in my service, my very diligent defender against those who wished to minimize my virginity, a wholly loyal witness of the miracles of God. He was so dead to the world and the flesh that he cared for nought but the heavenly. He believed so much in the promises of God that he continually used to say, 'O that I might live and see the will of God fulfilled.' He came into the society and councils of men very seldom because his whole longing was directed toward obeying God's will. This is why his glory is now so great." ²¹ Incidentally, it should be noted here that these are only private revelations. There is no obligation to believe them. They did, of course, wonderfully inspire reverence and love for our Lady and for St. Joseph, as may be judged from the above descriptions.

Such was the general impression given of St. Joseph in the popular and devotional literature of the period. But a great change now took place. The series of poetic lives of Mary became, in a manner, standardized, adhering more or less to definite models. The apocryphal legends, much revised by this time, were no longer decked with new devices. The poem which served as the exemplar in which all tradition was crystallized—at least in the German lands—was the *Rhythmic Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Savior*. Written by a German poet of the early thirteenth century, this life of Mary not only utilized the gospels, the original apocrypha, and their recently added folk tales, but also claimed to have drawn much of its material from writers of

the Greek Church, such as Ignatius Martyr and John Damascene. It was the last major development of the medieval legends of St. Joseph, incorporating all sorts of fables "without any great pains on the part of the compiler to explain away the contradictions that thereby arose."²² Because of its importance, however, we must note its contents with care, especially its stress on Joseph's virginity. It further provides an excellent example of the average medieval legend of St. Joseph.

We shall avail ourselves here of Seitz's analysis. "The espousal," he writes, "is described in full detail. In the temple Mary was universally beloved by local citizens as well as by strangers, and when the priests ordered all mature temple virgins to be married according to the popular custom, numerous youths wished to wed the attractive maiden. Rich offers were made to gain her favor, while the priests themselves supported the suitors. Yet Mary hesitated, for she had vowed herself to eternal virginity, and with inspired words she praised the beauty of her heavenly spouse. Astonished at this, the Jews took counsel as to what they should do in regard to the virgin. Since they had to honor her vow, an ancient of the assembly proposed a three-day fast in order to learn God's will in the matter. On the third day a loud voice, heard by everyone, filled the temple. It ordered all unmarried men of the tribe of Juda to assemble, each with a staff which the high priest was to carry into the sanctuary. The rod that would burst into blossom and upon which the Holy Spirit would descend in the form of a dove

was to indicate the chosen man. All joyfully assembled, yet the hoped-for signs were not given, despite three days of expectation. Again there was ardent prayer, when suddenly, a voice from heaven announced that the chosen man was absent, but that he could be found in Bethlehem and that his name was Joseph.

“At this point a rather long eulogy of St. Joseph (verses 1166-1230) was inserted in which all his virtues were enumerated and his meekness and chastity especially lauded.

“At the angel’s behest Joseph was summoned, and immediately upon his entrance into the temple the staff in his hand began to bloom. When he wished to hand it to the high priest, the Holy Spirit descended on it as prophesied. Full of wonder, all the people offered congratulations, and the priests pressed him to marry the virgin. But Joseph, remembering his vow of perpetual virginity, hesitated. Moreover, he did not deem it fitting that he should defile so holy a virgin and that he, who was advanced in years, should be bound to a maid so charming. The urgings of the priests did not cease. Full of fervor, Joseph prayed for the protection of his chastity and that of Mary. Thereupon God sent an angel who encouraged him to accept Mary, for she was a woman who wished to live continently like himself and was entrusted to him merely that her purity might be guarded. The same vision was given Mary. . . .

“The espousal was celebrated at once, but the marriage was postponed for three months. Meanwhile Mary was sent with seven virgins to her father’s house in Nazareth while Joseph returned to Bethlehem. At Nazareth Mary received the double greeting of the angel—at the brook and within her house—and then visited her cousin Elizabeth. When Joseph met Mary, he found his bride pregnant and was exceedingly frightened. He could not believe in her guilt because he well knew her holiness. Consequently, he took care not to manifest his grief to her and considered fleeing secretly, but his state of soul was not hidden from Mary. Accompanied by her seven virgins she narrated the angel’s visit and amid the assenting voices of her friends assured Joseph of her perpetual chastity. Nonetheless, Joseph found no peace until an angel appeared to him and brought consolation. Thereupon he begged pardon of his bride and served her with joy.

“At the wish of Mary’s parents Joseph sold his house in Bethlehem and settled down in Nazareth. As the time of the Savior’s Nativity approached, he traveled to Bethlehem with Mary for the census. Mary rode on an ass, and Joseph drove an ox with him to be sold to pay expenses. When the holy couple approached Bethlehem, an angel stopped them. Mary entered a neighboring cave where Joseph constructed a manger for the animals as best he could. Noticing that the time for the Nativity was at hand, he hastened into the city to procure midwives, and in the meantime Mary gave birth amid the ministrations of an angel. Upon his return Joseph

respectfully adored the Child. Being in an ecstasy of joy that he had been selected for the divine service, he glorified God in a melodious song of praise of the promised Redeemer in whom all figures of the Old Testament were fulfilled. The usual adjuncts of the scene at the crib were not lacking here; there were the two midwives who extolled Mary's virginity, the adoration by the ox and ass—both paying homage on bended knee—and the miraculous signs that spread the good tidings throughout the entire world. From this point the life of Mary follows the gospels in relating the events at the Nativity.

“Joseph, like Jesus and Mary, was richly rewarded by the three Oriental kings. Then he was called aside and asked about the happenings of the previous night, all of which information he generously gave. Next occurred the Purification in the temple and the flight into Egypt, which was made after Christ's first year. The whole household accompanied the Holy Family—two oxen, two asses, three men-servants, and one maid. The trip and the events of Christ's childhood were described with all the coloring found in *Pseudo-Matthew* and the prolific versions of the *Book of the Infancy of the Savior*. There is one new tale: upon his arrival Joseph had to give the Egyptians exact information about his family and his flight. Likewise, at his departure he admonished the citizens (who were reluctant to see him depart), telling them of the foolishness of idolatry and exhorting them to adore the one true God. Here as previously with the Magi, he played the role

of the first apostle of the Lord—a reflection that often occurs. During the seven-year exile Joseph earned his livelihood as a carpenter while Mary wove byssus and purple and thus contributed to the support of the Divine Child.”²³ Such is the charming tale of the *Rhythmic Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Savior*—the last form of the legends of St. Joseph.

As the Middle Ages coursed on, both theological and devotional literature were moving in the same direction: toward the further glorification of St. Joseph and the revealing of his hidden greatness. If we were erroneously to think that the arguments of the scholars did not ultimately and indirectly reach the common folk in some form or other, we need merely consult the poem just summarized to find a very enlightening example. There it is stated that Mary and Joseph did not consent to be married until each knew by the revelation of an angel that the other wished to preserve virginity. This passage represented the author's attempt to explain a doctrine which just then had been decided by the Scholastic theologians, namely, that Mary and Joseph could not give a true consent to marriage unless each was aware of the virginal intentions of the other.

It would likewise be erroneous to think that most of the medieval faithful remained ignorant of the lives of Jesus and Mary and Joseph because of the low percentage of literacy. There were other channels of information. There were always the Miracle and Morality Plays which grew up out of the poetic legends we have noted and out of the narra-

tives of Holy Scripture; and there were the art and sculpture and architecture of the age, all of which preached their sermons and told their stories in pictures and dramatization and richly carved stone. Finally, there were the strong traditions of the day which took the content of the writings and handed it on to all the folk by word of mouth.

The Miracle Plays

St. Joseph became a familiar figure to the medieval folk in the many Miracle Plays wherein he was portrayed. Originally, the Miracle Plays of the tenth and eleventh centuries were used to supplement the Christmas liturgy of the Church so that the appealing Christmas story might be presented to learned and ignorant alike. Soon other scenes were added to the Christmas scene—the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Coming of the Magi, and the Slaughter of the Innocents. These were at first produced in Latin as part of the liturgical service, but gradually the custom grew to present them outside the churches as secular representations. In the final stages of their development many of the plays were completely divorced from the purely religious element, so that the sacred mysteries of the gospels were used merely as occasions for buffoonery.

The Miracle Plays were actually no more than sections of Holy Scripture and the apocryphal legends in dramatized form. We can easily understand their characterization of St. Joseph if we keep in

mind the picture of St. Joseph that was drawn in the poetic legends. Moreover, because the Plays dipped into the legends in order to complement the gospel story, they underwent a course of development which in general paralleled the development of the legends. In the beginning St. Joseph is no more than an incidental character; later he is more correctly portrayed as Mary's intimate. For instance, the eleventh-century "Order of Rachel" from Freising, Germany, presents Joseph merely as a passive spectator. He does, however, awaken Mary for the flight into Egypt, reminding her of Isaiah's prophecy that the gods of Egypt will be demolished when Jesus enters the land. This is a dim hint that the apocrypha were used as source material even at this early date.

In the Christmas Plays of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Joseph appears in respectable clothing and is delineated as an old man with a long, white beard. His role still remains that of the silent spectator at the birth of Christ. Nevertheless, it was at this time that alterations began to set in, although the original forms could still be recognized. The sacred gravity and pious simplicity of the Plays were replaced with jollier moods, and Joseph no longer played a lethargic role but now became an active, speaking character. The close liaison with the apocrypha here is well evidenced by the fact that where the legends of the apocrypha were of minor importance—as in Spain and Italy—Joseph was not transformed into this more active role, as he was in France, England, and the German countries.

A novel incident in one of the French productions of the fourteenth century represents the hard-hearted innkeeper as refusing to give Joseph fire-brands unless he carry them away in the folds of his cloak. When the cloak miraculously remains intact, the innkeeper abjectly begs forgiveness.

In England there were three general types of Miracle Plays, all very much influenced by the apocrypha. The oldest of these, named after the Towneley family, contained 32 scenes; the Coventry group had 43, and the Chester Plays, 25. Their quality was so excellent that even kings patronized them. In them we repeatedly encounter the tales of the apocrypha. For example, Joseph is dramatized as a fatigued, senile character, too old to stand erect. Miracles occur at the espousal in order to show God's choice. Joseph and Mary also drink the "water of ordeal of the Lord" to prove their innocence, and Joseph brings midwives to Mary in the stable at Bethlehem.

With the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Joseph was made a droll and often coarse figure in the Miracle Plays of Germany. Particularly in the Christmas scene he served as Mary's artless though honest servant. When brawls broke out among the characters (as, for instance, between the innkeeper and his wife), Joseph was supposed to separate and pacify them. Seitz makes this terse comment, "The elements of the Christmas play offered many occasions for dramatic life and comic coloring, but the dramatizations handed down to us bring forward

this humorous side not merely as an incidental but as a deliberate feature. The development was almost always at the expense of the character of Joseph, and was inclined to strong, often coarse, realism.”²⁴

In an Erlau Mystery, “Joseph was full of jolly mirth throughout, and on every occasion was busy drinking. His chief activity consisted in a wholesale sharing of his ‘good wine’ with everyone.” In a Hessian Christmas play of the late 1400’s, “Joseph had the same craving for drink. In the Flight he attempted to barter Mary’s veil and his own hat for beer, and concluded with this invitation to the audience, ‘Nu voluff und volge mir—wir woln ge-en zu dem guden bier’ ”²⁵ . . . “Hurry now and follow me, we’ll go where good beer be!” Fortunately, the rest of this play did not contain any more of such coarse burlesque. Fortunately, too, in the history of all the medieval Miracle Plays the vulgar element did not appear until in the late productions. In general the plays were fairly accurate expressions of the simple, honest piety of the common folk.

The Miracle Plays were a most potent means in bringing the legends of St. Joseph to the people. Through them the poetic versions of the life of Mary reached every class of medieval society and called attention to the part which our Lady’s spouse played at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, and in Egypt.

Popular Veneration of St. Joseph

With the increasing amount of attention St. Joseph received in theological and devotional litera-

ture it is logical to suppose that the call to honor him found a sympathetic response among the faithful. Testimonies of this veneration are, however, not easy to locate. Such veneration of its very nature does not leave behind enduring records since its manifestations are spontaneous and ephemeral. At present our only evidence is the reverence accorded Joseph's "relics," the foundation of several brotherhoods in his honor, and the fact that the prayer books of the faithful included several prayers addressed specifically to him. All things considered, devotion to St. Joseph was yet far from being universally accepted and practiced. It was still maturing in this period before the Council of Trent, and we cannot expect too much documentary evidence to be extant now after a period of from four to seven hundred years. As to the relics of the Saint, it is not unreasonable to withhold belief in their genuineness inasmuch as their origin is unknown and no convincing proofs have ever been adduced to satisfy modern critics. They are mentioned here solely because they were piously and sincerely venerated. May we add that belief in the historical genuineness of a specific relic has never been part of the doctrine or discipline of the Catholic Church. Honor paid to relics is honor paid to the person whom the relics represent.

In 1254 one of the Crusaders, Sire de Joinville, brought the "girdle of St. Joseph" to France from the East. De Joinville built a chapel of St. Joseph in order to house his treasure, and was himself buried there in 1319. The chapel became a shrine

much visited by French pilgrims where eventually Louis XIV and Cardinal Richelieu came to pray. In 1668 the "relic" was somehow destroyed. It was of coarse, gray hemp, about a yard long and 1½ to 2 inches wide. An ivory buckle was fastened at one end, with a corresponding buttonhole at the other. A Latin inscription read,

This is the girdle that girdled
Joseph, Spouse of Mary.

The sole guarantee of the relic's authenticity was the noble character of its original owner. Just how he obtained the girdle in the East we do not know.

Other relics of St. Joseph were introduced during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Four or five cities claimed to possess a "staff of St. Joseph" which he supposedly bore during the flight into Egypt; and the swaddling clothes venerated in Aix-la-Chapelle were thought to be possibly Joseph's foot coverings. Against the weight of all tradition two churches claimed even to have fragments of his body.

Another relic, ostensibly the ring of espousal which Mary received from Joseph's hand, was venerated as early as 1000 at Chiusi in Tuscany. It was supposed to have come from a Jerusalem goldsmith. After Perugia and Chiusi had contested long and bitterly for its possession, Pope Innocent VIII finally awarded it to Perugia in 1486. Its genuineness, however, appears to be questionable, for at least six other monasteries or churches claimed to possess the same espousal ring which Joseph be-

stowed on Mary. Yet no matter how counterfeit these relics might have been, their veneration at least indicates that there existed in Italy lively interest in St. Joseph. Incidentally, historical evidence indicates that wedding rings were not in use in the times of Joseph and Mary.

Some of the *Private Hours*—prayer books of the fifteenth century for lay folk—contain selections from the mass and offices of St. Joseph which were being composed at the time. Peter d'Ailly's prayer as well as the concluding prayer from the sermon of St. Bernardine of Siena ("Remember us, therefore, O blessed Joseph . . .") were also favorites.

In the early 1500's the Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of St. Joseph was proposed by John of Fano, an Italian Capuchin. This devotion apparently was modeled on the corresponding devotion to our Lady of Sorrows, then much in favor. In it no definite events in St. Joseph's life were held up for the veneration of the faithful; the seven sorrows could be selected at will.

Records show that four or five brotherhoods were founded in honor of St. Joseph at Avignon, Perugia, Cologne, and Florence. As the Middle Ages drew to their close, certain guilds chose Joseph as their patron saint. From the data we possess we know that the carpenters and cabinetmakers were usually the ones to select Joseph as their protector.

Medieval art offers a worthy manifestation of Joseph's meteoric rise out of the obscurity of the first thousand years. However, owing to the detailed

treatment necessary and to the technical nature of the criticism of art and the analysis of artistic trends, a comprehensive survey of medieval painting and its presentation of St. Joseph has not been included in this book.²⁶ Suffice it to say that the apocrypha initially influenced the portrayal of St. Joseph. After the year 1350, artists began to give him the honorable recognition more worthy of his true status.

Veneration in the Liturgy—the Feast of St. Joseph

Perhaps the most amazing feature of the devotion to St. Joseph was the suddenness with which his widespread veneration appeared in the liturgy after 1480. It is true that in the twelfth century and thereafter churches and altars were dedicated and feasts celebrated in Joseph's honor in isolated localities; but toward the end of the fifteenth century churches all over Europe began to include masses and offices of the Saint in their missals and breviaries. This spontaneous appearance of Joseph's name in the liturgical books offers a bewildering mass of documentary evidence which presents many obstacles to logical analysis. For the sake of brevity and clarity we can set forth only the statistical evidence and from that draw our conclusions.

Throughout this sketch of the growth of the liturgical feast it will be well to remember that before the Council of Trent each bishop had the right to introduce feasts into the liturgy of his diocese without having recourse to Rome. It was only after the Council that all liturgical innovations had to be

approved by the Holy See. The regulations of the Council were fully called for by several abuses, notable among which were the caprices of irresponsible printers. In the fullness of their "power of the printing press" some of these craftsmen included or excluded whatever they willed in the missals and breviaries they published. Hence, from our vantage point we find it most difficult to gauge the spread of St. Joseph's feast accurately. The liturgical documents are almost inaccessible and are widely scattered. Moreover, there is bewildering confusion with respect to the liturgical rank of the supposed feast days of St. Joseph. Are they solemnities, simple feasts, or merely votive masses which the priest may celebrate according to his own devotion? All these factors must be taken into consideration together with a comparative study of the various formulas of the masses and offices of St. Joseph. Otherwise it is useless to try to correlate the diverse influences which brought about the appearance of the feast.

Probably the first church specially dedicated to St. Joseph was built at Bologna, in Italy, about 1129. Precisely when and by whom it was erected is unknown. Diocesan priests and the Benedictines took charge of it until 1300, when it was entrusted to the Servites. In England in 1140 Joseph was chosen as secondary patron of the Benedictine priorate church at Alcester, Warwickshire. There was also the chapel of St. Joseph built by Sire de Joinville a century later. These are the three earliest instances of such honors paid our Lady's spouse.

Bologna seems to have the right to claim the greatest distinction in this matter, for devotion to the Saint radiated from that city. There, for instance, the practice originated of using "Joseph" as a patronal name. Although "Joseph" had long been given in the East as a personal name, it had always referred to the patriarch of the Old Testament; and even in the West up to this time the rare appearance of a "Joseph" occurred in localities that were susceptible to Byzantine influence.

Bologna was the first to include St. Joseph in the Litany of the Saints, placing his name among the confessors in 1350.²⁷ Even at this early date a titular feast of the church of St. Joseph was celebrated, as is indicated by the church's constitutions of 1372. The custodians of the church were members of the Servite Order who as specially consecrated "Servants of Mary" naturally recognized the glorious merits of her spouse. The *Servite Annals* relate the following concerning the general chapter of 1324: "Upon the advent of the time of convocation on the Calends of May [May 1], 1324, the assembly of the brethren was held in Orvieto, wherein these decrees were renewed or rather were declared: first, the Fathers considered that for the greater service of their patroness, the Virgin, the feast of St. Joseph, spouse of the same Blessed Mary, should be celebrated with a double rite in each of their churches on the fourteenth of the Calends of April [March 19]. . . ." ²⁸ The wording of the decree implies that the feast was already celebrated among the Servites before 1324.

The Franciscans adopted the feast of St. Joseph at their general chapter of 1399. They used the "Common of a Confessor" as the liturgical text of their mass. According to a book published in 1668, the Franciscan feast may have been observed even a hundred years earlier than the date of this general chapter. Here the text reads, "In another parchment [martyrology] of the thirteenth century, I believe, for the use of the Minorites, this was written: 'The 14th of the Calends of April. Of St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary and confessor; greater double'; and in another parchment even a little older, this was explicitly written: 'The 14th of the Calends of April. Of St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and confessor; double.'" ²⁹ "Double" and "greater double" indicates the rank of a feast.

Prior to 1900 it was often stated that the Carmelites transplanted the devotion to St. Joseph when they migrated from the East to the West about 1250. At present, scholars completely discount this belief. Abbé Lucot's research indicates that in some European localities the Carmelites celebrated a feast of St. Joseph in the late fourteenth century. ³⁰

The existence of a feast at Avignon about 1375 is deduced from bits of evidence. There, the altar of the chapel of St. Joseph (in the Church of St. Agricola) is decorated with the coat-of-arms of Pope Gregory XI (1370-1378). Gregory is known to have enriched the feast with certain indulgences. ³¹

According to John Gerson's letter of 1416 to Cantor Parvi, the feast of St. Joseph was being celebrated at the time in widely separated places. Gerson stated that the Augustinians of Milan were observing it on March 19, and that the English instituted it on February 9, the octave of the Purification of Mary. Gerson claimed that "this also occurred in many districts of Germany." We do not, however, possess manuscript evidence to confirm his statement.

One interesting office of St. Joseph reaches back to the thirteenth century, to the Benedictine monastery of St. Laurence at Liege.³² Here there seems to have been no celebration of a feast but merely a solemn commemoration in the divine office. A prologue to the manuscript asserts that the author purposes not only to stimulate private devotion; he also wishes to pave the way for a special feast in the liturgy. "The whole world wonders," he adds, "and well may it wonder, why Holy Church celebrates the feasts of other saints with such rejoicing, and sings of them as is worthy and proper, and yet has been silent concerning this Saint over so long a period." Subsequently we are treated to a delectable legend nowhere else recorded. "Many believe and assert as certain that when the Savior's fame spread more and more after His Ascension, the Jews summoned Jesus' foster father, the old man Joseph, and zealously cross-examined him. He confessed under oath that Jesus was not His son, but was the Son of God and the promised Redeemer. Thereupon they were seized with wrath

and scorn, and delivered the man of God to a horrible death." To which the author modestly adds: "Whether this was so or not, let no one thereby be disquieted."

Strikingly, the monk who composed this office of St. Joseph was ignorant of the commemoration for March 19, already four centuries old. This would seem to indicate that his monastery had never adopted the *Hieronymite Martyrology*, probably following instead a Usuardine version which omitted Joseph's name.

In the Austrian monastery of St. Florian a missal of the late thirteenth century listed a votive mass entitled "Of St. Joseph, Foster Father of the Lord." In later missals this mass reappeared as "Against the Calumny of Evil Men" because its oration prayed that "through the merits of Joseph we may be preserved from every false and evil suspicion of men." However, it was merely a votive mass (that is, it was to be used only according to individual devotion) and was not linked with any obligatory date. It appeared again two hundred years later in many German missals as a prelude to the mass of a special feast of St. Joseph.

In addition to the writings of John Gerson and Peter d'Ailly, which we have already noted, their efforts in connection with the introduction of a feast of St. Joseph were equally important. We have already discussed the initiative Gerson took in this matter. It was in 1413 that the first step of a private campaign to secure the adoption of such a feast in the liturgy of the Church was taken by him. He ad-

dressed a letter to "all the churches, especially those which are consecrated to the memory of the ever-Virgin," and in this letter he proposed that a feast be celebrated in honor of the virginal marriage of Joseph and Mary. Since there were already too many solemnities, he said, this "Feast of the Espousal" was to be of a votive character so that priests could celebrate it without greatly altering the divine office. The most suitable day was the Thursday of Advent Ember week, since the gospel of the Espousal would thus fit admirably between Wednesday's gospel of the Annunciation and Friday's gospel of the Visitation. (Gerson was not yet aware of the commemoration of the *Hieronymite Martyrology* for March 19.)

To us who are accustomed to look to our bishops and to the Holy See for guidance in such matters, the dispensation which Gerson granted his project seems a very bold move. "If anyone wishes it," he wrote, "he need seek no other permission for this than the narrative and authority of the gospel." We must not forget, however, the chaotic conditions of his time. One pope and two anti-popes were claiming the papal throne, and no one knew in whom the legitimate authority was vested. As a matter of fact, Gerson ardently longed for unity in the Church and hoped that by virtue of St. Joseph's intercession the disastrous schism of 1378 might soon be healed.

His suggestions for a feast of the Espousal apparently were unfruitful. Meanwhile the Council of Constance assembled, where Gerson represented

his king and the University of Paris of which he was chancellor. Despite his many activities, he never forgot St. Joseph. Details of his sermon delivered on this occasion have already been given in our section on Medieval Literature (p. 500). Attention, however, must still be given here to the logical process of thought planned by him whereby he could propose the feast of the Espousal.

Reasoning from the fact that Mary was truly the Mother of God and that Joseph was truly Mary's husband, Gerson expounded his plan in these words, "If it should seem proper to this holy synod to make some arrangement in honor of and in praise of Joseph, the virginal spouse of Mary, may the enlightened devotion of your holiness take this step. Not as if I were suggesting an increase in the feasts for the people who live by the labor of their hands—would that the number of feasts would be less for them, as has been remarked to this Council with reference to reform!—but we are speaking *to* priests and *of* priests when we desire that a festival be instituted for the glorification of Joseph's virginal marriage to Mary, or of his blessed passing. And for what reason? In order that through the merits of Mary and through the intercession of so great, so powerful, and in a certain way so omnipotent an intercessor with his bride. . . . the Church might be led to her only true and safe lord, the supreme pastor, her spouse in place of Christ." In these weighty words the chancellor was the first directly to prepare the way for the ultimate selection of St. Joseph as the patron of the united Church.

Because of the pressing business of the Council no direct action was taken on Gerson's proposal, although it was favorably received. One of the certain results of the sermon was the propagation of Gerson's doctrines among prelates of many lands. Perhaps on their return home they looked more favorably on the project to honor St. Joseph in the liturgy. Another definite result of the sermon was the publication by Peter d'Ailly of his tractate on the twelve privileges of St. Joseph. D'Ailly's purpose was ever the same as that of the chancellor. He began with the words, "When we consider what the gospels tell us in various places about St. Joseph, we find him truly commended by so many privileges and great encomiums; wherefore we must believe it right if our holy mother the Church inaugurates a great feast in his honor." His conclusion was of the same tenor. "We hold him worthy to be glorified by men and to be singled out with great honor, with an honorable solemnity, and with a solemn feast, since the King of kings wished to exalt him with such dignity." D'Ailly's influence on the feasts of St. Joseph is easy to discern. In many divine offices compiled later in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, his praises of St. Joseph were directly incorporated or were closely imitated. John Gerson and Cardinal Peter d'Ailly did not live to see their cherished dream realized, but their efforts were not in vain.

Nor did they stand alone. The Dominican, St. Vincent Ferrer, preaching throughout Spain

and southern France, was zealous in emphasizing Joseph's worthiness to receive public veneration. Another contemporary, the Franciscan St. Bernardine of Siena, described the life and virtues of Joseph with glowing admiration, so that even though he did not explicitly ask for a special feast in the Church, he encouraged his thousands of listeners to venerate the Saint wholeheartedly. His successors, Bernardine of Feltre and Bernardine of Busti, were hardly less active in stimulating devotion to St. Joseph. These three Bernardines seem to have represented the mind of their Order.

In 1479 a Franciscan Pope, Sixtus IV, introduced the feast of St. Joseph in the Roman church. This does not mean that he extended it to the entire Roman Catholic Church; Sixtus merely desired it to be included in missals and breviaries as a feast to be celebrated at Rome.³³ The Pope's action had the most far-reaching consequences. Apparently Rome's example led the world, for the Italian dioceses explicitly followed Roman usage and we find that missals and breviaries from other countries began to list masses and offices in honor of St. Joseph after 1480. Of course this spread of the feast throughout Europe can be claimed to be a process more or less independent of the mother church, since its propagation was most erratic and its causes were very complex. Moreover, most of the masses and offices in use were totally different from the mass of the Roman feast of St. Joseph. Yet it hardly seems logical to dismiss as mere

coincidence the sudden appearance of the feast in the liturgy only *after* it had been received at Rome. The point can be argued both ways.

The introduction of the feast of St. Joseph in the Roman church had another result at the time of the Council of Trent, seventy-five years later. When the Council stabilized the liturgy by decreeing that all Catholic churches of the Latin rite must conform to Roman usage, the feast of the Saint necessarily appeared everywhere in the Catholic world because of its previous adoption at Rome.

In the past there was some difficulty in ascertaining the rank which Pope Sixtus IV accorded the feast of St. Joseph. This difficulty arose from a confusion of the Franciscan and the Roman liturgical books. The Franciscan Order used the Roman missal and breviary, but it also listed its own special feasts in an appendix. The calendars of Franciscan books from 1485 onward consistently state that the feast of St. Joseph is a "greater double"—in other words, of very high rank. On the contrary, Roman missals of 1479, 1481, 1484, and 1501 call it "simple"—that is, of lowest rank. Since these missals do not include the Franciscan appendix, they were evidently destined for the use of Roman diocesan priests. We understand, therefore, that when Sixtus IV first introduced the feast of St. Joseph, it was given a minor classification in the liturgy. Pope Benedict XIV adds this historical note concerning its rank: "In the breviaries edited in the time of Sixtus IV the office of St. Joseph was sim-

ple, and in the time of Innocent VIII [1484-1492] was raised to a double." ³⁴

Now arise the difficulties of deducing from old missals and breviaries the existence of feasts of St. Joseph in various cities of Europe. As a sample of the problems involved in this matter, let us take the votive mass of St. Joseph from St. Florian's monastery. This composition is found printed in missals from Salzburg for 1505 and 1510, from Passau for 1505, from Constance for 1479 and 1504, and from Augsburg for 1491 and 1496. But other contemporary missals of Salzburg and Passau omit even the mention of Joseph's name! The situation is most puzzling until we find that printer John Winterburger of Vienna decided to include the mass in certain Salzburg and Passau missals. Before him Erhard Radolt of Augsburg and George Stuchs of Nuremberg followed a similar procedure; however, their fellow, Peter Liechtenstein of Vienna, decided to disregard the mass when he printed missals for Salzburg! And thereby everything is explained. We finally conclude that a true feast of St. Joseph did not exist at Salzburg, Passau, or Augsburg in 1505, despite what seems to be printed evidence. At Constance, on the other hand, his mass was printed in the sanctoral cycle. No printer would have dared to make so drastic an insertion; therefore, a special feast must have truly existed in that city.

For brevity's sake we shall condense the results of Seitz's research without explaining the processes he followed in each individual case. His general

method, however, is worth noting. "Provided we lack direct testimony, the elements from which we infer the existence of a feast are contained in the data of the liturgical books—the calendar, the missal, and the breviary. The mention of St. Joseph's name is not in itself an indication of a feast, any more than a mass at the end of a missal would be. We can draw our conclusions legitimately only when a mass of St. Joseph is listed in the ordinary sanctoral cycle, or when an office of St. Joseph in the breviary occurs among the offices in honor of the other saints. In each case conclusions from such scattered evidence as we possess must be adopted with prudence, and only after special investigation of each individual point." ³⁵

In 1479, accordingly, we find that the feast of St. Joseph was introduced into those Italian dioceses which followed Roman custom. It also appeared at Basle and Constance, Switzerland, and at Odense, Denmark. By 1500 evidence of its celebration can be found in liturgical books from a dozen more cities. Within the next twenty-five years it appeared in thirty more localities, and by 1569 the evidence shows that it was being celebrated in at least seventy cities of Europe—24 in France, 21 in what were then the German countries, 11 in Scandinavia, and 7 in Spain, not counting the dioceses of Italy. ³⁶

The credit for stimulating the wide adoption of the feast of St. Joseph must go to Gerson and to the Religious Orders. Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Franciscans, Servites—all these reli-

gious families were instrumental in awakening the Catholic world to recognize St. Joseph's merits explicitly and publicly. The Benedictines laid the groundwork in their early acceptance of St. Joseph in the martyrology. Although their entire Order did not formally accept the feast of St. Joseph until after the Council of Trent, there is evidence that individual monasteries followed the usage of their local dioceses in celebrating his feast. In this Benedictine group are included the branches of the Order—the Clunyites, Cistercians, Carthusians, Camaldolese, and Olivetans.

As has been mentioned, the Servites and Carmelites were among the first to adopt the feast of St. Joseph. The Franciscans seem to have been chiefly responsible for bringing about the appearance of the feast in the liturgy of the Church. The Dominicans played an important role, although their influence was more indirect. St. Joseph could never have received the full honors of the liturgy had not his dignity been solidly established by the Dominican theologians of the Church. Foremost in this number were St. Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas, whose praises of Mary led them to expound the purity and the exalted vocation of her most chaste spouse. Isidor de Isolani's pioneering *Summa of the Gifts of St. Joseph* followed in the paths of his earlier confreres.

By 1500 various provinces of the Dominican Order celebrated the feast of St. Joseph according to the customs of the dioceses in which they were

located. A Dominican breviary of 1508 carries this notice: "It was declared in the chapter at Rome in 1508 that the offices of the Piety of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of her Presentation and of Blessed Joseph might continue in localities where the custom had already existed, and that they should be placed among the extraordinary feasts of the Order." During the generalate of Thomas de Vio de Gaeta (1508-1517) the feast of St. Joseph was prescribed as obligatory in Dominican missals and breviaries. In 1552 when the Order's liturgical books were simplified, the feast was given a higher rank.

Most of the early masses of St. Joseph were built around the "Common of a Confessor not a Pontiff"—that is, the general formula for masses of "confessor" saints who do not have a special mass in their honor. Even after some new sections were inserted in order to make it apply more particularly to St. Joseph, the "Common" was still recognizable. This is true of the present mass for March 19, which, except for the oration, is found in Roman missals of 1513, 1519, and 1521. The oration is taken from the mass which was used in the reformed Dominican missal of 1552. Inasmuch as the feast of the (now replaced) Solemnity of St. Joseph (unlike the feast of March 19) was of comparatively recent origin, its prayers are not included among the old masses in honor of the Saint.

Gerson's dream of a feast of the Espousal was not completely unrealized. In 1537 the Franciscans adopted such a feast in honor of our Lady; the Ser-

vites and Dominicans followed the same course. The Carthusians in their general chapter of 1567 chose the feast as a special means of obtaining God's help to ward off the dangers of their times and as a petition to repopulate their monasteries with worthy aspirants. However, since the time of Pius X it is not celebrated widely. The original purpose which Gerson had in mind when suggesting it has long since been achieved, and in a measure far beyond the chancellor's expectations.

CHAPTER
TWENTY - FOUR

THE DEVOTION TO
ST. JOSEPH AFTER 1550

After the Council of Trent (1545-1563) the religious orders continued to propagate the devotion to St. Joseph and to place themselves under St. Joseph's protection just as they had done during the early stages of the devotion. In addition to the orders that had played important parts in obtaining recognition for the Saint—e.g., Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Franciscans, and the Servites—new ones sprang up that adopted the devotion wholeheartedly. Among these the Society of Jesus from its very beginning in 1534 made the veneration of St. Joseph almost an inborn characteristic. St. Ignatius of Loyola, its founder, held up the members of the Holy Family to his spiritual sons as the exemplars of pa-

ternal authority and filial obedience,¹ and in his golden book of the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of the most potent instruments of reform in the Church, Ignatius introduced St. Joseph into the gospel meditations on the early life of the Lord. However, even in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the remote influence of the apocrypha seems discernible on the occasion when Ignatius suggests a servant's presence with the Holy Family en route to Bethlehem. Jesuit devotion to the Holy Family probably grew out of the strong love for the person of Christ which Ignatius inculcated into his followers.

Jesuit influence showed itself most influentially in the case of theologians like Alphonsus Salmeron, St. Peter Canisius, and Cornelius a Lapide. As already mentioned, Francis Suarez (*1617) revolutionized the theological treatment of the Saint by describing Joseph as a member of the "order of the hypostatic union"—in other words, picturing the Saint as an intimate co-operator in the redemptive work of Jesus with Mary. According to Sommervogel's encyclopedic catalogue of Jesuit writers, more than 130 independent works on St. Joseph were published by Jesuits after 1600.

During the last half of the sixteenth century the Carmelite foundress, St. Teresa of Avila, brought St. Joseph's cause to the forefront in Spain, so that even outside the cloisters of her order, the devotion became strongly ingrained in the Catholic life of the country. The well-known passage from the sixth chapter of Teresa's *Autobiography* has often been

quoted as one of the most excellent descriptions of Joseph's intercessory power and affectionate protection. (Cf. page 448). However, this is not the only record of Joseph's influence in the life of Teresa.

"One day after Communion," she wrote, "our Lord commanded me to labor with all my might for this end . . . [promising] that the monastery would certainly be built . . . that it should be called St. Joseph's; and that St. Joseph would keep guard at one door and our Lady at the other; that Christ would be in the midst of us."

Again, "Once, when I was in one of my difficulties, not knowing what to do and unable to pay the workmen, my true father and lord St. Joseph appeared to me, and gave me to understand that money would not be wanting; and I must hire the workmen."

Teresa's devotion to the Saint appears most of all in the story of her great vision. Here, too, is a dramatization of Joseph's role close to Mary. "On one of these days . . . I fell into so profound a trance that I was, as it were, beside myself . . . I thought, then, when I was in that state that I saw myself clothed with a garment of excessive whiteness and splendor. At first I did not see who was putting it on me. Afterwards I saw our Lady on my right hand, and my father St. Joseph on my left, clothing me with that garment. I was given to understand that I was then cleansed from my sins.

"When I had been thus clad (I was filled with the utmost delight and joy), our Lady seemed at

once to take me by both hands. She said that I pleased her very much by being devout to the glorious St. Joseph; that I might rely on it that my desires about the monastery would be accomplished; and that our Lord and they, too, would be greatly honored in it; that I was to be afraid of no failure whatever . . . because they would watch over us and because her Son had promised to be with us. . . . I did not see St. Joseph so distinctly, though I saw clearly that he was there.”²

Of the seventeen monasteries which she founded, Teresa dedicated twelve to St. Joseph. Her writings were most influential; and her spirit of devotion to the Saint lived vigorously in her order. After her death the general chapter of the Carmelite Fathers selected St. Joseph as patron of the order. This occurred in 1621. A more momentous event took place in 1680. The Carmelites obtained permission to celebrate the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph on the third Sunday after Easter. Here we see the origins of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the feast that honored the Saint's universal patronage until it was replaced by the feast of Joseph the Worker in 1956.

In 1632 the Hermits of St. Augustine had placed all their Italian and German establishments under the protection of St. Joseph. Later, in 1700, they, too, were allowed to celebrate the feast of the Patronage, together with the additional privilege of making a liturgical commemoration of the Saint in every office of “semidouble” rank.

Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul also deserve mention as moving spirits in the further growth of the devotion. Vincent made the Saint patron of his seminaries; Francis chose Joseph as patron of the Visitation Order which he had founded, and urged his spiritual daughters to imitate Joseph closely. The influence of de Sales worked most powerfully for St. Joseph in the tributes of his book, *On the Love of God*, and in the nineteenth of his *Spiritual Conferences*, which presented solid theological analysis in a devotional format. We have already quoted St. Francis in ranking St. Joseph after our Lady in perfection and holiness (Cf. page 398); it is in this same "Nineteenth Conference" that de Sales showed Joseph's union with Jesus through the marriage to our Lady:

"By means of the marriage between our Lady and the glorious St. Joseph, the Good of eternal goods, our Lord Himself, belonged to St. Joseph as well as to our Lady. This is not true as regards the nature which he took in the womb of our glorious mistress, and which had been formed by the Holy Spirit of the most pure blood of our Lady; but it is true as regards grace, which made him participate in all the possessions of his beloved spouse and which increased so marvellously his growth in perfection; and this through his continual communication with our Lady." 3

The history of the devotion to St. Joseph in the Order of the Visitation becomes that of almost all orders and could be continued at great length.

Hundreds of monasteries and convents have been named in honor of him and have been consecrated to him as the special exemplar and protector of their members. Since a detailed list would run into large numbers, the over-all impression can best be obtained by mentioning a few of these religious families, but particularly those that bear the name of St. Joseph.

In a certain sense the very existence of congregations such as these has been a mighty stimulus to honor the Saint. It is true that their members privately honored their patron; but the exterior works they accomplished as well as their selfless dedication to so many varied apostolates have served to call attention to the man whose closeness to Jesus and to Mary has been their inspiration. Some of these foundations are now extinct, such as the Cretenists or "Missionaries of St. Joseph" which the physician, J. Cretenet, began in Lyons, France, about 1650. Another group, the "Knights of St. Joseph," was reorganized in 1807 in Tuscany and was based on a brotherhood of St. Joseph that had first existed at Florence in 1514. Victor Emanuel, however, suppressed these Knights later in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most striking, because of its numbers and because of the eventual world-wide extent of its work, has been the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The group was founded at Le Puy, France, in 1650 by Bishop Henri de Maupas and

Jean-Pierre Medaille, S.J. It was based on the Rule of St. Augustine and the original principles of Francis de Sales, devoting itself to works of mercy and to education. At the present day at least 25,000 Sisters of St. Joseph are working for Christ in this organization whose name and history have constantly served to remind the world of the head of the Holy Family.

A full enumeration of the religious families dedicated by name to St. Joseph offers the following interesting list:

- five groups of men are no longer in existence;
- six priests' congregations are now flourishing, of which the best known in the United States is St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, for Colored Missions (the "Josephite Fathers");
- three religious brotherhoods of St. Joseph;
- three women's orders of St. Joseph; and
- eleven women's congregations in whose title the Saint's name appears.

But the picture is still incomplete. Nine associations for lay people exist in the Church as archconfraternities, unions, etc. Among them is the Pious Union of St. Joseph's Passing, founded for the benefit of all who are in their last agony.⁴ Thus, the head of the Holy Family has truly become the head of numerous religious families, just as in countless individual cases husbands and wives have chosen Joseph's love of Jesus and Mary to be the spirit that reigns at their hearth.

The Devotion to St. Joseph in Europe

After the century of the Council of Trent and the Protestant Reformation, the 1600's witnessed official public honor for St. Joseph in many countries of Europe. These were, of course, the so-called Catholic countries, for in lands where persecution raged, such public devotion was out of the question.

Quite remarkable signs of esteem for the Saint were manifested. Ferdinand III in 1655 wished St. Joseph to be proclaimed as the special patron of the kingdom of Bohemia under the title of "Preserver of the Peace." Ferdinand's son, Leopold I, publicly turned to the intercession of the Saint in order to obtain from God the favor of male succession. Meanwhile, he declared Joseph patron of all Austria. When the Emperor's first son was born, he gratefully named him Joseph even though this name had hitherto never been used in any European dynasty. It was in this way that the name of St. Joseph was to be connected (through a later Joseph) with an anticlerical political system.

The most critical event in Leopold's reign was the Turkish menace to Europe. In 1683 the Turks were beaten off by the generalship of John Sobieski at Vienna, and later they were completely vanquished. Leopold attributed the Vienna victory to St. Joseph's protection, and on February 5, 1684, wrote to Pope Innocent XI on this score:

"When the whole Christian world stood in peril because of the siege of Vienna, the struggle which led to the defeat of the Turkish hordes be-

gan on the heights of Kahlenberg ("Bald Mountain"), dedicated to St. Joseph. The outcome seems to show that our merciful God, moved by the intercession of this patron and protector, wished to grant this manifold victory to His people.

"Accordingly, since we think it fitting and just that the veneration and devotion to the most holy patriarch, foster father of the Son of God and spouse of the ever pure Virgin Mary, should daily increase, we beg Your Holiness with childlike confidence to grant our petition: that the name of the holy patriarch Joseph be included in the Litany of the Saints, and that the feast of his Patronage, as the Discalced Carmelite Fathers have long possessed it and celebrate it on the third Sunday after Easter, be prescribed as a universal feast."⁵

The petition was not successful. There was fear at Rome of starting an unwelcome precedent in changing the Litany of the Saints. As for a feast of thanksgiving, the results of our Lady's intercession showed prominently in the victory over the Moslems and should have been commemorated before all else. Hence, Innocent XI extended to the whole Church the feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary, and did not see fit to grant Leopold's request. Instead, the Emperor's dominions were given special permission to celebrate the feast of the Espousal of Joseph and Mary. This was in gratitude to God not only for the conquest at Vienna but also for the succeeding battles in Hungary which permanently broke the Turkish power.

Innocent XI likewise granted the feast of the Espousal to Spain. Spanish devotion to St. Joseph was so strong that Charles II petitioned the pope to declare the Saint patron of Spain. This declaration was made in 1689, but a tempest of criticism was aroused because the decree which granted the petition was not made out in proper form. In addition, the opposing faction claimed that the traditional position of St. James as patron of Spain had been impugned. As a result of these protests, in 1690 the declaration of St. Joseph as patron of Spain was pronounced null and void as if it had never been issued.

The entire incident is unfortunate, to say the least; but the reaction against the decree as well as the subsequent revocation does not reflect any lack of zeal on the part of the Spanish people in general, who have clung to the devotion to St. Joseph with a long-traditional enthusiasm. There seems to be no Spanish name more common than "José." Leo XIII's letter of 1890, restoring the feast of St. Joseph in Spanish lands to its pristine dignity, pays lavish tribute to this devotion. A letter of the same pope, written a few months later, avers that Portugal is no less devout to the Saint.⁶

It was because of the Spanish petition of Charles II that Belgium came to be placed under the patronage of St. Joseph. At the time of the request, in 1679, the Spanish possessions included most of what is now Belgium. When the Spanish clergy, wishing to keep St. James as patron of Spain, protested against the grant of the Holy See concern-

ing St. Joseph, the Congregation of Sacred Rites nullified the decree, but only in so far as it concerned Spain, not for the possessions of Spain. Hence, the invalidation did not take effect in Belgium, where the original announcement had been received with popular joy and acclaim.⁷

The Germany of the seventeenth century was a war-torn land, but despite its tragic conditions we can discern some indication of the regard of the faithful for St. Joseph. For example, in 1661 the Prince-Bishop Bernard von Galen obtained papal permission to consecrate his entire diocese to the Saint. This followed upon the Bishop's triumphal re-entry into Münster on July 7, 1661, when the silver statue of St. Joseph was carried in solemn procession. A synod of 1662 directed the local clergy to spread the love and knowledge of the Saint among the people, and especially to preach his powerful intercession as the patron of a happy death.

In France, Father Pierre Coton (Cotton), S.J. (*1626), was one of the most active proponents of the devotion in all its history. From 1603 to 1617, Coton worked both at the Court and among the people for the cause of his friend and heavenly patron. Coton was a versatile and brilliant preacher and controversialist, who used all the influence he could muster for the cause of St. Joseph. Partly as the result of his work, on June 20, 1613, Marie de Medici personally laid the cornerstone of what is believed to be the first church of St. Joseph on French soil. This was the church of the Discalced

Carmelites in Paris, completed in 1620 and solemnly consecrated on December 21, 1625.

At about the same time, due to Coton's efforts the new Jesuit church at Lyons was also dedicated to the Saint. In Paris, a group of Reformed Cistercians known as the Feuillants also made this dedication of their church "to the spread and grateful recognition of the excellence of incomparable St. Joseph." Here, in 1657 this church of the Feuillants witnessed Bossuet's matchless "First Panegyric" preached on St. Joseph. Bossuet was only in his thirty-first year, but his oratorical genius was shown so plainly that he was commanded to repeat his panegyric in 1659 before the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, as well as her company. In addition to this double rendition of the "First Panegyric," Bossuet delivered a second such sermon in the Lent of 1661.

Anne's devotion to St. Joseph was well known, and Bossuet's oratory thus wakened a desire at the French court to have the general observance of the feast of St. Joseph extended to France. Even so worldly a monarch as Louis XIV expressed a wish to that effect. Pope Gregory XV had prescribed the feast as a holyday of obligation in 1621, and Urban VIII had repeated the directive in 1642, but it still had not been carried out in France. Hence, Coton and Bossuet had to overcome much indifference regarding St. Joseph.

Bossuet's first panegyric on the Saint is called the *Depositum Custodi*, from the text, "Guard the trust" (1 Tim. 6:20). The oration elaborates the three

trusts committed to Joseph's care: the virginity of Mary, the rearing of Jesus Christ, and the secret of the Incarnation. Certain sections of the sermon merit our attention here, as examples of Bossuet's description of Joseph's vocation.

"Can we confirm in more express terms the truth which I preach?" Bossuet asks. "You behold the dignity of Mary in the fact that her blessed virginity has been chosen from eternity to give Jesus Christ to the world; and you behold the dignity of Joseph in the fact that this purity of Mary, which has been of such value to our nature, has been confided to his care. It is he who preserves for the world something so needful. O Joseph, 'guard the trust!' Guard dearly this sacred trust of Mary's purity. Since it has pleased the Eternal Father to protect Mary's virginity under the veil of this marriage, she can no longer preserve it without you; and thus your purity has become in a fashion necessary for the world, by the glorious charge which has been given you to protect the purity of Mary. . . ."

"But it is not enough for the Eternal Father to have confided to Joseph the virginity of Mary. He prepares for him something even more exalted; and after having entrusted to his loyalty this holy virginity which is to give Jesus Christ to the world (as if He planned to exhaust His infinite generosity in favor of the Patriarch), He is now about to place Jesus Christ Himself into Joseph's hands, and He wishes him protected by Joseph's care. If we penetrate into this secret, if we enter into the depths of this mystery, O faithful people, there it is that we

shall discover something so glorious for the just man Joseph that we will never be able to understand it sufficiently! . . .”

“Among all vocations, I discern two in the Scriptures which seem diametrically opposed. The first is that of the apostles; the second, that of Joseph. Jesus is revealed to the apostles, Jesus is revealed to Joseph, but under very contrary conditions. He is revealed to the apostles in order to be proclaimed throughout the entire world; He is revealed to Joseph in order to be in silence and to be hidden. The apostles are lights to make Jesus Christ visible to the world; Joseph is a veil to cover Him; and under this mysterious veil, there is hidden the virginity of Mary and the magnificence of the Savior of souls. . . . The holy apostles preach the gospel so valiantly that the sound of their preaching reaches even unto heaven. Joseph on the contrary, hearing the story of the marvels of Jesus Christ, listens, admires, and is silent.”⁸

But we must return to the course of the devotion in other countries of Europe. In Rome the guild of masons and carpenters dedicated a new church to the Saint in 1596, in the fifty-eighth year of the guild's existence. Annually, on the feast day, the poor or the orphaned daughters of guild members received a dowry from the common funds. Also on this day, a condemned criminal might receive pardon by reason of an indult of Gregory XIII. In 1598 a certain Desiderius, Canon of the Church of St. Mary of the Martyrs (the ancient pagan pan-

theon), organized a pious union of painters, architects, and other artists in honor of St. Joseph. A chapel was erected in the church, and the altar consecrated to the Saint. Every March 19, this association like its fellow guild presented a destitute maiden with a fitting dowry. Such a predilection of the guilds for St. Joseph appeared in Belgium and France as well as at Rome. The guild at Antwerp, for instance, possessed its own chapel in the cathedral, dedicating the altar there to St. Joseph.

These, then, represent some of the marks of the devotion to St. Joseph in the Europe of the seventeenth century. During the ominous eighteenth century, the situation of the Church grew steadily worse; and in common with the temporal misfortunes of the Church, the devotion to the Saint seems to have remained stagnant as far as public marks of honor were concerned. Only with the reign of Pius IX (beginning in 1846, when we are already in touch with the modern phase of the devotion) does that new vigor appear which has culminated in our present-day recognition of the Saint.

As for the devotional and theological literature of the period after the Council of Trent, literally hundreds of essays and independent works were published concerning St. Joseph's vocation. The great names of Suarez, Cornelius a Lapide, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, and Bossuet are already familiar to us. In addition to these, several others also deserve mention. Prosper Lambertini (the future Benedict XIV) sponsored, as we shall later tell, the

inclusion of St. Joseph's name in the Litany of the Saints. Father Joseph Patrignani, S.J., was the author of a biography of St. Joseph, a devotional work that first appeared in 1709 and then became one of the most widely reprinted and translated books ever written concerning the Saint. St. Alphonsus Liguori (*1787), bishop, founder of the Redemptorists, and Doctor of the Church, was responsible for a series of meditations and sermons that faithfully reflect a candid theological appraisal of St. Joseph and his service to our Lord and our Lady. After Liguori's century, the English convert, Father Frederick William Faber (*1863) gave to the world a warm appreciation of St. Joseph in his several volumes, particularly in *Bethlehem* and *The Blessed Sacrament*. Faber's writings were all the more valuable because their author drew copiously on dogmatic theology, while presenting his subject in inspiring devotional language.

Devotion to St. Joseph on the Missions

It would be a huge task to give an adequate presentation of the strength and influence of the devotion to St. Joseph in the mission fields of the Church during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. North America, Paraguay, India, and China all witnessed the self-sacrifice of missionaries who dedicated their work to the head of the Holy Family. We can illustrate this fervor by beginning with the story of the North American martyrs and their companions: John de Brebeuf, Isaac Jogues, Le Jeune, Lallemand.

In trying to teach and convert the Indians, the missionaries used all possible means to make the Faith attractive and colorful to savage minds throttled by brutality and superstition. One of the methods the fathers found useful was the celebration of the feasts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in grand style. Primarily, of course, they wished to pay homage to the Holy Family, while impressing the savages with the greatness of God and of His saints.

Father LeJeune describes one of these feast days at Quebec—that of St. Joseph. “On this day,” he writes, “our church was full of devout people, almost as it is on Easter Day, all of them blessing God for having given us as a protector the foster father and guardian angel (so to speak) of Jesus Christ His Son. In my opinion it is through his favor and through his merits that the inhabitants of New France who live upon the banks of the great St. Lawrence River have resolved to receive all the good customs of Old France and to refuse admission to the bad ones.”⁹ These words of Father LeJeune follow directly upon his description of a fireworks display at Quebec, all in honor of St. Joseph!

Terrible physical hardships beset the missionaries, but all these trials were as nothing compared with the fickleness, the ingratitude, and even the treachery of the savages. The Fathers relied on prayer to get the strength they needed. Since St. Joseph’s intercession did not fail them, they could hardly find language to express their gratitude for his friendship.

St. John Brebeuf, later to be martyred for the Faith, tells of some of these difficulties in the founding of the first Huron mission at Ihonatiria. Then he adds, "Several times I was completely baffled and desperate until I had special recourse to our Lord Jesus Christ, for whose glory alone we were undertaking this painful journey, and until I had made a vow to glorious St. Joseph, the new patriarch of the Hurons. Immediately I saw everything become quiet."¹⁰

LeJeune experienced the same dramatic results while en route to Canada from France. His ship was being driven relentlessly toward the rocks. "If the ship had advanced twenty paces, we would have been dashed to pieces. . . . At the moment when I was offering my vows to God through the medium of this great saint, I was told that the wind had passed by the vessel."¹¹

These are but typical instances narrated in the *Jesuit Relations*. Sometimes the missionaries were hopelessly lost in the wilderness until they came to familiar territory after invoking the aid of St. Joseph. Striking favors were granted them in bending the wills of obstinate sinners who had previously expressed only hatred and contempt for the Faith. More than once, droughts were broken after the Fathers asked God to grant their petitions in honor of St. Joseph—and this while the medicine men vainly tried to obtain results from their charms and sorceries.

As an attempt to express their gratitude worthily and also as an additional prayer for the success of their apostolate, the fathers honored St. Joseph externally as much as possible. Twelve of the converts mentioned in their reports are named after the Saint. The first Huron mission at Ihonatiria was dedicated to him, as well as the first Huron mission at Silery. When Ihonatiria became uninhabitable because of the plague, the new station at Tenaustaye was again called St. Joseph. Lakes, rivers, and other settlements were given the same title.

In this the North American martyrs were merely continuing in the path of the first settlers and missionaries of New France. The (Franciscan) Recollect Fathers at Quebec had been responsible for the dedication of the whole land to St. Joseph in 1624. Now, the Jesuits continued to sprinkle "St. Joseph" place names throughout the territory, some of which still remain on the map.

The Pottawatomi and Miami missions at the southeast corner of Lake Michigan influenced the present names of the St. Joseph River, St. Joseph, Michigan, and the adjacent St. Joseph County, Indiana. Lake Michigan itself received the name of Lake St. Joseph from Father Allouez in 1677. Even the part of the Wabash River in lower Illinois and Indiana was described by an early missionary as St. Joseph River. In upper Lake Huron, northwest of Manitoulin Island lies the Isle of St. Joseph, sometimes called Charity Island. There, in 1649 the

Jesuits founded a refuge for their Huron Indians in the hope of removing them from the reach of the dreaded Iroquois. As usual, the fathers dedicated the mission to St. Joseph and the church to our Lady.

As a final instance of this linking of the names of Joseph and Mary, we can read the words of Jerome Lallemant, S.J. On the Wye River in Canada, he reported, "We have given to this new house the name of St. Mary or Our Lady of the Conception. Since St. Joseph was chosen for the patron of this country, we ought not to have taken any other protectress for our house than his spouse, the Blessed Virgin, lest we separate those whom God had bound together so closely."¹²

Reports like this are paralleled by the records of the Paraguay Reductions, where great blessings and favors were ascribed to St. Joseph's intercession; and also by the reports from the Mariana Islands, where the missionaries placed themselves under the protection of St. Joseph. In Madura, India, the great missionary, Joseph Beschi, S.J., utilized his genius for language in amazing heathen scholars by his poem to St. Joseph, expressed in classically elegant Tamil.

In Mexico, Joseph had been declared special patron of the country as early as 1555 at the First Provincial Synod of Mexico. Thenceforth, his feast was celebrated with great fervor and solemnity—and with the usual display of fireworks—everywhere in Latin America. As is easily noted on any map, particularly on the west coast of North America,

the Spanish Franciscans made their missions monuments of devotion to St. Joseph.

On August 17, 1678, Pope Innocent XI confirmed the choice of St. Joseph as special patron of the Chinese missions. On March 19, 1692, the missionaries obtained the written permission of the Emperor to preach the gospel freely in his territories. In gratitude they determined to erect a votive chapel in honor of St. Joseph although three other churches already existed in Peking.

It was again on the feast of St. Joseph in 1700 that the cornerstone was laid of a chapel in honor of St. Francis Xavier on the island of Sancian; but the votive chapel that had been projected for Peking was not finished until 1721. Its cornerstone bore a dedicatory inscription to St. Joseph written in Latin, Chinese, and Tartar. Then came the dreadful earthquake of 1730, which is said to have taken 500,000 lives. Unlike the three churches in Peking, St. Joseph's votive chapel was almost untouched by the disaster, and none of the fathers in the three mission houses in the city was harmed.

In the United States one of the first churches in the section under British rule was old St. Joseph's in Philadelphia, founded in 1733 by the Jesuit Josiah Greaton. The conversion of General Ethan Allen's daughter during the late eighteenth century caused a tremendous sensation, especially when she became the first American nun. Frances Allen, when twelve years old, had beheld an unknown man who protected her from harm. Not until

thirteen years later did she recognize his identity as that of St. Joseph, to whom she attributed her conversion as well as her vocation. At Emmitsburg, Maryland, Mother Elizabeth Seton placed her community and her loved ones under Joseph's protection, calling her nuns the Sisters of St. Joseph. Her mother house still bears his name. Another pioneer, Bishop Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, was wholeheartedly devoted to the Saint and begged him to watch over his struggling diocese and its grave needs.

In our own day Canada received the crowning favor of a basilica that has deservedly been called the most magnificent shrine of St. Joseph in the whole world. It was most fitting that this basilica was erected at Montreal. There, indeed, after the era of the first missionaries the Sulpician Fathers followed in the steps of their founder, Father Olier, by inspiring the faithful to turn to St. Joseph. There, too, the Ursulines and Grey Nuns had always paid the Saint exceptional veneration, for Mother Mary of the Incarnation, foundress of the Ursulines at Quebec, had led the way for her own spiritual daughters and for other holy women in imitating Teresa of Avila not only in sublime contemplation and active zeal but also in love for St. Joseph.

The basilica at Montreal, St. Joseph's Oratory, had its origin in the faith of a lay brother of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Brother André, whose name in the world had been Alfred Bessette, entered the Congregation in 1870 and was assigned

the humble post of doorkeeper at Notre Dame College in Montreal. Some day, so he spoke with the certainty of faith, God in his goodness would lift up a monument to St. Joseph on the steep western summit of Mount Royal, across the street from the college.

Hundreds of instances are on record in which people claim to have received miraculous favors after Brother André directed them to pray or to perform some other pious action in honor of St. Joseph. But the truest miracle is the miracle of faith; that a poorly educated and sickly lay brother could have been the human instrument and the moral force responsible for a massive temple of God, second to few buildings of its type and without a doubt the foremost shrine of St. Joseph in the world.

The Oratory itself was founded in 1904. Some ten years later, the crypt structures were begun. The dimensions of the basilica unit are hard to imagine simply for their vastness. On the first level, about fifty feet from the ground, rests the sedate crypt church, three stories high and accommodating two thousand persons. It is, however, dwarfed by the monumental basilica which rises behind it to a height of almost four hundred feet, and capable of holding a congregation of more than ten thousand worshippers. Together with the majestic proportions of the basilica, the policy of constructing the Oratory gradually and according to the funds on hand was reminiscent of the decades required to erect the ageless cathedrals of Europe.

Brother André died in 1937 at the age of 92. He did not live to see the basilica finished, but he saw its future success assured, and with that he was content. St. Joseph's Oratory would rise to the clouds, symbolizing the prayers of the millions of pilgrims who have traveled there to honor and imitate and beg the help of their patron. Brother André liked to call himself "St. Joseph's little dog," but the story of the monument he caused to be created merits for him the title of "Apostle of St. Joseph."

As far as devotional aspects are concerned, the Oratory is already the world-wide shrine of St. Joseph's cultus. But more was needed. There existed a great need for some central organization, an international clearinghouse, as it were, for the "things of St. Joseph." The history of the devotion to St. Joseph is a unique story in the Church. It has had its difficulties not only because of the sparse source material about the Saint, but also because of uncritical writings whose ill-advised attempts to honor St. Joseph were based on exaggerated speculation. Perhaps because of this situation or because of the limited data immediately available, there has existed among Catholics a kind of shying away from deeper study of the problems concerning the Saint. Popular devotion took for granted St. Joseph's position as second to that of Mary, but serious research had not given him full attention.

Accordingly, on April 30, 1952, the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, a charter meeting of some

fifty priests, nuns, and laymen was held at the Oratory to discuss organized research on questions concerning the Saint. With the approval of His Eminence, Paul-Emile Cardinal Léger, Archbishop of Montreal, constitutions were drawn up for an official "Research and Documentation Center" whose headquarters would be at the Oratory.

These constitutions stated the purpose of the society: to encourage a more profound study of the exalted position held by St. Joseph as virginal husband of Mary, as virginal father of Jesus, and as head of the Holy Family. At the library, every available bit of literature extant on St. Joseph was to be collected, either in book form or microfilm. The Center was interested in all Josephite questions, not limiting itself to dogmatic theology alone, but extending its patronage to exegesis, patristics, church history, ascetical and mystical theology, music, sculpture, painting, poetry, and drama—wherever these sciences and arts touch on the person or devotion of St. Joseph.

A similar desire to give the devotion the support of scholarship led to the founding in 1947 of the Spanish periodical, *Estudios Josefinos*. This was issued semiannually by the Discalced Carmelites of Valladolid, and was a sort of counterpart of the semiannual *Cahiers de Joséphologie* published by the Center at Montreal. On August 30, 1951, the Spanish Society of Josephology was officially established. Less than two years later, May 25, 1953, its title was changed to "The Ibero-American Society

of Josephology” so that it might include Spain, Portugal, and all New World nations speaking Spanish and Portuguese.

All of the Josephite activities of St. Joseph's Oratory culminated in the founding at Montreal of the North American Society of Josephology, May 5, 1962. This was the extension and fulfillment of the Research and Documentation Center, and grew directly out of the labors and writings of Roland Gauthier, C.S.C., and Guy-M. Bertrand, C.S.C., not to mention the large staff of priests and brothers which the Congregation of Holy Cross has assigned to service St. Joseph's Oratory.

The actual results of these foundations can be known only by time and experience. One conclusion is certain: the devotion to St. Joseph has taken still another step toward full maturity in the Church, removing more and more the obscurity which was required temporarily by St. Joseph's vocation, but now to be replaced by the full appreciation of the man nearest to Jesus Christ.

The Devotion to St. Joseph in the Liturgy

Following the reign of Sixtus IV (1471-1484), the feast of St. Joseph in the Roman church was raised to the rank of a “double,” and was so classified by Pope St. Pius V in the reformed breviary.

In 1621, Gregory XV prescribed it as a holyday of obligation, but since his decree was not put into execution everywhere, Urban VIII re-emphasized the public observance of the feast in 1642. This was

all the more remarkable in view of Urban's desire to limit rather than increase the number of such holydays.

During these years the saintly Carmelite nun, Clara Maria of the Passion (*1675), had been urging that the feast of St. Joseph be given a higher rank in the liturgy, as was more befitting. Clement X acceded to these requests in 1670, elevating the feast as a "double of the second class."

Although there now existed a special mass and feast of St. Joseph, there was still lacking a divine office which would exclusively apply to the Saint. The original office of St. Joseph had been introduced during the pontificate of Innocent VIII (1484-1492); but in 1522 it had been supplanted by another, except in the breviaries of the Franciscans. Both of these offices were abolished by Pius V, who substituted only the common formulary used for "confessor" saints.

When Clement XI became pope in 1700, he felt that he could not afford to overlook the movement in the Church toward greater devotion to St. Joseph, a devotion he himself loved fervently. In his time also, the Franciscan preacher, Bonaventura da Potenza (*1712), was energetically working for the greater spread of the devotion and for the more worthy celebration of the feast. Patrignani's life of St. Joseph could assert that since 1522 more than 300 works on the Saint had appeared in various languages and localities. This was all the more remarkable in view of the political upheavals and the slow printing processes of the times.

Clement XI accordingly responded to this popular desire by composing a new office of St. Joseph, prescribed for Church use in 1714. He was also responsible for the approval of a votive mass in honor of St. Joseph, to obtain the grace of a happy death. This mass had been composed by the Theatine, Cardinal Thomasi (*1713). As if in answer to his oft-uttered wish and prayer, Clement died on the feast of St. Joseph, 1721.

Another signal mark of honor was left not for Clement but for his successors to bestow on the Saint. In the Church's Litany of the Saints the name of St. Joseph did not occur. Bologna had placed Joseph's name in its litany of the saints in 1350, and the Dominicans and Carmelites had done the same in their approved liturgical books ever since the middle of the 1500's. Then in 1684 (as already related), Emperor Leopold I requested Innocent XI to make the insertion. Even when these petitions became more frequent, Clement XI for all his devotion to St. Joseph hesitated to take any action because of a fear of creating the precedent of frequent alteration. Throughout, it was acknowledged that no legitimate reason existed for dropping St. Joseph's name once the request had appeared of inserting it.

At any rate, Innocent XIII came to the papal throne in 1721, and the question was opened once again. Petitions had now arrived from the Emperor Charles VI, from the Electors of Cologne and the Palatine, from the Grand Count of Etruria, and from forty superiors or procurators-general of religious

orders. The reasons pro and con had already been studied in great detail in 1714, when Cardinal Prosper Lambertini (the future Benedict XIV) was appointed *promotor fidei*, an official designated to find all possible reasons against the change.

Lambertini's favorable recommendations were again considered. Since Innocent died before he could make the final decision, Benedict XIII acted in 1726, approving the insertion of the name of St. Joseph after that of John the Baptist in the Litany of the Saints (cf. p. 462).

Beginning with the pontificate of Pius IX, Joseph's rise in the liturgical life of the Church has been meteoric. In 1847, Pius increased the rank of the feast which was known as the Solemnity of St. Joseph, extending it to the whole Church. After numerous other honors for the Saint, the pope took his most notable step in declaring Joseph Patron of the Universal Church in a solemn ceremony that took place on December 8, 1870.

Pope St. Pius X continued the process of exalting St. Joseph in the liturgy. In the years 1911-1913, St. Pius prescribed that the "Solemn Commemoration of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Confessor," was to be observed on March 19. However, since the Lenten penitential season prevented the full celebration of an octave, the pope elevated the rank of the second feast during Paschal time under the title, "The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Confessor, Pa-

tron of the Universal Church." (This had been the feast of the Patronage.)

At this juncture certain liturgical writers petitioned that March 19 be reduced to its former rank of "double rite of the second class," since there never had existed any historical reason to celebrate March 19 as the "natal" feast of St. Joseph (that is, the anniversary of his death, his birth into heaven). Moreover, the Saint, so these writers said, was now worthily honored by the feast of the Solemnity.

A decree of October 28, 1913, acceded to this request, and also directed that the feast of the Solemnity should be celebrated on the third Wednesday instead of the third Sunday after Easter. But on December 12, 1917, Pope Benedict XV re-elevated March 19 to its earlier rank of "double rite of the first class."

By a decree of the Congregation of Sacred Rites dated April 24, 1956, the Solemnity of St. Joseph was abolished, and the feast of St. Joseph the Worker was placed in its stead. However, the title of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church was to be added to his "principal feast," March 19.¹³

The feast of Joseph the Worker was first announced by Pius XII in an address given on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Christian Association of Italian Workers, May 1, 1955. The words of Pope Pius on this occasion will be found on page 610, grouped with the other pronouncements of the Holy See concerning St. Joseph.¹⁴

Occasionally, the Holy See has been forced to condemn or to prohibit exaggerations that do not represent true devotion to St. Joseph because they infringe on the exclusive positions of Mary and of Jesus. None the less, a cursory glance at the list of honors heaped on the Saint by recent popes reveals that the Church seems to be placing more and more emphasis on St. Joseph's position as set apart from other saints.

One of the greatest of these exclusive honors consists in the Litany of St. Joseph, which was promulgated on March 18, 1909, when Pius X sanctioned its use in public services. Only five other litanies in the Church have been granted such approval: the Litanies of the Sacred Heart and of the Holy Name and of the Precious Blood of Jesus; the Blessed Virgin's Litany of Loreto, and the Litany of the Saints.

In 1919 Benedict XV approved the Preface of St. Joseph, to be used in all masses in honor of the Saint. In the Latin rite, we note, no other saint except Mary is given such a special Preface. St. Joseph was again singled out in 1921 when Benedict ordered the phrase inserted into the Divine Praises, "Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse." The following year, Pius XI inserted the name of St. Joseph in the Church's official prayers for the dying.

John XXIII continued the process of exaltation by declaring Joseph the heavenly protector of the Second Vatican Council in 1961; and most of all,

by ordering his name included in the *Communicantes* prayer of the Canon of the mass, in 1962.

The future is in the hands of God; but undoubtedly the Holy Spirit will not cease honoring him to whom the Church applies the words, "A faithful man shall be greatly praised, and he that is the keeper of his Lord shall be glorified."¹⁵ John Gerson and other pioneers of the devotion never dared in their wildest dreams to fancy anything half so bold as the present reality, and what the future still suggests.

CHAPTER
TWENTY - FIVE

MODERN PAPAL DOCUMENTS
CONCERNING ST. JOSEPH

St. Joseph's obscurity in the life of the Church has long since disappeared as far as formal recognition of his dignity and holiness is concerned. None the less, there still exists much ignorance of the statements of the Church concerning him. Undoubtedly the reason for this lies chiefly in the difficulty of locating the pertinent material and making it available for wide reading.

In the following pages we will present the major papal statements of the past century. (Nothing of importance exists before that time except individual decrees concerning liturgical honors for the

Saint.) Because these papal directives and exhortations are frequently of such great importance, we are adding periodic commentaries to point out ideas of special interest. The format is so arranged that the documents themselves can be read independently of the commentary, according as a reader might wish.

* * *

The first of these great modern pronouncements was made on December 8, 1870, when Pope Pius IX placed the entire Catholic Church under the patronage of St. Joseph with the title of Patron of the Universal Church. In two respects this decree was a milestone in Church history. Coming at a time when the Church's temporal fortunes were in a pitiful state, it marked the ebb of the reverses suffered by the papacy. At the same time it acted as a sort of signal for St. Joseph's meteoric rise to almost full recognition of his rightful status. Soon after he was proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church and honored as such, there began that era of papal prestige which has culminated in the present-day respect paid the Holy Father even by those whose religious affiliations lead them to oppose strongly any recognition of the Pope as a spiritual sovereign.

It is hard to dismiss as mere coincidence these two simultaneous processes—the rise of the Church together with the proclamation of Joseph's patronage of the Church. Yet the resurgence of the Church's prestige is a fact, and Joseph's patronage of it is a fact. Today we take both for granted. We

ought not to be remiss in our gratitude to the memory of Pius IX for the decree which led to such important consequences for the Church and for the devotion to St. Joseph.

Quemadmodum Deus—Pius IX

As Almighty God appointed Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, over all the land of Egypt to save grain for the people, so when the fullness of time was come and He was about to send on earth His only-begotten Son, the Savior of the world, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first Joseph had been the type, and whom He made the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures.

Pius begins with the age-old comparison between Joseph of Egypt and Joseph of Nazareth. Yet we must remember that even though this parallel existed in Church literature since the Middle Ages, in line with Joseph's primitive obscurity the early Fathers of the Church never adverted to the symbolic likeness between the vocations of these two Josephs. The Fathers usually saw Joseph of Egypt as prefiguring the suffering Savior Jesus; they never explored the idea further to include the father of Jesus on earth. By including the comparison in this decree, Pius made it, as it were, official, and not just a private pious reflection without significant basis.

So also [Joseph] had as his spouse the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and of her was born by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord, who in the sight of men deigned to be reputed the son of Joseph, and was subject to him.

The wording here carefully points out the miraculous virginal motherhood of our Lady, mystically espoused to the Holy Spirit even while espoused on earth by spiritual bonds to St. Joseph.

And so it was that Him whom countless kings and prophets had of old desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed, and most diligently reared—even Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby they might obtain eternal life.

Two things are notable in this sentence: first, the paraphrase of our Lord's words in Luke 10:23, explicitly applied to St. Joseph: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things that you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things that you hear, and did not hear them." Second and more notable, the detailed description of Joseph's affectionate fatherly duties toward Jesus. The Pope is certainly making it clear that Joseph manifested his love for Jesus.

Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on His most faithful servant the Church has always most highly honored and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble.

Something of the formal and hyperbolic style of legal documents enters into the decree at this point. In historical fact Joseph was not "always highly honored" in the Church for centuries. The word "always" mentioned here must be understood in context as "for a long time." But highly momen-

tous is Pius IX's ranking of Joseph second only to Mary in intercessory power; implicitly, therefore, second to Mary in holiness. This can be said to be the first official recognition by the Church of Joseph's preeminence over other saints.

And now therefore, when in these most troublous times the Church is beset by enemies on every side and is weighed down by calamities so heavy that ungodly men assert that the gates of hell have at length prevailed against her, the venerable prelates of the Catholic world have presented to the Sovereign Pontiff their own petitions and those of the faithful committed to their charge, praying that he would deign to constitute St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. And this their prayer and desire was renewed by them even more earnestly at the Sacred Ecumenical Council of the Vatican.

The Pope here refers to at least three petitions. The first, signed by one hundred and eighteen bishops, asked that St. Joseph be declared Patron of the Universal Church—"he who was constituted by God as the guardian of His only-begotten Son and who tirelessly carried out toward Jesus and Mary the duties of father and husband with most loyal love and utmost diligence." Almost the same characterization was in a second petition signed by forty-three Superiors-general of various religious orders. A third petition bore two hundred and fifty-five signatures, thirty-eight cardinals' among them, including the future Leo XIII.

Accordingly, it has now pleased our most holy sovereign, Pius IX, Pope, deeply affected by the recent deplorable events, to comply with the desires of the prelates and

to commit to St. Joseph's most powerful patronage himself and all the faithful. He therefore has declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. . . .¹

Some writers have aptly commented that the Pope did not actually *constitute* St. Joseph Patron of the Church. Joseph's position as head of the Holy Family already gave him the duty of protecting the infant Church, as it were, at Nazareth. Pius IX's was more of an official proclamation and recognition of the fact. We should note, too, that this decree mentions the great power of St. Joseph's intercession.

* * *

The decree of 1870 was followed eight months later by a companion decree of July 7, 1871, which legislated for the liturgical observance of March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Since so many of these regulations are now obsolete, having since been readjusted according to later liturgical reforms, we will not repeat them here. The doctrinal and historical part of the decree, however, is immensely valuable for its content.

Inclytum Patriarcham—Pius IX

The Catholic Church rightly honors with its highest cultus and venerates with a feeling of deep reverence the illustrious patriarch blessed Joseph, now crowned with glory and honor in heaven, whom Almighty God, in preference to all His saints, willed on earth to be the chaste and true spouse of the Immaculate Virgin Mary as well as the putative father of His only-begotten Son. He indeed en-

riched him and filled him to overflowing with entirely unique graces, enabling him to execute most faithfully the duties of so sublime a state.

Nowhere else, even in the monumental encyclical of Leo XIII, can there be found in Church documents a paragraph which better summarizes the position of St. Joseph. These sentences must be ranked among the choicest ever uttered about the Saint. They teach that (1) Joseph is granted extremely high honors among the saints; (2) God predestined him for a unique vocation in preference to all other saints; (3) he was the genuine, virginal husband of Mary; (4) he fulfilled a fatherly position with respect to Jesus, being thought publicly to be Christ's natural father and acting with a father's rights; (5) his position is entirely unique; and (6) he carried out his duties with perfect fidelity to God's grace.

Wherefore, the Roman Pontiffs, Our predecessors, in order that they might daily increase and more ardently stimulate in the hearts of the Christian faithful a reverence and devotion for the holy patriarch, and that further they might exhort them to implore with the utmost confidence his intercession with God, have not failed to decree for him new and ever greater tokens of public veneration whenever the occasion served.

Among these let it suffice to call to mind Our predecessors of happy memory, Sixtus IV, who wished the feast of St. Joseph to be inserted in the Roman missal and breviary; Gregory XV, who by a decree of May 8, 1621, ordered that the feast should be observed in the whole world under a double precept;² Clement X, who on December 6, 1670, accorded to the feast the rite of a double of the second class; Clement XI, who by a decree of February 4, 1714,

adorned the feast with a complete proper mass and office; and finally Benedict XIII, who by a decree published on December 19, 1726, ordered the name of the holy patriarch to be added to the Litany of the Saints.

We Ourselves, raised to the supreme Chair of Peter by the inscrutable design of God, and moved by the example of Our illustrious predecessors, as well as by the singular devotion which from youth itself We entertained toward the holy patriarch, have by a decree of September 10, 1847, extended with great joy of soul the feast of his Patronage to the whole Church, under the rite of double of the second class—a feast which was already being celebrated in many places by a special indult of the Holy See.

However, in these latter times in which a monstrous and most abominable war has been declared against the Church of Christ, the devotion of the faithful toward St. Joseph has grown and progressed to such an extent that from every direction innumerable and fervent petitions have once more reached Us. These were recently renewed during the Sacred Ecumenical Council of the Vatican by groups of the faithful, and—what is more important—by many of Our venerable brethren, the cardinals and bishops of the Holy Roman Church.

In their petitions they begged of Us that in these mournful days, as a safeguard against the evils which disturb Us on every side, We should more efficaciously implore the compassion of God through the merits and intercession of St. Joseph, declaring him Patron of the Universal Church. Accordingly, moved by these requests and after having invoked the divine light, We deemed it right that desires in such numbers and of such piety should be granted. . . .³

* * *

The next document concerning St. Joseph was the encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, issued on August 15, 1889. This is the length-

iest Church pronouncement ever made regarding the Saint. It secured for the devotion to St. Joseph a position in the Church which completely obliterated any last vestiges of the centuries-old neglect of the Saint. In fact, the future liturgical and theological growth of the devotion can be only a development of the guiding principles of this encyclical.

In summary, Leo called attention to the deplorable anti-Catholic and anti-Christian atmosphere of his times, and stressed the need of appealing to Mary for help. Almost equally important, he stated, was the necessity of securing the intercession of St. Joseph, who in dignity and holiness is second only to our Lady. The Pope noted with approval the continued growth of devotion to the Saint and cited as its basis the position which Joseph held as the husband of Mary and the virginal father of Jesus.

Quamquam Pluries — Leo XIII

(Address to the Bishops of the Church)

Although We have already ordered on several occasions that special prayers should be offered throughout the whole world and that Catholic interests should be recommended to God in a more earnest manner, let it not seem surprising to any one if at this time We judge that this duty should again be called to mind. In difficult times, particularly when it seems that the powers of darkness are able to make daring attempts to ruin Christianity, the Church has always been accustomed to call humbly upon God, her founder and champion, with greater earnestness and perseverance. In such times she has also sought aid from the saints who dwell in heaven, and principally from the august Virgin Mother of God, by whose patronage she knows that support in her trials will chiefly be afforded;

for the fruit of such pious prayers and of hope in the divine bounty will sooner or later become manifest.

Now, venerable brethren, you have learned to understand the present age, hardly less calamitous to the Christian commonwealth than the very worst the world has hitherto experienced. Around us We behold faith, the foundation of all Christian virtues, perishing almost everywhere; We see charity waxing cold; youth growing up corrupted in morals and in doctrine; the Church of Jesus Christ attacked on every side with violence and rage; and a vicious war waged against the papacy. We behold, in fact, the very groundwork of religion overthrown by assaults that increase in violence from day to day. As for the depths of this catastrophe of our age and the ulterior schemes of the agitators, you yourselves know more than it behooves Us to put into words.

Amid such difficult and lamentable conditions the evils of our day have grown too great for human remedies. The only course left open is to seek a total cure through the divine power. Because of this, therefore, We deemed it advisable to call upon the piety of the faithful that they may implore the aid of Almighty God with greater earnestness and perseverance. But particularly, with the month of October now approaching—which elsewhere We have decreed should be dedicated to the Virgin Mary of the Rosary—We urgently exhort that during the present year the entire month be spent in the greatest possible devotion and piety. We know that a refuge for us is ever ready in the maternal bounty of the Virgin; and with no less certainty We know that our hopes in her are not in vain. If she has come a hundred times to aid the Christian commonwealth in times of need, why should we doubt that she will give new examples of her power and favor provided that humble and continued public prayers be offered? Assuredly, We believe that she will help us all the more wonderfully the longer the period is during which she desires us to implore her.

At this point the encyclical turns explicitly to St. Joseph.

But still another proposal remains to be made, venerable brethren, well aware as We are that you will diligently cooperate with Us here as you have always done in the past. In order, then, that God may show Himself more willing to grant our petitions and that He may aid His Church more promptly and bountifully in proportion as more numerous voices are raised to Him, We have deemed it highly expedient that the faithful should become accustomed to implore with special piety and trust, the aid of the Virgin Mother of God, associating with this devotion their supplication for the aid of Blessed Joseph, her most chaste spouse. Indubitable evidence exists for us to conclude that such a method of approach will be desirable and pleasing to the Virgin herself.

The encyclical strikingly urges that devotion to Mary should be linked with devotion to St. Joseph. The connection lies in the fact that devotion to Joseph is ultimately devotion to our Lady, because Joseph is all he is, because of and through Mary. For that matter, devotion to our Lady ultimately is devotion to our Lord, because Mary is all she is, because of and through Jesus. It is no original comment to add that "what God has joined together"—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—"man should not tear asunder." Devotion to all three goes hand in hand.

In this connection, concerning which We are about to make Our first public pronouncement, We are aware that the piety of the people is not only favorably inclined but is advancing, as it were, along a course already entered upon. For in times past, the endeavor of Roman Pontiffs has been gradually to extend the veneration of Joseph further and

further, and to propagate it widely. In these latter days, however, We have seen that same veneration taking on everywhere unquestionably new stature, particularly after Our predecessor, Pius IX of happy memory, conformably with the requests of numerous bishops had declared this holy patriarch the Patron of the Universal Church. But precisely because it is highly advantageous that veneration for him be deeply rooted in Catholic morals and practices, We desire that the faithful be moved thereto no less by Our own voice and authority.

We could hardly ask a stronger recommendation from papal authority for the devotion to St. Joseph. "It is highly advantageous that veneration for him be deeply rooted in Catholic morals and practices." Now begins the most valuable section of the encyclical, as far as the theology of St. Joseph is concerned. Modern theology has merely developed the principles set forth at this point.

There are special reasons why Blessed Joseph should be explicitly named the patron of the Church and why the Church in turn should expect much from his patronage and guardianship. For he, indeed, was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ.

The root of Joseph's patronage, then, lies, in his double position as virginal husband of Mary and virginal father of Jesus.

From this arise all his dignity, grace, holiness, and glory.

The position of Joseph as husband and father gives him his unique *dignity* or worth. For this position he was given unique *grace*, and because he carried out his duties so perfectly, he increased in this grace. Because of his grace, he was equivalent-

ly *holy*. The fruits of his holiness will make themselves fully manifest in his *glory* here on earth and most of all in heaven. The encyclical continues with a formal enunciation of Joseph's preeminent dignity, and therefore of his holiness, for in his case the one follows from the other.

The dignity of the Mother of God is certainly so sublime that nothing can surpass it; but none the less, since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, *there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures.*

Leo always returns to Joseph's marriage with our Lady as the channel and the means whereby the Saint became what he was; but there is to be further and more detailed explanation why the marriage accomplished this. Before we proceed to this, one necessary qualification should be mentioned. When the encyclical says that the "Mother of God is raised far above all created natures," this statement must be understood in context with proper theological distinctions. Strictly speaking, Mary's nature is below the created human nature of Jesus, for in Jesus there is the union of the infinite, eternal, uncreated divine nature of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity with the finite, temporal, and created nature of Jesus as man. These two natures are united in the divine Person, the Word of God. Therefore, the meaning of the encyclical is evidently that the "created natures," of which Mary's is the highest, represent *created beings*, human persons. To return to the encyclical:

For marriage is the closest possible union and relationship whereby each spouse mutually participates in the goods of the other. Consequently, if God gave Joseph as a spouse to the Virgin, He assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself.

It is true that not every husband and wife mutually share dignity as Joseph and Mary did. In the case of this couple, however, their marriage had been brought into existence for the precise purpose of receiving and rearing the Son of God in human nature. That meant that the dignity of the marriage imparted dignity to the spouses. Joseph's vocation with regard to our Lady is set forth as a constant sharing with Mary. In accordance with the partnership of marriage, Joseph shared common life with our Lady; he shared her virginity by testifying to the fact of her virginity and by himself living virginal; he shared her care for her reputation by guarding her honor as her legitimate husband; but most of all, he shared her exalted dignity as her husband, for God would not have chosen an unworthy man for a post so critically important with regard to the Incarnation and thereby, the Redemption. So much, then, for Joseph's relationship to Mary. Granted that his relationship to Jesus grows out of the marriage, Joseph's fatherhood is now described separately for the dignity it, too, possesses.

Likewise, Joseph alone stands out in august dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by the divine appointment, and in the opinion of men was His father.

As a consequence, the Word of God was modestly obedient to Joseph, was attentive to his commands, and paid to him every honor that children should render their parent.

Notably, the encyclical says, Joseph is *alone* in the absolutely unique relationship he holds toward Jesus. Divinely chosen for the task, he appeared publicly as the natural father of Jesus. But he was much more than that. He possessed some sort of actual fatherhood by spiritual bonds, because he was given jurisdiction over Jesus and he was treated by Jesus with "every honor that children should render their parent." Therefore, we must conclude, he was truly the father of Jesus, in every way a genuine father short of physical generation. Though he is not the natural father, the dignity of his spiritual paternal ties with the incarnate Son of God bestows on him the most sublime human fatherhood the human race can ever know.

The encyclical continues with the duties of St. Joseph as head of the Holy Family. That this position was for him something connatural, not arbitrary or artificial, flows from the fact that his duties were "prescribed by nature."

From this double dignity, moreover [of husband and father], such duties arose as are prescribed by nature for the head of a household, so that Joseph was at once the legitimate and the natural guardian, preserver, and defender of the divine household over which he presided. These duties he fulfilled as long as he lived. Zealously he watched over his spouse and her divine offspring with the most ardent love and constant solicitude. By his labor he regularly provided for both of them such necessities of life as food and clothing. In seeking a place of refuge he warded off

that danger to their lives which had been engendered by the jealousy of a king. Amid the inconveniences of the journey and the bitterness of exile he continually showed himself the companion, the helper, the consoler of the Virgin and of Jesus.

Leo minces no words in setting forth the intimate bonds of affection that existed among the members of the Holy Family. Implicitly, we are reminded that holiness does not mean the smothering of love among humans, provided only that this love is centered in the love of God. The next step in the encyclical is to move from Joseph's position as head of the Holy Family into his patronage of the Universal Church, and the reasons why Joseph holds this position.

Moreover, the divine household, which Joseph governed just as with paternal authority, contained the beginnings of the new Church. The Virgin most holy is the mother of all Christians since she is the mother of Jesus and since she gave birth to them on the mount of Calvary amid the unspeakable sufferings of the Redeemer. Jesus is, as it were, the first-born of all Christians, who are His brothers by adoption and redemption. From these considerations we conclude that the blessed patriarch must regard all the multitude of Christians who constitute the Church as confided to his care in a certain special manner.

This is his numberless family, scattered throughout all lands, over which he rules with a sort of paternal authority, because he is the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is conformable to reason and in every way becoming to Blessed Joseph that as once it was his sacred trust to guard with watchful care the family of Nazareth, no matter what befell, so now, by virtue of his heavenly patronage he is in turn to protect and to defend the Church of Christ.

The wording in this paragraph is interesting to note. Joseph is said to govern the Holy Family "*as with paternal authority.*" This restriction indicates that Joseph's authority as father is analogous to the authority of a natural father who has generated his son by physical generation, which Joseph did not do. A second reason for the analogous language is that Joseph did not and could not rule over Jesus with jurisdiction in the strictest sense, even while by the natural law Jesus was subject in His human nature to parental obedience. It is impossible that any creature of himself could ever gain true authority over his Creator. In the case of Joseph as well as of Mary, Jesus freely submitted Himself to them as their son, rendering true obedience to them of His own will.

Also striking is the fact that Pope Leo refers to St. Joseph simply as "the father of Jesus Christ," with none of the usual qualifiers added. Evidently, there should be no fear that the term "father of Jesus" will be misunderstood provided that one has early made clear the correct meaning of the term as it applies to St. Joseph. The encyclical continues:

The statements made here, venerable brethren, as you will readily perceive, are confirmed by what We shall further set forth. Conformably, namely, with the Church's sacred liturgy the opinion has been held by not a few Fathers of the Church that the ancient Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, foreshadowed both in person and in office our own St. Joseph.

The references to the "Fathers of the Church" applies to later writers who are called "Fathers" in

a wider sense of the word, namely, men who were living already in the Middle Ages. Earlier Fathers did not advert to the comparison between Joseph of Egypt and Joseph of Nazareth.

By his glory he was a prototype of the grandeur of the future guardian of the Holy Family. In addition to the circumstances that both men bore the same name—a name by no means devoid of significance—it is well known to you that they resembled each other very closely in other ways as well. Notable in this regard are the facts that the earlier Joseph received special favor and benevolence from his lord, and that when placed by him as ruler over his household, fortune and prosperity abundantly accrued to the master's house because of Joseph.

There was even a more evident similarity when by the king's order he was given supreme power over the entire kingdom. When calamity brought on a deficient harvest and a scarcity of grain, he exercised such excellent foresight in behalf of the Egyptians and their neighbors that the king decreed he should be styled "savior of the world." Thus, in that ancient patriarch we may recognize the distinct image of St. Joseph. As the one was prosperous and successful in the domestic concerns of his lord and in an exceptional manner was set over the whole kingdom, so the other, destined to guard the name of Christ, could well be chosen to defend and to protect the Church, which is truly the house of God and the kingdom of God on earth.

The encyclical now sketches the patronage of St. Joseph as it extends to individual classes of people in the Church. We note, however, that this in turn is nothing else than the application of Joseph's patronage of the Universal Church. If he is the patron of the Universal Church, he is therefore the

universal patron of the Church—of everyone, everywhere in it, for the Church itself is for all.

This is the reason [namely, Joseph's position as head of the Holy Family] why all the faithful of all places and ranks commend and confide themselves to the guardianship of Blessed Joseph. In Joseph fathers of families have an eminent model of paternal care and providence. Married couples find in him the perfect image of love, harmony, and conjugal loyalty. Virgins can look to him for their pattern and as the guardian of virginal integrity. With the picture of Joseph set before them, those of noble lineage can learn to preserve their dignity even under adverse circumstances. Let the wealthy understand what goods they should chiefly seek and earnestly amass, while with no less special right the needy, the laborers and all possessed of modest means should fly to his protection and learn to imitate him. Joseph was of royal blood; he was espoused to the greatest and the holiest of all womankind; he was the father, as was supposed, of the Son of God. Nevertheless, he devoted his life to labor, and by his hands and skill produced whatever was necessary for those dependent on him.

The encyclical from this point to its conclusion is concerned with an exhortation to workmen as well as further urgings to all the faithful to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph as devoutly as possible.

Therefore, if truth be sought, the condition of those reduced to slender means is not disgraceful. The labor of craftsmen, far from being dishonorable, can by virtue be even greatly ennobled. Joseph, content with what was his own, little as it doubtless was, bore with calm and dignified spirit the straitened circumstances necessarily connected with his meager means of livelihood. This was conformable to the example of his son, who having accepted the form of a servant, while being Lord of all, willingly subjected Himself to the utmost indigence and poverty.

Considerations such as these will serve to encourage and tranquillize the poor and all those who live by the labor of their hands. Nevertheless, although it is permitted them to rise from a condition of want to one of well-being, provided violation of justice is excluded, yet both justice and reason forbid the destruction of that order which divine providence has ordained. On the contrary, it is foolish to have recourse to violence, and to seek to better existing conditions by sedition and revolt. In most cases these produce only greater evils than those which they were meant to cure. If the poor wish to act wisely, let them not believe the promises of seditious men, but let them trust in the example and patronage of St. Joseph, and in the maternal care of the Church, which daily becomes more solicitous for their welfare.

Accordingly, venerable brethren, relying mainly on your episcopal authority and zeal, and confident that the truly good and pious will of their own desire and volition perform more numerous and signal acts than such merely as are demanded of them, We decree that during the month of October a prayer to St. Joseph shall be added to the recitation of the Rosary.

It was from this mandate in the encyclical that the custom originated of daily reciting the prayer to St. Joseph, "We have recourse to thee," after the Rosary during October.

Concerning the Rosary, We have elsewhere already legislated, but a copy of the prayer to St. Joseph is sent to you along with this letter. We decree that this order shall be observed in future years in perpetuity. To those who shall piously recite this prayer, We grant them singly an indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days for each recitation.

Salutary and deserving of highest commendation is the practice of consecrating the month of March by daily exer-

cises of piety in honor of the holy patriarch. That indeed has already been observed in many places. But wherever it cannot readily be accomplished, We desire that preceding the feast of St. Joseph, a triduum of prayers should be held in the principal church of each city. In localities where the nineteenth day of March, sacred to Blessed Joseph, is not included among the feasts of obligation, We exhort all voluntarily to keep holy this day by private exercises of devotion in honor of our heavenly patron, and to do this with the same zeal as if they were obeying a precept.

Meanwhile, as a promise of heavenly favors and as a testimony of Our benevolence toward you, venerable brethren, and toward your clergy and your people, We most lovingly bestow on you the apostolic blessing in the Lord.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, the fifteenth day of August, 1889, the twelfth year of Our pontificate. ⁴

* * *

In 1892 Leo XIII officially encouraged the devotion to the Holy Family. In the following excerpt, which represents the pertinent portions of the Pope's apostolic brief on this subject (*Neminem Fugit*), Leo clearly states that St. Joseph participated intimately in the supreme dignity of the Holy Family. Practically this entire passage has been adopted by the Church as a part of the divine office for the feast of the Holy Family. It begins with a reference to the critical importance of healthy family life.

Neminem Fugit—Leo XIII

It is a fact apparent to all that the welfare of the individual and of the state is in a special manner dependent on the family. Insofar as virtue has struck deep roots within the home and the character of children has been influenced in accordance with religious precepts by the teaching and example of parents, the common interest will be benefited.

Consequently, it is of utmost importance, not only that the society of the home be established holily, but also that it be ruled by holy laws, and that the spirit of religion and the standard of Christian living be diligently and steadfastly fostered there.

Hence, when God in His mercy decided to carry out the work of man's redemption, so long expected through the centuries, He arranged to perform His task in such a way that in its beginnings it might show forth to the world the august spectacle of a divinely founded family. In this all men were to behold the perfect exemplar of domestic society, as well as of all virtue and holiness.

Leo teaches that the Holy Family is the unique and superlative example of virtue and perfection, shared by Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Joseph thus belongs to the privileged circle of the three examples of the greatest holiness the world has ever witnessed. Moreover, this family was brought into existence by God for its very special purpose: "He arranged to perform His task in such a way."

Such indeed was the family of Nazareth. In its bosom was concealed the Sun of justice, awaiting in anticipation the time when His full splendors should shine on all the nations—Christ our God, our Savior, together with His virgin mother and Joseph, that most blessed man who exercised the rights of father over Jesus.

We cannot doubt, then, that all the glories of domestic life, taking their origin in mutual charity, saintly character, and the exercise of piety, were without exception manifested in a superlative degree by the Holy Family as a pattern for all other families to imitate.

We italicize the next key words, in order to show the emphasis Leo places on the purpose of the Holy Family as the family for all families to imitate.

To this very end a benign providence had established the Holy Family, in order that *all* Christians in *whatever* walk of life or situation might have a reason and an *incentive* to practice *every* virtue, provided that they fix their gaze on the Holy Family. In Joseph, therefore, heads of the household are blessed with the unsurpassed model of fatherly watchfulness and care. In the holy Virgin Mother of God, mothers possess an extraordinary ideal of love, modesty, submission, and perfect loyalty. In Jesus, who "rendered them submission," children have before them the divine picture of obedience to admire, venerate, and copy.

This paragraph has special application for those who might think that the Holy Family is not capable of being a true model for the modern Christian family. Joseph and Mary, such persons say, did not use their marriage rights since theirs was a virginal marriage; hence, they can hardly serve as examples for husbands and wives who symbolize their love in marital physical union in accordance with God's laws.

The answer to the difficulty should be almost evident. None of us as individuals ever finds an exact duplicate of our personality reflected in circumstances exactly the same as those amid which we are living. In every case we must *apply* the lesson. Some of its elements fit, some do not. So, too, here. The lesson of Joseph and Mary is shown in their spirit of mutual, selfless love. This is the spirit which must be present in the home if family life is to prosper. Without such love, there can be no meaningful symbolism of mutual living and mutual giving. According to God's loving plan, the physical symbolism of

marriage cannot have its full, deep meaning unless the spirit of generous, self-sacrificing love motivates it. Joseph and Mary lead the way in exemplifying this spirit of oneness.

Let those who are nobly born learn from this family of royal blood how to moderate their conduct in prosperity as well as to retain their self-respect in adversity. Let the wealthy understand how greatly virtue is to be preferred to riches. Workers, and all who are deeply embittered owing to reduced circumstances and a lowered standard of living, particularly in these times, will not lack reason for rejoicing over the lot that has befallen them rather than bewailing it, provided they will but turn their gaze on the blessed members of that Holy Family. In common with them they are subject to labor and with them they have their common cares of everyday life.

Joseph, too, was bound to find ways and means of wresting a livelihood out of his earnings, while the very hands of God plied the tools of a carpenter. Nor, indeed, is there reason for us to wonder at those prudent men of affluence who in the past have wished to put away their wealth and to choose instead poverty with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

In view of these considerations we may say that veneration of the Holy Family, if early introduced into the Catholic home, will steadily gain in vigor. . . . Nothing, in fact, can be conceived more helpful or effective for Christian families than the example of the Holy Family, embracing as it does the perfection and fulfillment of all domestic virtues.

When thus invoked, may Jesus, Mary and Joseph take their place in the family circle as its propitious patrons. May they foster charity, mould character, and encourage the practice of virtue through imitation of their example; and by

sweetening the burdens of this life which everywhere encompass us, may they render them more easy to bear.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, June 14, 1892, the fifteenth year of Our pontificate. 5

* * *

In 1920 Pope Benedict XV issued a special *Motu Proprio* singling out St. Joseph as the patron of workmen. In it he called attention to the fact that fifty years had elapsed since St. Joseph had been declared Patron of the Universal Church. While deploring the great damage to moral conduct which resulted from the First World War, the Pope urged devotion to St. Joseph as a remedy for the problems which were beginning to assume startling proportions at the time. He particularly recommended to the faithful the devotion to the Holy Family and the devotion to St. Joseph as patron of the dying.

Bonum Sane—Benedict XV

It was good and salutary indeed for the Christian commonwealth that Our predecessor, Pius IX of immortal memory, solemnly declared the most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary and the foster father of the Incarnate Word, St. Joseph, to be the Patron of the Universal Church. But now that the fiftieth anniversary of this happy event will occur next December, We consider it useful and opportune that it should be worthily celebrated by the whole Catholic world.

Casting Our glance over the past fifty years, We behold the wonderfully flourishing conditions of pious institutions which bear witness to the manner in which devotion to the

holy patriarch has been gradually developing among the faithful. When further, then, We consider the calamities afflicting the human race today, We cannot fail to realize how opportune it is to increase this devotion and to spread it ever more widely throughout Christian peoples.

In Our encyclical, "On the Reconciliation of Christian Peace," following the cruel war, We indicated what was necessary to establish order and tranquillity everywhere. In particular, consideration was given by Us to the civil relations that exist between nations and between individuals. Yet today the treatment of another cause of disturbance, much more serious, becomes imperative. There is question now of an evil that has crept into the very heart of society. For the scourge of war had been laid on the human race at the very moment it had become profoundly infected with naturalism—that great worldly plague which, wherever it enters, lessens the desire of heavenly things, extinguishes the flame of divine love, and deprives man of the healing and elevating grace of Christ, leaving him without the light of faith, dependent on the weak and corrupt resources of nature and the slave of unbridled human passion.

Thus it happened that many devoted themselves solely to the acquisition of worldly goods. Moreover, while the contest between the wealthy and the proletariat had already become acute, class hatred now became still more grave by reason of the length and severity of the war, for while this on the one hand brought intolerable privation to the masses, on the other it rapidly made fortunes for the few.

Then, too, the holiness of conjugal fidelity and respect for paternal authority were often grievously transgressed during the war. The remoteness of one spouse served to relax the bond of duty to the other, and the absence of a watchful eye gave rise to freer and more indulgent conduct. More particularly was this notable among younger women. Sincerely to be regretted, therefore, is the fact that public morals have become far more corrupt and depraved than

they had previously been, and for this very reason, too, the so-called "social question" has reached an intensity which causes one to fear the gravest of evils.

In the wishful thinking and expectations of the seditious members of society there has consequently been maturing the advent of a certain universal commonwealth that is to be founded on absolute equality of men and on community of goods. National distinctions are no longer to exist in this, nor is any recognition to be given to the authority of the father over his sons, of public power over the citizens, or of God over men united in civil commonwealth. All such ravings, should they be carried into effect, must culminate in a tremendous social convulsion, such in fact as is now experienced and felt by not a small part of Europe. Precisely a similar condition of affairs, We are aware, is ambitioned among other peoples. The masses are wrought into excitement by the fury and audacity of a few, while grave disturbances break out in many places.

Meanwhile, pre-occupied above all else with this course of events, We have not failed to renew in the sons of the Church a sense of their duty, whenever the occasion presented itself. This purpose, for example, We but recently accomplished through the letter addressed by Us to the bishop of Bergamo and also to the bishops of the Venetian province. And so now, prompted by the same motive, namely to recall to their duty those of our own fold, however many, who earn their bread by the labor of their hands, and to preserve them immune from the contagion of socialism, than which nothing is more opposed to Christian wisdom, We have with great solicitude placed before them in a particular manner the example of St. Joseph, that they may follow him as their special guide and may honor him as their heavenly patron.

Benedict now begins a special encomium of St. Joseph as patron of the workingman.

It was he, who in very deed lived a life similar to theirs; and for this reason our Lord Jesus Christ, though in truth the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, wished to be called the "son of the carpenter." Yet how numerous and how great were the virtues with which he adorned his poor and humble condition! Among all these virtues none was wanting to ennoble the man who was to be the husband of Mary Immaculate and to be thought the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let all persons, then, learn from Joseph to consider present passing affairs in the light of future good which will endure forever, and find consolation amid human vicissitudes in the hope of heavenly things, so that they may aspire to them in a manner conformable to the divine will—that is, by living soberly, justly, and piously. In reference to the labor problem it is opportune to quote here the words which Our predecessor, Leo XIII of happy memory, uttered on this question, for they are such that no other words can be considered appropriate.

Here follows the paragraph from Leo XIII's encyclical, *Quamquam Pluries*, concerning "Considerations . . . for their welfare," as on page 595. Benedict then returns to the devotion to St. Joseph as a means of fostering devotion to the Holy Family and therefore of strengthening holy family life.

With the increase of devotion to St. Joseph among the faithful there will necessarily result an increase in their devotion toward the Holy Family of Nazareth, of which he was the august head, for these devotions spring spontaneously one from the other. By St. Joseph we are led directly to Mary, and by Mary to the fountain of all holiness, Jesus Christ, who sanctified the domestic virtues by His obedience toward St. Joseph and Mary.

We desire, then, that these marvelous exemplars of virtue should serve as inspiration and as models for all

Christian families. Even as the family constitutes the foundation of the human race, so by strengthening domestic society with the bonds of purity, fidelity, and concord, a new vigor and, as it were, new lifeblood will be diffused through all the members of human society under the vivifying influence of the virtue of Christ; nor shall the result consist merely in the correction of public morals but in the restoration of public and civil discipline itself.

Therefore, full of confidence in the patronage of him to whose providence and vigilance it pleased God to entrust His only-begotten Son as well as the Virgin most holy, We earnestly exhort all the bishops of the Catholic world that in the Church's present need they should induce the faithful to implore more earnestly the powerful intercession of St. Joseph. And since there are many ways approved by this Apostolic See for venerating the holy patriarch, especially on all Wednesdays of the year and during the month consecrated to him, We wish that at the instance of each bishop all these devotions should be practiced in each diocese as far as possible.

Then, too, since Joseph, whose death took place in the presence of Jesus and Mary, is justly regarded as the most efficacious protector of the dying, it is Our purpose here to lay a special injunction on Our venerable brethren that they assist in every possible manner those pious associations which have been instituted to obtain the intercession of St. Joseph for the dying—such as the "Association for a Happy Death," and the "Pious Union of St. Joseph's Passing," established for the benefit of those who are in their last agony. . . .

Given at St. Peter's at Rome, July 25, Feast of St. James the Apostle, 1920, in the sixth year of Our pontificate. ⁶

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One of the titles of St. Joseph which deserves to be more widely known among Catholics is his position as patron of the Church's struggle against

atheistic communism. This is a logical development of his position as Patron of the Universal Church and patron of labor. The declaration was made by Pius XI at the conclusion of *Divini Redemptoris*, his encyclical on atheistic communism. It is noteworthy that Pope Pius issued the encyclical on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1937.

Divini Redemptoris—Pius XI

To hasten the advent of the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ, so ardently desired by all, We place the vast campaign of the Church against world communism under the standard of St. Joseph, her mighty protector. He belongs to the working-class, and he bore the burdens of poverty for himself and the Holy Family, whose tender and vigilant head he was. To him was entrusted the divine Child when Herod loosed his assassins against Him. In a life of faithful performance of everyday duties he left an example for all those who must gain their bread by the toil of their hands. He won for himself the title of the "just man," serving thus as a living model of that Christian justice which should reign in social life. ⁷

Several discourses of Pius XI present tributes to St. Joseph which deserve to be better known. All of these were delivered on feasts of St. Joseph. The first was given on April 21, 1926, the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph. On this occasion Pope Pius proclaimed the decrees of beatification of the Venerables André-Hubert Fournet (founder of the Sisters of the Cross) and Jeanne-Anthide Thournet (foundress of the Daughters of Charity). This allocation was presented in the Consistorial Hall, and particularly emphasizes that the Church was al-

ready in existence, although in seedling form, at the time that Joseph was head of the Holy Family; hence, his title of Patron of the Universal Church fundamentally belonged to him already then.

Here is a saint who enters the world and spends his life in fulfilling the most exalted mandate from God, the incomparable mission of guarding the purity of Mary, of protecting the divinity of Jesus Christ, a knowing cooperator in preserving the secret unknown to all except the most Blessed Trinity, that of the mystery of the Redemption of the human race. And it is in the grandeur of this mission that the singular and absolutely incomparable holiness of St. Joseph lies, because truly such a great mission was not confided to any other soul, to any other saint, and thus, between Joseph and God we do not see nor can we see anyone except the most holy Mary with her divine maternity. It is evident that in such an exalted mission this Saint already possessed title to the glory which is his, the glory of Patron of the Universal Church. The whole Church was, in fact, there beside him, like a seed already fecundated, in the humanity and in the Blood of Jesus Christ; the whole Church was there in the virginal motherhood of the most holy Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all the faithful, who at the foot of the Cross were to become her children in the blood of her firstborn son Jesus. What a small thing in human eyes, but what a great thing in the spiritual view: the Church was already there with St. Joseph when he was in the Holy Family, the guardian, the protecting father. ⁸

The second pertinent allocution occurred on March 19, 1928, on the occasion of the publication of the decree of heroicity of virtues of Jeanne-Elizabeth Bichier des Ages (co-foundress of the Sisters of the Cross). Pius XI here called attention to St. Joseph's superiority over St. John the Baptist and

St. Peter. A selection from this allocution was included by John XXIII in his Apostolic Letter on St. Joseph issued on March 19, 1961.

Between these two missions [of John the Baptist and of St. Peter] there appears the mission of St. Joseph, withdrawn, silent, almost unperceived, destined to shine forth only several centuries later—a silence which was to be followed no doubt by a resounding chant of glory, but long, long afterward. Indeed, there where the mystery is more profound, where the shades of night covering it are more dense, where the silence is more complete, truly there it is that the mission is more exalted and the ensemble more brilliant of the requisite virtues and of the merits called on by happy necessity to be their echo. This was a unique and magnificent mission, that of protecting the Son of God and King of the world; the mission of protecting the virginity and holiness of Mary; the singular mission of entering into participation in the great mystery hidden from the eyes of past ages, and of thus cooperating in the Incarnation and in the Redemption. The whole sanctity of St. Joseph consists precisely in the scrupulously faithful accomplishment of this mission so great and so humble, so exalted and so hidden, so splendid and so surrounded by darkness.⁹

On the 19th of March, 1935, Pius XI returned again to the idea of St. Joseph's connection with the hypostatic union, whereby the divine and human nature of our Lord were linked in the one divine Person of the Second Person of the Trinity. Most striking here is the pope's comment on St. Joseph's all-powerful intercession. The occasion for this allocution was the reading of the decree on the heroic virtues of Emilie de Vialar (foundress of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition).

This is the mystery, the secret of the divine Incarnation, of the Redemption, which the Holy Trinity reveals to man. In truth, it is impossible to rise higher. We are in the order of the hypostatic union, of the personal union of God with man. It is in this moment that the gesture of God invites us to consider the humble and great saint; it is in this moment that God utters the word which explains all the relationships between St. Joseph and all the great prophets and all the other great saints, even those who have had elevated public missions like the apostles. No other distinction can surpass that of having received the revelation of the hypostatic union of the divine Word. . . . The source of every grace is the divine Redeemer; after Him there is Mary, the dispensatrix of the divine graces. But if there is anything which should arouse still greater confidence on our part, it is, in a certain way, the thought that St. Joseph is the one who is able to do everything, along with the divine Redeemer and His divine Mother, and in a manner and with an authority which surpasses that of mere minister and guardian. . . . In the case of Jesus and of Mary, the angels offer them respect and veneration. And in their turn, Jesus and Mary themselves obey and offer their homage to Joseph, for they reverence what the hand of God has established in him, namely, the authority of spouse and the authority of father. Consequently, our confidence in this Saint should be very great, founded as it is on such prolonged and even unique relationships with the very sources of grace and of life, the Blessed Trinity.¹⁰

In the closing stages of his pontificate, Pius XI again alluded to the "omnipotent intercession" of St. Joseph. The allocution of March 19, 1938, was given to a group of young married folk; we do not possess the exact wording of the pope, but the indirect style of *L'Osservatore Romano* clearly reveals the doctrinal thought of Pope Pius.

The august Pontiff could not wish for his children anything truer, richer, more full of the promise of every grace and prosperity, than to pray that their homes be like the family presided over truly by St. Joseph with the authority of a father, and to ask that this protector of the family to which Mary and Jesus belonged be also the great patron of their homes. May St. Joseph by his paternal providence and his omnipotent intercession be always ready to help their homes and their own persons! It is customary to reserve this use of "omnipotent" to the intercession of Mary, but he dares to say that it should also be applied to St. Joseph. Actually, the intercession of Mary is that of the mother, and consequently, we do not see how her divine Son could refuse anything to such a mother. But the intercession of St. Joseph is that of the husband, the putative father, the head of the family of Nazareth which was composed of himself, Mary, and Jesus. And as St. Joseph was truly the head or the master of that house, his intercession cannot be but all-powerful. For what could Jesus and Mary refuse to St. Joseph, he who was entirely devoted to them all his life, and to whom they truly owed the means of their earthly existence? ¹¹

The outstanding event of the pontificate of Pius XII as far as the devotion to St. Joseph was concerned was his institution of the feast of Joseph the Worker. Like so many events of this sort, the announcement at the time attracted only moderate attention that did not suggest the importance it would eventually assume.

A change in the liturgy is not the result of a decision made overnight. It is the culmination of long and careful study of suggestions made to the Holy See. Often enough, these suggestions themselves have been brought forward for years without

apparent success. Even if the idea in itself as first represented seems reasonable, other factors can make it inexpedient. Prudent moderation must guide the Church in matters such as this. The selection of feasts must never overload the Church calendar with observances in a number so unreasonable that there would be a danger of substituting formalism for the spirit of genuine piety.

Another danger is that if the feasts become too many, they also become so common that they cannot be—or at least they will not be—widely celebrated and observed. In such a case they lose the effect for which they were intended, namely, to remind the faithful of inspiring truths to live by. Fortunately, in the case of the feast of Joseph the Worker the danger of these retarding factors was not present.

The feast of Joseph the Worker was first announced by Pius XII in an address given on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Christian Association of Italian Workers, May 1, 1955.

Joseph the Worker—Pius XII

From the beginning We put your organization under the powerful patronage of St. Joseph. Indeed, there could be no better protector to help deepen in your lives the spirit of the gospel. As We said then [March 11, 1945], that spirit flows to you and to all men from the heart of the God-man, Savior of the world, but certainly, no worker was ever more completely and profoundly penetrated by it than the foster father of Jesus, who lived with Him in closest intimacy and community of family life and work. Thus, if you wish to be close to Christ, We again today repeat, "Go to Joseph" (Gen. 41:44).

Yes, beloved workers, the Pope and the Church cannot withdraw from the divine mission of guiding, protecting, and loving especially the suffering, who are all the more dear the more they are in need of defense and help, whether they be workers or other children of the people. This duty and obligation We, the Vicar of Christ, desire to declare again clearly here on this first day of May, which the world of labor has claimed for itself as its own proper feast day. We intend that all may recognize the dignity of labor, and that this dignity may be the motive in founding the social order and the law founded on the equitable distribution of rights and duties.

Acclaimed in this way by Christian workers and having received, as it were, Christian baptism, the first day of May—far from being an incitation to discord, hate, and violence—is and will be a recurring invitation to modern society to accomplish what is still lacking for social peace; a Christian feast, therefore, that is a day of rejoicing for the concrete and progressive triumph of the Christian ideals of the great family of all who labor.

In order that this meaning may remain in your minds and that in some way We may make an immediate return for the many and precious gifts brought to Us from all parts of Italy, We are happy to announce to you Our determination to institute—as in fact We do now institute—the liturgical feast of St. Joseph the Worker, assigning it to the first day of May. Are you pleased with this Our gift, beloved workers? We are certain that you are, because the humble workman of Nazareth not only personifies before God and the Church the dignity of the man who works with his hands, but he is always the provident guardian of you and of your families.¹²

We do not know who first thought of the plan for the new feast (whether Pope Pius himself or his advisors), but it was an excellent decision on many scores. Probably the greatest advantage was that it

“baptized” May Day. For decades the first of May had been observed in European countries as nothing more than a mere celebration honoring the workingman. The cause of labor had been espoused by atheistic communism, and under such auspices May Day became an excuse for rioting, anarchy, and the preaching of irreligious doctrines of class hatred. There was no doubt that May Day was considered a holiday; the Church’s master stroke was to make it a *holyday* as well, and particularly a holyday of labor, by dedicating it to St. Joseph, himself a workingman.

This is not the first time in Church history that such a change had occurred. Christmas Day is an example. It substituted the birth of the eternal Sun of justice for the pagan feast celebrating the “birth of the sun” at the height of midwinter. Just as Christmas annually calls attention to the Incarnation of Jesus, so now does the feast of Joseph the Worker call attention to the dignity of Joseph, husband and father in the Holy Family at Nazareth.

Another parallel exists in the case of the feast of Christ the King, celebrated on the last Sunday of October. In the encyclical on Christ the King, Pius XI made a comment which holds equally true for Joseph the Worker. The faithful, he said, are instructed in the truths of the faith and are brought to appreciate the inner joys of religion far more effectually by the yearly celebration of liturgical feasts than by any pronouncement, however weighty, of the teaching authority of the Church.

One of the reasons for this is that the Church's teachings primarily influence the mind, but her feasts affect both mind and heart. We remember, too, that a statement of doctrine can lie unnoticed amid the pages of tomes that are practically inaccessible to the average person and therefore unknown to him. On the other hand, the annual recurrence of a feast is a reminder and an occasion for popular explanation of its meaning.

In this case the meaning of the feast of Joseph the Worker is two-fold: first, the dignity of St. Joseph, and second, the dignity of labor as personified in St. Joseph. The feast replaced the former Solemnity of St. Joseph, which had been celebrated since 1913 on the third Wednesday after Easter. As far as St. Joseph was concerned, the Solemnity had been a worthy mark of honor in itself, but it did not receive much popular notice. It could not be observed widely outside monasteries and convents simply because it was an obscure "third Wednesday." Joseph the Worker, however, changed all that. The public notice given to May Day has been given an inseparable connection with the religious notice given St. Joseph.

In the United States and Canada, May Day is not observed as a secular holiday as it is in Europe, and hence receives or might receive less prominence religiously. None the less, the feast of May 1 has been signaled as a fitting way to open the month of Mary with the honoring of Mary's husband. More-

over, in the years when this falls on a Sunday, the mass of Joseph the Worker will be said as the parish mass and will thus do its duty of instructing the faithful as far as St. Joseph is concerned. Still another advantage exists in that the mass of Joseph the Worker may by special indult of the Holy See be said on Labor Day in September in both the United States and in Canada. The resultant sanctifying of Labor Day is all to the good, both for the increase of devotion to St. Joseph and for a proper evaluation of the vocation of labor.

The list of advantages of the change can be continued even more. It is true that the feast seems inferior theologically to the more exalted and broader, though more abstract universal patronage of St. Joseph, which was the subject of the Solemnity which it replaced and which was then included in March 19. This, however, is not without its own benefit. The subject of the feast—Joseph's patronage of labor, and the dignity of labor—is much more intelligible to the popular mind because it is more concrete and closer to the material needs of everyday life.

* * *

In the last year of Pius XII's life, just seven months before he died, the Pope gave another public manifestation of his devotion to St. Joseph. He composed a prayer in honor of Joseph the Worker, to be said by workmen, and on March 11, 1958, attached to it a partial indulgence of three years.

Prayer to Joseph—Pius XII

O glorious patriarch St. Joseph, humble and just workman of Nazareth, who has given to all Christians but especially to us, the example of a perfect life of assiduous work and admirable union with Mary and Jesus, help us in our daily tasks, so that we Catholic workmen may also be able to find in them the efficacious means to glorify our Lord, to sanctify ourselves, and to be useful to the society in which we live—all as supreme ideals of our actions.

Obtain for us from our Lord, O beloved Protector, humility and simplicity of heart, love of work, and benevolence toward those who are our companions in it; conformity to the divine will in the inevitable sufferings of this life, and joy in bearing them; a consciousness of our specific social mission and a sense of our responsibility; a spirit of discipline and of prayer; docility and respect toward our superiors; brotherhood toward our equals; charity and indulgence for those who depend on us. Be with us in moments of success, when everything beckons us to taste the honest fruits of our fatigue; but sustain us in our hours of sadness, when heaven seems to be closed against us and the very instruments of labor seem to rebel in our hands.

Grant that according to your example we may keep our eyes fixed on our mother Mary, your most sweet spouse, who silently used to do her weaving in a corner of your modest workshop, with the sweetest smile playing on her lips. Grant that we may not lose sight of Jesus, who busied Himself with you at your carpenter's bench. Thus may we be able to lead a peaceful and holy life on earth, as a prelude to that eternally happy one which awaits us in heaven for ever and ever. Amen.¹³

* * *

Collections of papal documents typically contain solemn pronouncements couched in technical phrases. The following text is something far differ-

ent. On February 19, 1958, Pius XII gave a radio-cast to American schoolchildren, which was largely concerned with St. Joseph. The speech is of particular interest because throughout, the Pope exalted the role, the holiness, and the personality of St. Joseph. This address does not have, of course, the doctrinal importance of a formal encyclical or official decree, but it has great value in mirroring the mind of Pius XII and the modern appreciation of the Saint.

To American Schoolchildren—Pius XII

Is it possible that another Lent has come around and that We are asked once again to speak to Our dear schoolchildren in America? Surely nothing pleases Us more than to talk with the young ones of the cherished flock belonging to the divine Shepherd. During the year hundreds and hundreds of children come to see Us here in Rome and out in the hill country nearby; We talk to them and often they answer Our questions. We cannot do that this morning, because you are too far away. But at least Our voice can travel across the ocean, and in one way brings Us really into your classrooms.

And what is the message it carries for you? Let Us tell you briefly. Next week you will begin the month of St. Joseph. Now We have decided this year to entrust to him the charge of all We fondly wish and hope for from you.

St. Joseph, as you have all learned at home and at school, was a very holy man. He had to be, because he was married to the Virgin Mary, the purest, the holiest, the most exalted of all God's creatures. More than that, the Eternal Father confided to the care of St. Joseph His own only-begotten Son, become man on earth, Jesus Christ. Mary was the mother of Jesus, the tenderest and most loving of all mothers; and though Joseph was not His father, he had for

Him by a special gift from heaven all the natural love, all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know. With Mary his wife, he shared all the joys and sorrows, the plans and anxieties that come to a mother in bringing up her child. Day after day, at home and in the carpenter shop, his eyes rested on Jesus; he protected Him against the dangers of childhood; he guided His advancing years, and by hard work and with religious devotedness he provided for the increasing needs of the Mother and the Son.

What a beautiful family life there was at Nazareth! You call it the *Holy Family*, and rightly so. In that small house you find Jesus, holy more than anyone can imagine, who has come to help you and everybody become holy and pleasing to the Father. There you find His mother, your Blessed Mother; and, as you know, from the first breath she breathed and all during the days of her life, her soul was simply one marvelous, indescribable thing of beauty, like a precious jewel whose every facet reflected clearly, unobstructed, the infinite holiness of God. And then there was Joseph, modest, self-effacing, yet exercising authority over that family. How holy he must have been! Under his fatherly protection and ceaseless, tireless care the young Boy grew into manhood, Who later on Calvary's cross, dying, would restore life to man, and draw all men into oneness through grace with Himself. With Him as their head they should then form that one big, big family scattered all over the world. You call that family the Church, the one, true Catholic Church, of which you are members, and that membership is your richest treasure on earth.

Now let Us ask you, dear children, if Joseph was so engaged heart and soul in protecting and providing for that little family at Nazareth, don't you think that now in heaven he is the same loving father and guardian of the whole Church, of all its members, as he was of its Head on earth? We hear your answer: yes. And does he not know that, oh so many of its children are terribly in need of help? They

need help for their souls—the grace of repentance, the grace of perseverance, the grace of humble, unstinted surrender to the holy will of God; and Joseph turns to Jesus, of old his Boy of Nazareth, and at once graces flow abundantly for the souls of men.

They need help also for their bodies: fathers are out of work, mothers are bending beneath burdens far too heavy, children are without sufficient food and clothing and medicines when ill; and Joseph turns to you. Yes, it is to you he turns. He must look to you to aid and encourage those children, who are also your little brothers and sisters. We know you will not fail him. Your devotion to him will spur you on to make little sacrifices and big ones, too, so that the vast human family that Jesus yearns to unite in faith and charity, will know that St. Joseph is still the alert and generous guardian and protector, working now through his loyal clients. And so as We said at the beginning, with confidence We commit to him the charge to bestir the unselfish affection that fills your hearts for those who need and ask assistance.

We leave you now, dear children, but first We wish to give you a proof of the fatherly care We have for all of you. And so, with the full affection of Our heart We impart to you, to your dear parents, and all at home, to your teachers and pastors, Our Apostolic Benediction. May it draw down into your souls the strong grace of abiding fidelity to God and His Church; and never forget that St. Joseph is always standing by to protect you. ¹⁴

* * *

On March 19, 1959, John XXIII recalled the basic reasons why St. Joseph is honored by the Church as patron for those in so many walks of life. The occasion was a discourse before a large meeting of Roman workers.

All the saints in glory assuredly merit honor and particular respect, but it is evident that St. Joseph possesses a just title to a more sweet, more intimate and penetrating place in our hearts, belonging to him alone. . . . Here we are able to estimate completely all the greatness of St. Joseph, not only by reason of the fact that he was close to Jesus and Mary, but also by the shining example he has given of all virtues. . . . St. Joseph is the outstanding protector of the family, along with the other two persons whose incomparable guardian he was. The mere mention of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph reminds us that here we find all human history; here is summed up all the saving action, the grandeur, the beauty, the splendor of the Catholic Church.¹⁵

Le Voci—John XXIII

Two years later, Pope John issued a document of great importance for the cause of St. Joseph: an Apostolic Letter addressed to the bishops and the faithful of the entire world. Not only did this Apostolic Letter summarize the acts of earlier popes in honor of St. Joseph; it announced the selection of the Saint as heavenly protector of the Second Vatican Council.

Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children!

The expressions which have come to Us from every corner of the earth stir Us to draw profit from the good dispositions of so many open and sincere hearts, who joyously wait for the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and hope for its successful outcome. With loving spontaneity they devote themselves to beg heavenly aid. They turn toward increased religious fervor, toward a clearer understanding of all that the celebration of the Council will require beforehand and will subsequently produce in the form of increasing the interior and social life of the Church and the spiritual renovation of the entire world.

And now, as a new spring appears and we stand on the threshold of the sacred Easter liturgy, we find ourselves face to face with the gentle and kind figure of St. Joseph, the august spouse of Mary—one so dear to those souls most responsive to the attractions of Christian asceticism and to expressions of religious devotion that are reserved and modest but all the sweeter and more pleasing for being so.

In the Church's cult, Jesus, the Word of God made man, received from the beginning the adoration which is due Him as the splendor of the substance of the Father, a splendor reflected in the glory of the saints. Mary, His mother, followed Him closely ever since the first centuries, piously venerated in the images of the catacombs and basilicas as "holy Mary, Mother of God." Joseph, however, except for certain sporadic appearances which are found here and there in the writings of the fathers, for long centuries remained in his characteristic obscurity, like a kind of ornamental detail in the picture of the Savior's life. Time had to pass before his cultus passed from passing glances to the hearts of the faithful, then to surge forth in a special movement of prayer and trusting confidence. Such fervent joy was reserved for the outpourings of our modern day; oh! how rich and imposing have they been! We are particularly happy to collect from them certain observations that are at once quite characteristic and significant.

St. Joseph in the Words of the Pontiffs of the Last Hundred Years

Among the various petitions which the Fathers of the First Vatican Council presented to Pius IX during their meeting in Rome (1869-70), the first two concerned St. Joseph. The first asked that his cultus might be accorded a higher place in the sacred Liturgy; it was signed by 153 bishops. The second, signed by 43 Superiors-general of Religious Orders, asked for the solemn proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church (*Acta et Decre-*

ta Sacrorum Conciliorum recentiorum—Collectio Lacensis, t. 8, col. 856-857).

Pius IX

Pius IX received both requests with joy. At the very beginning of his pontificate (December 10, 1847), he had set aside the third Sunday after Easter for the feast and the liturgy of the Patronage of St. Joseph. Already in 1854, in a sparkling and fervent talk he had pointed to St. Joseph as the surest hope of the Church after the Blessed Virgin; and on December 8, 1870, when the Vatican Council had been suspended because of political events, he chose the happy coincidence of the feast of the Immaculate Conception for the official proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church and for the elevation of the feast of March 19 in its liturgical celebration as a double rite of the first class (Decr. *Quemadmodum Deus*, Dec. 8, 1870, *Acta Pii IX*, P.M., t. 5, Rome, 1873, 282). That decree of December 8, 1870, issued "To the City and to the World," was brief but precious and admirable, truly worthy of the "For Perpetual Memory" since it opened for the successors of Pius IX a mine of the richest and most precious inspiration.

Leo XIII

For the feast of the Assumption in 1889, the immortal Leo XIII issued the letter *Quamquam Pluries* (*Acta Leonis XIII*, P.M., Rome, 1880, 175-180), the fullest and richest document which a pope ever issued in honor of the putative father of Jesus, pointing up his characteristic role as the model for fathers of families and for workers. From it originated the beautiful prayer, "To thee, O blessed Joseph," which did so much to fill Our childhood with sweetness.

St. Pius X

The holy Pontiff Pius X added many new expressions of devotion and love for St. Joseph to those of Pope Leo, and he willingly accepted the dedication made to him of a

treatise illustrating the devotion (*Epist ad R. P. A. Lepicier, O.S.M.*, February 12, 1908; *Acta Pii X, P.M.*, Rome, 1914, 168-169). He also added to the treasure of indulgences for the recitation of the Litany that is so dear and so pleasing to recite. How expressive are the words used by him in this grant! "Our Most Holy Father Pope Pius X is devoted to the renowned patriarch St. Joseph with a special and constant religious love for him who is the putative father of the divine Redeemer, the chaste husband of the Virgin Mother of God, and the powerful Patron before God of the Catholic Church"—and note the depth of personal feeling—"and whose glorious name he received at birth" (*AAS*, 1 [1909], 220). Note the other words for the announcement of the reasons for these new grants: "In order to increase the veneration of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church" (*Decr. S.C.R.*, July 24, 1911; *AAS* 3 [1911], 351).

Benedict XV

At the outbreak of the first great European War, when the eyes of St. Pius X had closed on life here below, Pope Benedict XV was providentially raised up to move across the sorrowful years 1914 to 1918 like a kindly star bringing universal consolation. He, too, was quick to promote devotion to the Holy Patriarch. It is to him that we owe the introduction of the two new prefaces into the Canon of the mass: that of St. Joseph and that for masses for the dead, happily associating them by issuing the two decrees on the same day, April 9, 1919 (*AAS*, 11 [1919], 190-191), as if to remind men of the way in which sorrows and consolation are mingled and shared in the two families: the heavenly family of Nazareth, of which St. Joseph was the legal head, and the immense human family afflicted with universal grief because of the countless victims of the devastating war. What a sorrowful but at the same time consoling and fitting combination: St. Joseph on the one hand, and on the other, "St. Michael the standard-bearer," each presenting to the Lord the souls of the departed "into the holy light."

In the following year—July 25, 1920—Pope Benedict returned to this subject while preparations were being made for the fiftieth anniversary of Pius IX's proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. He came back to it in the light of theological doctrines with his *Motu Proprio, Bonum Sane* (July 25, AAS 12 [1920], 313), which throughout breathed forth an air of tenderness and unwavering trust. Oh! how beautiful to cast new light on the meek and kindly figure of the Saint, and to have the Christian people call upon him to protect the Church Militant, at the very moment when they were beginning to re-dedicate their finest efforts to spiritual and material reconstruction in the wake of so many calamities; and finally, to offer consolation to so many millions of human victims, poised on the threshold of their last agony. For these victims, Pope Benedict wished the bishops and many pious societies throughout the world to offer up their prayers to St. Joseph, patron of the dying.

Pius XI and Pius XII

The last two Pontiffs—Pius XI and Pius XII—of dear and venerated memory—showed deep and edifying fidelity in following the same path of recommending fervent devotion to the Holy Patriarch in all of their appeals, their exhortations, and their inspiring words. At least on four different occasions, Pius XI, in solemn allocutions dealing with new saints and very often at the annual celebrations of March 19th, for example in 1928 (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, S.E.I., vol. 1, 1922-28, p. 779-780), and again in 1935 and in 1937 took the occasion to exalt St. Joseph: the many glories that shone forth from the spiritual image of the guardian of Jesus, of the chaste husband of Mary, of the pious and modest workman of Nazareth, and of the Patron of the Universal Church, our powerful shield of defense against the efforts of world atheism, intent on wiping out Christian nations.

Pius XII picked up this keynote from his predecessor and made it echo forth in the same tones, in so many allocutions that were always beautiful, sparkling, and felicitous. Thus, on April 10, 1940 (*Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di S. S. Pio XII*, vol. 2, pp. 65-69), he invited newly-weds to place themselves under the secure and sweet cloak of the spouse of Mary; and in 1945 (*ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 5-10) he called upon the members of Christian associations for workingmen to honor Joseph as their lofty model and as the invincible guardian of their ranks; and ten years later, in 1955 (*ibid.*, vol. 17, pp. 71-76), he announced the institution of the annual feast of St. Joseph the Worker. This recently established feast, celebrated on May 1, takes the place of that on the Wednesday of the second week after Easter, while the traditional feast of March 19 will henceforth mark the date of the solemn and definitive celebration of the patronage of St. Joseph over the Universal Church.

This same Holy Father Pius XII was pleased to adorn the heart of St. Joseph with a precious garland in the form of a warm prayer recommended to the devotion of priests and faithful throughout the world; he enriched it with many indulgences. It is a prayer of eminently professional and social nature, and therefore well suited for those who find themselves subject to the law of work, which is for them "a law of honor, of a peaceful and holy life, and a prelude to eternal happiness." Among other ideas, it says, "Be with us, O St. Joseph, in our moment of success, when everything beckons us to taste the honest fruits of our fatigue; but most of all be with us and sustain us in the hours of sadness when heaven seems to be closed against us and the very instruments of our labor are about to rebel in our hands" (*ibid.*, vol. 20, p. 535).

March 19: Definitive date for the Feast of the Patronage

Venerable brethren and beloved sons! We felt that it was opportune for Us to propose these notes on history

and religious piety for the fervent attention of your souls, trained to a fine sense of how a Christian and Catholic should live, precisely on this date of March 19, when the feast of St. Joseph coincides with the beginning of Passiontide and prepares us for a deep familiarity with the most impressive and saving mysteries of the sacred Liturgy. The dispositions that lead us to veil the images of Jesus crucified, of Mary, and of the saints during the two weeks which come before Easter, are an invitation to a holy inner recollection concerning our relationships with our Lord in our prayer; it should be a meditation and a supplication that is frequent and ardent. Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints are waiting for us to express our trusting, heartfelt prayers; and it is only natural for these prayers to center on things that most closely correspond to the needs of the Catholic Church universal.

Expectation for the Ecumenical Council

There can be no doubt that the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican stands at the center and in first place among these needs and cares; it is now eagerly awaited by all those who believe in Jesus, the Redeemer, and who belong to our Mother the Catholic Church, or to one of the various groups that are separated from it and yet still anxious—at least as far as many are concerned—for a return to peace and unity that will be in full accord with Christ's teaching and His prayer to His heavenly Father. It is only natural for Us to have as Our aim, in thus recalling the words of the popes of the last century, to stir up the Catholic world to work for the success of this great plan for order, for spiritual improvement, and for peace, which constitute the purpose and goal of an Ecumenical Council.

The Council at the Service of All Souls

Everything about the Church as Jesus established it is great and worthy of attention. The celebration of a Council gathers the most distinguished persons of the ecclesiastical

world around the fathers: those who are most richly endowed with the gifts of theological and juridical learning, of organizing ability, of apostolic zeal, and fervor. This is what a Council is: the Pope at the summit, and around him and with him cardinals, bishops from every rite and every country, the best qualified scholars and teachers from various levels and from various fields in which they specialize. But the Council is meant for all Christian people; they have an interest in it, for they will share in the more perfect communication of grace and of Christian vitality that will make it easier for them to acquire more quickly the truly precious goods of the present life and thus assure themselves of the riches of the eternal ages.

All, then, are interested in the Council, clergy and laity, great and small of every part of the world, of every class, of every race, of every color; and if there is a protector to be appointed to obtain from heaven, in its preparation and development, that "divine power" by which it seems destined to mark an epoch in the modern history of the Church, it could not be entrusted to a better heavenly protector than St. Joseph, the august head of the family of Nazareth and protector of Holy Church.

Whenever we listen to the echoes of the voices of the popes of this last century of our history, as We just have done, Our heart is particularly moved by the words of Pius XI, which were so typical of him in their calm and carefully thought-out way of expression. We recall hearing a discourse pronounced precisely on March 19, 1928, with an allusion which he just would not and could not restrain, in honor of St. Joseph—of the dear and blessed St. Joseph, as he liked to call him.

"It is very thought provoking," he said, "to see two magnificent figures who were close to each other in the beginnings of the Church now standing alongside each other in brilliance: first, that of St. John the Baptist, who rises out of the desert, sometimes with a thundering voice and sometimes with meekness and gentleness; sometimes like a

roaring lion and at others like a friend rejoicing in the glory of the bridegroom and offering the wonderful testimony of his martyrdom to the whole world. Then the figure of Peter, so full of vigor, who hears those magnificent words from the Divine Master: "Go, and preach to the whole world"; and to himself personally, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." This was a great mission, with divine magnificence and acclaim.

This was what Pius XI had to say; then he continued, so felicitously: "Between these great personages, between these two missions, there appears the mission and the person of St. Joseph, withdrawn, silent, almost unperceived and unknown in humility, in silence, a silence which was to shine forth only centuries later, a silence which was to be followed by a resounding chant of glory in the centuries" (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, Vol. 1, p. 780).

Oh! the invocation of St. Joseph! Oh! devotion to St. Joseph for the protection of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican!

Venerable brethren and sons of Rome, brethren and well beloved children of the entire world! This is what We wanted to lead up to and this is why We are sending this apostolic letter on March 19th. We wanted the celebration of the feast of St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church, to bring your souls the inspiration for an extraordinary renewal of fervor that will come from a more lively, more ardent, and more constant prayerful participation in the cares of Holy Church, your teacher and mother, your instructor and guide for this extraordinary event—the Twenty-first Ecumenical Council and the Second of the Vatican—to which the public press of the whole world has been devoting lively interest and respectful attention.

You know very well that the first phase of organizing the Council is moving along calmly, effectively, and in encouraging fashion. Distinguished prelates and clergymen by the hundreds have come from every part of the world and are now meeting here in the City; they have been

divided up into various well organized sections, each with responsibility for some important work all its own. They are following the lines laid down by the priceless contents of a series of imposing volumes that have gathered together the thoughts and experience and suggestions that are the fruit of the wisdom, intelligence, and apostolic zeal that constitutes the real wealth and treasure of the Catholic Church of the past, the present, and the future. All the Ecumenical Council needs in order to reach a successful conclusion is the light of truth and of grace, the discipline of study and of silence, and a serene peace and trust in minds and hearts. This is on the human side. On the other hand, the Christian people must call down God's aid from on high through their prayers and through their efforts to lead model lives that will be a foretaste and a first evidence of the firm determination that each one of the faithful must make to apply and put into practice the teaching and directives that will be proclaimed at the end of the eagerly awaited event—which is now well on its way to what promises to be a successful conclusion.

Venerable brethren and beloved children!

The luminous thought of Pope Pius XI, on March 19, 1928, still lingers with us. Here in Rome the sacrosanct Cathedral of the Lateran is always resplendent in the glory of the Baptist. But in the great basilica of St. Peter's, where precious mementoes of the whole of Christianity are venerated, there is also an altar for St. Joseph, and We intend, and We propose on this date, March 19, 1961, that the altar of St. Joseph be adorned with new splendor, more handsomely and more solemnly, and that it become a center of attraction and religious piety for individual souls and for large crowds. It is under the heavenly canopy of the Vatican basilica, around the Head of the Church, that the ranks of the members of the Apostolic College will be united from all parts of the globe, even the most distant, for the Ecumenical Council.

O St. Joseph! It is here, in this very place, that you will exercise your office of "Protector of the Universal Church." It has been our desire to present to you, through the voices and the documents of Our immediate predecessors of the last century—from Pius IX through Pius XII—a crown of honor, echoing the testimonies of affectionate veneration which are now ascending from every Catholic nation and every missionary region. Be always our protector. May your interior spirit of peace, of silence, of good works, and of prayer, in the service of the Church, animate us always and make us rejoice, in union with your blessed Spouse, our most sweet and Immaculate Mother, in a most strong and sweet love of Jesus, the glorious and immortal king of ages and peoples. Amen.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, March 19, 1961, the third year of Our Pontificate.

PP. John XXIII ¹⁶

On the same day that the Apostolic Letter was officially released, Pope John XXIII addressed various religious communities and Catholic lay organizations at Rome, in an allocution containing several outstanding tributes to St. Joseph. The following selections are pertinent:

You can image what tenderness We feel this morning as We greet you beloved children who have come from every corner of Rome, just a few hours after publication of the Apostolic Letter on devotion to St. Joseph. . . .

As you wonderful laymen and outstanding religious try to come closer to the gentle figure of the guardian of Jesus, you find there the best kind of lesson for all of you as a group and the best kind of example for the special tasks entrusted to each and every one of you. He offers a timely reminder and he supplies that sense of balance and of patience, that love of silence and love of sacrifice which brings

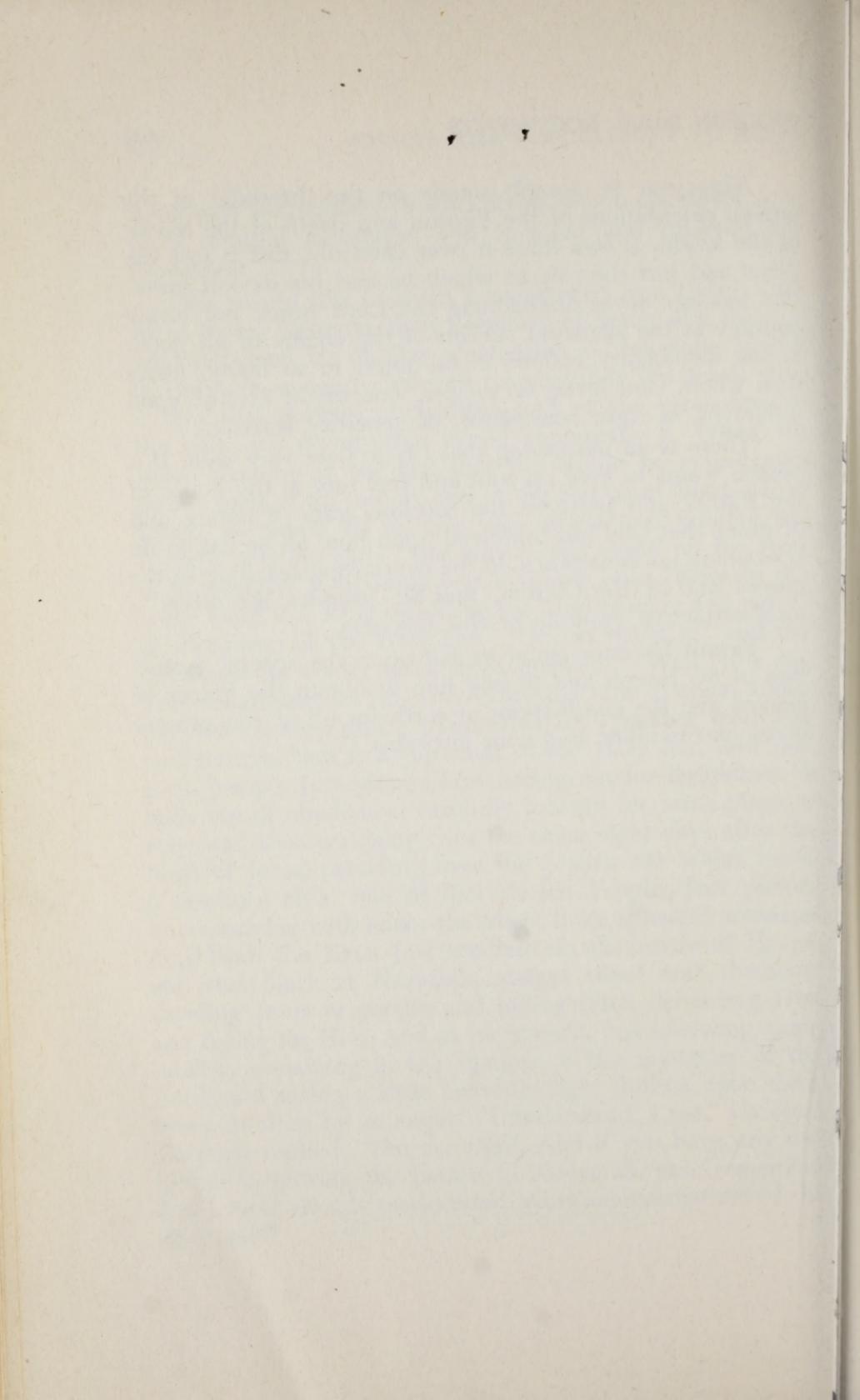
soundness and solidity to institutions which are devoted to piety, mutual assistance, and spiritual and material improvement.

We would like to share a secret with you today. Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, then Secretary of State, was the one who informed Us of Our nomination as Apostolic Visitor in Bulgaria—a dearly beloved country that We recall with a love that remains unchanged—and of the promotion to the episcopal dignity that would accompany it. When We heard mention of the fact that We would be consecrated on the feast of St. Joseph, and in the church of San Carlo al Corso, he asked Us in that very direct and pointed but friendly way he had: “And why in the world on the feast of St. Joseph?” Our reply was a simple one: “Because this is the Saint We think would be the ideal teacher and patron of diplomats of the Holy See.” “Oh, so that’s it!” said the Cardinal. “I would never have guessed.” “Well, you see, Your Eminence, it’s this way. Knowing how to obey; knowing how to keep quiet; when need be, speaking with care and reserve; that is a diplomat of the Holy See, and that is St. Joseph. Just picture him setting out for Bethlehem at once out of obedience; carefully looking for some place to stay; and then watching over the cave; eight days after the birth of Jesus, presiding over the Jewish rite which made a newborn child one of the Chosen People. Just picture him receiving with honor the Magi, those splendid ambassadors from the East. Just see him on the roads of Egypt, and then back at Nazareth, always silent and obedient: showing Jesus to people and hiding Him; defending Him and caring for Him. And as for himself, just following along quietly, remaining in the shadow of the mysteries of the Lord, and seeing a little heavenly light thrown upon them every so often by an angel.” “I understand, I see,” Cardinal Gasparri replied. “You are right. And if you have any difficulty in picking the person to consecrate you, remember that I have already consecrated many representatives of the Holy See.”

This year St. Joseph stands on the threshold of the annual celebrations of the Passion and death of the Savior of the world. If you think it over carefully, this is just the place and just the role in which he and his devout imitators belong: never abandoning the Lord Jesus; not losing courage at the apparent success of the enemy of all good, at the momentary eclipse to be noted in so many, many men whom God loves, an eclipse, one might say, of good judgment, of right conscience, of generous activity. . . .

There is an old saying that fits in here very well. If a person wants to save his soul and feel safe in the house of the Father and preserve the precious gifts of nature and of grace that God has bestowed upon him, all he has to do is examine his conscience on the everlasting teaching of the gospel and of the Church; and St. Joseph's life offers a most attractive example of this teaching. . . .

Permit Us once again to call upon the special protection of St. Joseph and to beg him to obtain the graces of heaven and the consolations of earth for all of you present here, your families, and your institutes. ¹⁷



Epilogue

HAIL JOSEPH!

SON OF DAVID, MAN OF JUSTICE,

YOU ARE THE VIRGINAL HUSBAND OF MARY,

THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD.

YOU ARE THE VIRGINAL FATHER

OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

HOLY JOSEPH,

PATRON OF THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST,

PRAY FOR US WHO ASK YOUR HELP,

NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH,

AMEN.

APPENDIX I

A COMBINED CHRONOLOGY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF ACTIONS OF THE HOLY SEE
RELATING TO ST. JOSEPH AND ISSUED SINCE 1479

- 1479 Sixtus IV introduces the Feast of St. Joseph at Rome. (Cf. p. 537.)
- 1621 May 8—Gregory XV orders the Feast of St. Joseph to be observed throughout the world as a holyday of obligation.
(Decree No. 387 of the C.S.R.; Benedict XIV, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, part 2, c. 20, No. 19.)
- 1660 November 25—It is forbidden to celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph on July 20. (Decree No. 1179 of the C.S.R.)
- 1670 December 6—Clement X grants the Feast of St. Joseph the rank of a double of the second class. (Cf. No. 3252 of the C.S.R.)
- 1678 August 17—Apostolic Brief of Innocent XI confirms the selection of St. Joseph as Patron and Protector of the Chinese missions.
(Benedict XIV, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, part 2, c. 14, No. 5.)
- 1714 February 4—Clement XI approves a Proper Mass and Office for the Feast of St. Joseph. (Cf. No. 3252 of the C.S.R.)
- 1726 December 19—Benedict XIII orders the name of St. Joseph inserted in the Litany of the Saints.
(Cf. No. 3252 of the C.S.R.; also Benedict XIV, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, part 2, c. 16.)
- 1847 September 10—Pius IX extends the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph to the whole Church as a double of the second class.
(Cf. Decrees Nos. 3201 and 3252 of the C.S.R.)
- 1870 March 9—Petition presented to the Vatican Council by 43 Generals of Religious Orders, asking that St. Joseph be declared Patron of the Universal Church; also two other petitions signed by 255 and 118 Fathers respectively.
(The petitions are printed in *Collectio Lacensis*, Vol. 7, p. 895.)
- 1870 December 8—Pius IX declares St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church.
(*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 6, 193; translation printed on pp. 578-581.)
- 1871 July 7—Pius IX summarizes the past history of the Feast of St. Joseph and lays down rules for its more worthy celebration in the liturgy.
(Apostolic Brief printed in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 6, 324; Decree No. 3252 of the C.S.R.; translation on pp. 581-583.)
- 1873 June 14—The Holy See does not approve of the cultus of the "Heart of St. Joseph." (Decree No. 3304 of the C.S.R.)

- 1878 May 11—If statue of St. Joseph is not on altar, it may be left uncovered in Passiontide. (Decree No. 3448, n. 11, of the C.S.R.)
- 1883 September 19—Leo XIII makes the Feast of St. Joseph an occasion when bishops are to officiate at solemn pontifical functions. (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 16, 205; Decree No. 3595 of the C.S.R.)
- 1884 January 6—Leo XIII adds the oration and other prayers after Mass, in which St. Joseph is invoked (“O God, our refuge and our strength, etc.”). (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 16, 239; *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol. 5, 1884, p. 130.)
- 1889 August 15—Leo XIII issues *Quamquam Pluries*—encyclical letter on devotion to St. Joseph. Together with it the prayer, “Unto thee, O Blessed Joseph,” is approved and recommended to be said in October after the recitation of the Rosary. (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 22, 65; translation given on pp. 584-595.)
- 1892 June 14—Leo XIII calls on the Catholic world to honor and imitate the virtues of the Holy Family, often referring to St. Joseph as intimately related to Jesus and Mary. (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, Vol. 23, 318; translation on pp. 596-600.)
- 1892 August 15—Decree of the Congregation of Sacred Rites denying higher liturgical cultus for St. Joseph. (Decree No. 3789 of the C.S.R.; translation on p. 454.)
- 1909 March 18—Pius X approves and indulgences the Litany of St. Joseph. (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. 1, 290.)
- 1911 July 2—The Feast of St. Joseph may be celebrated on the first Sunday after March 19.
July 24—The feast of March 19 to be celebrated under the title, “The Solemn Commemoration of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” and as a double of the first class; the feast of the Patronage, as the “Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Confessor, Patron of the Universal Church,” on the third Sunday after Easter as a double of the first class with a common octave. (AAS, Vol. 3, 306; 351.)
- 1912 December 6—The titular Feast of St. Joseph is to be celebrated on the third Sunday after Easter. (AAS, Vol. 4, 728.)
- 1913 October 28—The Solemnity of St. Joseph is advanced from the third Sunday after Easter to the third Wednesday; March 19 is correspondingly reduced in rank to a double rite of the second class, although it is retained as a primary feast. (AAS, Vol. 5, 458.)
- 1917 December 12—Benedict XV re-elevates March 19 to a high rank as a double of the first class. (AAS, Vol. 10, 26.)
- 1919 April 9—The Preface of St. Joseph is approved and is assigned for use in all Masses of St. Joseph. (AAS, Vol. 11, 191.)
- 1920 July 25—Benedict XV issues a *Motu Proprio* on “St. Joseph and Labor,” commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Joseph’s declar-

- ation as Patron of the Universal Church.
(AAS, Vol. 12, 313; translation on pp. 600-604.)
- 1921 February 23—"Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse," is ordered to be inserted in the Divine Praises.
(AAS, Vol. 13, 158; also Decree No. 4365 of the C.S.R.)
- 1922 August 9—The invocation of St. Joseph is ordered to be included in the special prayer for the moment of death.
(AAS, Vol. 14, 506.)
- 1926 Allocution of Pius XI, praising St. Joseph.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, April 22-23, 1926; translation on p. 606 of this book.)
- 1928 March 19—Allocution of Pius XI, praising St. Joseph.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20-21, 1928; translation on p. 607 of this book.)
- 1935 March 19—Allocution of Pius XI, on St. Joseph's connection with the hypostatic union.
(*Bollettino del clero romano*, 16 [1935], 57. Translation on p. 608 of this book.)
- 1937 March 19—Pius XI selects St. Joseph as patron in the fight against atheistic communism, in his encyclical, "On Atheistic Communism."
(AAS, Vol. 29, 106; translation on p. 605.)
- 1938 March 19—Pius XI alludes to "omnipotent intercession" of St. Joseph.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 21-22, 1938; translation on p. 609 of this book.)
- 1955 May 1—Feast of Joseph the Worker announced by Pius XII, replacing former Solemnity of St. Joseph.
(AAS 47, 402) (see p. 610.)
- 1958 February 19—Radiocast of Pius XII to American Schoolchildren on the virtues of St. Joseph.
(AAS 50, 174; translation on p. 616 of this book.)
- 1959 March 19—Allocution of John XXIII on virtues of St. Joseph.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20-21, 1959; see p. 619 of this book.)
- 1961 March 19—Apostolic Letter of John XXIII announcing the selection of St. Joseph as heavenly protector of the Second Vatican Council.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 19, 1961; translation on pp. 619-629 of this book.)
- 1961 March 19—Allocution to various religious communities and lay organizations at Rome on the example of St. Joseph.
(*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20-21, 1961; translation on pp. 629-631 of this book.)
- 1962 November 13—John XXIII announces to the Second Vatican Council in its eighteenth session that the name of St. Joseph is to be inserted into the *Communicantes* prayer of the Canon of the Mass.

APPENDIX II

ST. JOSEPH PRAYERS

NEWLY COMPILED AND TRANSLATED

Numbers in parentheses after prayers refer to the 1952 edition of the **Enchiridion Indulgentiarum**; capital letters indicate the indulgence granted, according to list of list of indulgences on pages 652-653.

NOVENA IN HONOR OF ST. JOSEPH

O glorious St. Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, to you do we come to ask your powerful intercession in obtaining from the merciful Heart of Jesus all the helps and graces that we need for our spiritual and temporal welfare, and in particular the grace of a happy death, and the special favor we now implore (*silently recall the grace you are requesting.*) O guardian of the Word incarnate, we know with confidence that your prayers on our behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God, and that God will grant us whatever is for His greater glory and for our greatest good.

℣. O glorious St. Joseph, through your love of Jesus Christ and for the glory of His name,

℞. Hear our prayers and ask God to grant our petitions. (*Say this versicle and response seven times in honor of the Seven Sorrows and Joys of St. Joseph.*)

Let Us Pray

O glorious St. Joseph, spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, obtain for us pure, humble, and charitable hearts, and perfect conformity to the will of God. Be our guide, our father and model during life so that we may merit to die as you did in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Dear St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ, true spouse of the Virgin Mother of God pray for us.

(No. 460; K) (No. 466; L) (No. 467; M) (No. 468; N) (No. 469; O)

NOVENA TO ST. JOSEPH

It consists in turning to St. Joseph four times a day (it does not matter when or where) and honoring him in the four points of:

1. His fidelity to grace. Think of this for a minute, thank God, and ask through St. Joseph to be faithful to grace.

2. His fidelity to the interior life. Think, thank God, and ask.

3. His love of our Blessed Lady. Think, thank God, and ask.

4. His love for the holy Child. Think, thank God, and ask.

TO ST. JOSEPH TO OBTAIN A SPECIAL FAVOR

O blessed St. Joseph, tender-hearted father, faithful guardian of Jesus, chaste spouse of the Mother of God, I pray and beseech you to offer to God the Father, His divine Son bathed in blood on the cross for sinners, and through the most holy name of Jesus obtain for us of the Eternal Father the favor we implore (*here mention silently the favor requested*).

Appease the divine anger so justly aroused by our sins; beg of Jesus mercy for your children. Amid the splendors of eternity do not forget the sorrows of those who suffer, those who pray, those who weep; stay the almighty arm which smites us, that by your prayers and those of your most holy spouse, the Sacred Heart of Jesus may be moved to pity and to pardon. Amen.

LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven,

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God, the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, one God,

Holy Mary,

Saint Joseph,

Illustrious son of David,

Splendor of patriarchs,

Spouse of the Mother of God,

Chaste guardian of the Virgin,

Foster father of the Son of God,

Watchful defender of Christ,

Have mercy on us.

Pray for us.

Head of the Holy Family,
 Joseph most just,
 Joseph most chaste,
 Joseph most prudent,
 Joseph most courageous,
 Joseph most obedient,
 Joseph most faithful,
 Mirror of patience,
 Lover of poverty,
 Model of all who work,
 Glory of family life,
 Guardian of virgins,
 Mainstay of families,
 Consolation of the afflicted,
 Hope of the sick,
 Patron of the dying,
 Terror of demons,
 Protector of holy Church,
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
 spare us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
 graciously hear us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
 have mercy on us.
 V. He made him master of His house.
 R. And ruler of all His possessions.

Let Us Pray

O God, who in Your ineffable providence deigned to choose blessed Joseph as the spouse of Your most holy Mother, grant, we ask, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven, whom on earth we venerate as our protector, You Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen. (No. 462; H J)

THE MEMORARE TO ST. JOSEPH

Remember, O most pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, my beloved patron, that never was it heard that any one invoked your patronage and sought your aid without being comforted. With this confidence I come into your sight and fervently commend myself to you. O foster father of the Redeemer, do not despise my prayer, but receive it graciously. Amen. (No. 472; D)

FOR THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

(including consecration to St. Joseph)

O glorious Saint Joseph, chosen by God to be the foster father of Jesus, chaste spouse of Mary ever Virgin, head of the Holy Family, and therefore appointed by the Vicar of Christ as the heavenly patron and defender of the Church founded by Jesus, with fullest confidence I implore at this moment your powerful aid for all the Church militant. With your truly fatherly love protect in a special way the Supreme Pontiff and all bishops and priests united to the Holy See of Peter. Be the defender of all who labor for souls amid this life's trials and tribulations, and bring all peoples of the earth to submit themselves to the Church, the necessary means of salvation for all men.

Be pleased also, O dear Saint Joseph, to accept the consecration which I now make of myself to you. I dedicate myself wholly to you, that you may always be my father, my patron and my guide in the way of salvation. Obtain for me a great purity of heart, and a fervent love of the interior life. Grant, that following your example, I may direct all my actions to the greater glory of God, in union with the Divine Heart of Jesus, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and with you. Finally, pray for me, that I may share in the peace and joy which you possessed in your holy death. Amen.

(No. 474; D)

TO ST. JOSEPH FOR CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL.

Great Saint Joseph, to whose will the Savior subjected Himself, obtain for me the grace to subject myself in all things to the will of God. Through the merits you obtained when in the darkness of night you obeyed the angel's commands, ask for me this grace, that nothing may detain me from fulfilling the will of God with perfect conformity. In the stable at Bethlehem, on the flight to Egypt, you recommended yourself and those dear to you to divine Providence. Ask for me this same grace to conform myself to the will of God in discouragement and despondency, in health and in sickness, in happiness and in misfortune, in success and in failure so that nothing may disturb the tranquillity of my soul in obediently following the way of God for me. Amen.

IN HONOR OF THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF ST. JOSEPH

1.

O chaste spouse of most holy Mary, glorious Saint Joseph, great was the trouble and anguish in your heart when you were perplexed over putting away your immaculate spouse, yet your joy was ineffable when the sublime mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to you by the angel.

By this sorrow and this joy we ask you to comfort our souls both now and in the sorrows of our final hour with the joy of a good life and a holy death like your own in the company of Jesus and Mary.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

2.

Most blessed patriarch, glorious Saint Joseph, chosen for the office of foster father of the Word made flesh, the sorrow which you felt when you saw the Infant Jesus born amid such poverty was suddenly turned into heavenly joy when you heard the song of the angels, and when you saw the glory of that resplendent night.

By this sorrow and this joy, we ask you to obtain for us that after the course of this life we may pass onward to hear angelic songs of praise and to rejoice in the splendors of heavenly glory.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

3.

Obedient follower of the law of God, glorious Saint Joseph, the Precious Blood which flowed at the circumcision of the Infant Jesus caused your heart to be pierced, but the name of Jesus gave you new life and filled you with peace.

By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that by being free from all sin during life we may die in joy with the most holy name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

4.

O faithful saint, glorious Saint Joseph, who took part in the mysteries of our Redemption, the prophecy of Simeon about the future sufferings of Jesus and Mary brought mortal fear to you but at the same time filled you with blessed joy for the salvation and glorious resurrection which he prophesied would follow for numberless souls.

By this sorrow and this joy obtain for us that we may be among those who through the merits of Jesus and the intercession of the Virgin Mother are to rise in glory.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

5.

O watchful guardian of the incarnate Son of God, glorious Saint Joseph, what toil was yours in supporting and serving the Son of the Most High, especially when you were forced to flee into Egypt, yet what joy you felt having God Himself always with you and seeing the idols of Egypt fall to the ground.

By this sorrow and this joy obtain for us that we may keep the infernal tyrant far distant especially by flight from occasions of sin; and that every idol of earthly affection may fall from our hearts; and being wholly employed in the service of Jesus and Mary for them alone may we live and happily die. (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

6.

O angel on earth, glorious Saint Joseph, how you marveled to have the King of heaven subject to your commands; though your consolation in leading Him out of Egypt was troubled by fear of Archelaus, nevertheless, being assured by the angel, you lived in joy at Nazareth with Jesus and Mary.

By this sorrow and this joy, obtain for us that our hearts may be freed from harmful fears, and that we may have peace of conscience living in security with Jesus and Mary and also dying in their company.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

7.

Pattern of all holiness, glorious Saint Joseph, when you lost the Child Jesus through no fault of your own, with great sorrow you sought Him for three days, until you rejoiced exceedingly in finding Him in the temple amid the doctors.

By this sorrow and this joy, we ask you most earnestly to prevent us from ever losing Jesus by grave sin; but if through supreme misfortune we would lose Him, grant that we may seek Him with untiring sorrow, until we find Him again, particularly at the hour of death. May we pass onward to enjoy His presence in heaven, and there with you, to chant forever His divine mercies.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

Antiphon: Jesus Himself was about thirty years old, being as was supposed, the Son of Joseph.

℣. Pray for us, saint Joseph.

℟. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray

O God, who in Your ineffable providence deigned to choose blessed Joseph as the spouse of Your most holy Mother, grant, we ask, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven, whom on earth we venerate as our protector, You Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen. (No. 470; H J)

"GO TO JOSEPH"

1.

In the trials of this vale of tears, to whom shall we have recourse in our unhappiness if not to you, to whom your beloved spouse Mary entrusted all her precious treasures, to keep them for our benefit? "Go to my spouse Joseph," Mary seems to say to us, "and he will console you, he will give you relief from the evils which press you down, he will make you happy and at peace." Have pity on us, therefore, O Saint Joseph, have pity on us through that love which you fostered toward a spouse so worthy and so lovable.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

2.

We are fully aware that we have aroused the justice of God by our sins, and that we merit His most severe punishments. What will be our place of refuge? In what haven will we be able to obtain safety? "Go to Joseph," Jesus seems to say to us, "go to Joseph with whom I was well pleased, he whom I received and regarded as a father. To him as to a father I have granted all power, that he may use it for your welfare as he so wishes." "Saint Joseph, have pity on us through that love which you bore toward a Son so worthy of respect and so dear.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

3.

Unfortunately, we confess, the sins we have committed call down on our heads the most severe punishments. But to what ark shall we flee in order to be saved? What will be the rainbow that brings blessings to comfort us in our

affliction? "Go to Joseph," the Eternal Father seems to say to us, "go to him who took my place on earth with regard to My Son made man. I put My Son in his care—the everlasting source of grace. All graces, then, are in his hands." Have pity on us, therefore, O Saint Joseph, have pity on us, by that great love you had for God, who has been so generous to you.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

(No. 471; E J)

**"THIRTY DAYS' PRAYER"
IN HONOR OF THE THIRTY YEARS SPENT
WITH JESUS AND MARY**

(For any special intention)

Ever blessed and glorious Joseph, kind and indulgent father, compassionate friend of all in sorrow, through that bitter grief with which your heart was filled when you beheld the sufferings of the infant Savior, and when in prophetic view you contemplated His ignominious passion and death, I ask of you, take pity on me, who am poor and needy. Counsel me in my doubts, console me in my anxieties.

You are the good father and protector of orphans; the advocate of the defenceless; the patron of those who are in need and desolate. Do not, then, disregard my petition. My sins have drawn down upon me the just displeasure of my God, and I am surrounded with sorrows. To you do I come, O loving guardian of the holy family of Nazareth, for shelter and protection.

Listen with a father's solicitude, I ask of you, to the earnest prayer of your needy supplicant, and obtain for me the object of my petition.

I ask it by the infinite mercy of the eternal Son of God, which led Him to take on our nature, to be born into this world of sorrow. I ask it by that humility which filled your heart when you were awed by the mystery wrought in your immaculate wife, and you regarded yourself unworthy of her.

I ask it by that weariness, solicitude, and suffering when at Bethlehem you sought shelter for the holy Virgin, and you were obliged to consent that the Queen of the world should bear the world's Redeemer in a wretched stable.

I ask it by the painful blood-shedding you witnessed at His circumcision. I ask it by the sweetness and power of

the sacred name of Jesus which you conferred on the adorable Infant.

I ask it by the deadly anguish inflicted on you by the prophecy of holy Simeon, which declared the child Jesus and His holy mother the future victims of our sins and of their own great love for us.

I ask it through the sorrow and anguish which filled your soul when the angel declared to you that the life of the child Jesus was sought by His enemies, and to avoid their impious designs you were forced to flee into Egypt with Him and His blessed mother.

I ask it by all the pains, fatigues, and toils of that long and dangerous journey. I ask it by all the sorrows you endured when in Egypt, when sometimes you were not able even by the sweat of your brow to procure ample food for your family.

I ask it by all your solicitude to protect the sacred Child and His immaculate mother during your second journey when you were ordered to return to your native country. I ask it by your peaceful dwelling in Nazareth where so many joys and sorrows were mingled.

I ask it by your extreme affliction in being three days deprived of the company of the adorable Child. I ask it by your joy in finding Him in the Temple, and by the ineffable consolation imparted to you in the cottage of Nazareth, while living in the company of the infant Jesus. I ask it by that wonderful condescension, by which He subjected Himself to your will.

I ask it by that sorrowful foresight continually in your mind of all that Jesus was to suffer when you would no longer be at His side.

I ask it by that painful contemplation by which you foresaw those divine infant hands and feet now so active in serving you, and one day to be pierced with cruel nails; that head resting gently on your breast one day crowned with sharp thorns; that delicate body, now tenderly folded in your mantle and pressed to your heart, one day stripped, mangled, and extended on the Cross.

I ask it by the heroic sacrifice of your will and most precious love by which you offered to the Eternal Father the last awful moment when the God-man was to die for our salvation.

I ask it by your perfect love and conformity with which you received the divine command to depart from this life and from the company of Jesus and Mary. I ask it by the exceeding joy filling your soul when the Redeemer of the world triumphant over death and hell entered into the possession of His kingdom and led you also into it with special honor.

I ask it through Mary's glorious Assumption and through your own assumption into heaven, body and soul, which I believe in pious faith, and through the eternal happiness which with Mary you will have eternally from the vision of God.

O good St. Joseph, I ask you by all your sufferings, sorrows, and joys, hear me and obtain the grant of my petitions. (*Here name them or reflect on them.*) Obtain for all who have asked my prayers all that is useful to them in the plans of God. And finally, dear patron and father, be with me and be with all who are dear to me in our last moments so that we may eternally sing the praises of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

FOR THE DYING

Eternal Father, by the love You have for St. Joseph, who was chosen by You in preference to all men to represent Your divine fatherhood over Your Son made man, have pity on us and on the needy who are dying.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

Eternal divine Son, by the love You have for St. Joseph, Your most faithful guardian on earth, have pity on us and on the needy who are dying.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

Eternal divine Spirit, by the love you have for St. Joseph, he who protected your beloved spouse most holy Mary, have pity on us and on the needy who are dying.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father)

(No. 670; C)

FOR THE SPIRIT OF WORK

Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all who pass their lives in labor, obtain for me the grace to work in the spirit of penance to atone thereby for my many sins;

to work conscientiously, setting devotion to duty before my own desires;

to work with thankfulness and joy, deeming it an honor to use and to develop by my labor the gifts I have received from God;

to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, without ever shrinking from weariness and difficulties;

to work above all with a pure intention and with detachment from self, having always before my eyes the hour of death and the accounting I must then render of time lost, talents wasted, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, which is so fatal to the work of God.

All for Jesus, all through Mary, all in imitation of you, O patriarch Joseph! This shall be my motto in life and in death. Amen. (No. 478; D)

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH FOR OCTOBER

(assigned by His Holiness Leo XIII)

To you, O blessed Joseph we have recourse in our tribulations and having implored the help of your most holy spouse we confidently invoke your patronage also. By that love wherewith you were united to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by the fatherly affection with which you embraced the Child Jesus we humbly pray you to look more graciously upon the inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased with His blood, and to assist us in our needs by your power and strength. O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family protect the chosen people of Jesus Christ; keep far from us, most loving father all blight of error and corruption; mercifully assist us from heaven, most mighty defender, in our present conflict with the powers of darkness; and as of old you rescued the Child Jesus from the supreme peril of His life, so now defend God's holy Church from the snares of the enemy and all adversity. Keep us one and all under your continual protection, in order that by your example and supported by your help, we may be enabled to lead a holy life, die a happy death, and come at last to possess eternal blessedness in heaven. Amen. (No. 476; F J)

"HAIL JOSEPH!"

"Ave Joseph"

Hail Joseph, Son of David, man of justice. You are the virginal husband of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God; you are

the virginal father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Holy Joseph, Patron of the Mystical Body of Christ, pray for us who ask your help now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

FOR CHASTITY

Saint Joseph, father and guardian of virgins, to whose faithful keeping were entrusted Innocence itself, Jesus Christ, and Mary the virgins of virgins, I earnestly ask you, by Jesus and Mary, these pledges so dear to you, to bring me to serve Jesus and Mary most chastely, and to be preserved from all uncleanness, with untainted mind, pure heart, and chaste body. Amen. (No. 473; G J)

FOR A HAPPY DEATH

O blessed Joseph, who yielded your last breath in the loving embrace of Jesus and Mary, when the seal of death shall close my life, come, holy father, with Jesus and Mary to aid me, and obtain for me this one solace I ask for that hour, to die encircled by their holy arms. Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I commend my soul. Amen.

TO KNOW ONE'S VOCATION IN LIFE

O great St. Joseph, who were so docile to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, obtain for me the grace to know the state of life God in His providence destines for me. Do not let me be deceived regarding so important a choice. My happiness in this world depends on this, even perhaps my eternal salvation. Obtain for me, to be enlightened to know the will of God, to be faithful in carrying it out, and to choose that state of life which God has destined for me and which will lead me to a happy eternity. Amen.

BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

O blessed Joseph, how fortunate you were not only to see God whom many kings yearned to see and did not see; not only to listen to God whom many kings yearned to hear and did not hear—but to carry Him and kiss Him, to clothe Him and guard Him! Pray for us, then, O Blessed Joseph, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray

O God, our father of mercies, who deigned to let us share in the kingly priesthood of Your Son Jesus Christ, grant, we ask of You that just as blessed Joseph merited to touch and to carry with reverent hands Your only-begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary, so lead us to prepare ourselves with cleanness of heart and holiness of action that we may worthily receive the all-holy body of Jesus, and merit eternal life through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE PROTECTION OF ST. JOSEPH

O God, infinitely good, who created all things by Your love, ruler of the world by Your ineffable providence, we offer to You our heartfelt gratitude for the numberless blessings You have given us, and in particular, for the special privilege of receiving St. Joseph as our protector, so full of love for our welfare. With the help of Your grace we wish to show ourselves worthy of Your favor by patterning our lives on the life of St. Joseph and thus fulfilling your will in all things. May we be worthy to be called true children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, sons and daughters of Mary. Amen.

IN PRAISE OF ST. JOSEPH

I praise you dear Saint Joseph, man according to the heart of God, because you were found worthy to be the husband of the Virgin Mary and virginal father of the Son of God. To you the Lord entrusted the care of the holiest persons on earth. To you He sent an angel to reveal the wonderful mysteries of the Incarnation as well as the plans of His holy will. The graces bestowed upon you were numberless. Yours was the privilege to live with Jesus and Mary to share their joys and sorrows, to spend your years in peaceful work, to be patient in every trial. With the greatest fidelity you followed out every inspiration from heaven. With full confidence you placed yourself in the hands of divine Providence. God so ordered your life that at all times you gratefully adored His loving care. God will also take care of me if like you I live according to His holy will, and if like you I make His honor and glory the aim of my life. O lovable Saint Joseph, may your holy life be an inspira-

tion to me when I find it hard to be faithful in the practice of virtue and in the fulfillment of my duty. Help me to imitate your example to trust in God's grace, and to have the great happiness of dying in the friendship of Jesus and under the protection of Mary. Amen.

FROM THE VOTIVE MASS OF ST. JOSEPH

Helped by the patronage of the spouse of your blessed mother, O Lord, we ask Your mercy; that You would make our hearts despise all worldliness and love You, the true God, with perfect charity. You who livest and reignest ever, Amen.

(No. 479; E J)

FOR THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER

Joseph most just, I earnestly commend to you the salvation of a soul dear to me and redeemed by Jesus through the shedding of His blood. Great Saint Joseph, you know how unhappy are those who have banished the Savior from their heart and how dangerously these sinners are exposed to eternal loss. I beg of you, dear Saint Joseph to call this wayward soul from the path of sin. Enlighten this sinner, call back this prodigal son (daughter) to his (her) father's embrace. Do not desist from your urgings till finally you have opened for him (her) the gates of heaven, where he (she) shall bless you forever for the happiness in God to which you have led him (her). Amen.

FOR THE FATHER AND / OR MOTHER FOR THEIR CHILDREN

O glorious Saint Joseph, to you God committed the care of His only-begotten Son amid the many dangers of this world. We (I) come to you and ask you to take under your special protection the children God has given us (me). Through holy Baptism they became children of God and members of His holy Church. We (I) consecrate them to you today that through this consecration they may become your foster children. Guard them, guide their steps in life, form their hearts after the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Saint Joseph, who felt the tribulation and worry of a parent when the Child Jesus was lost, protect our (my) dear children for time and eternity. May you be their father and counsellor. Let them, like Jesus grow in age as well as in wisdom and grace before God and men. Preserve them from

the corruptions of this world, and give us (me) the grace one day to be united with them in heaven forever. Amen.

TO ST. JOSEPH FOR OUR BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

Dear Saint Joseph who carried the infant Jesus in your blessed arms and who for thirty years lived in family life with Him, take under your powerful protection those whom God has clothed with His authority, honored with the dignity of the priesthood, charged to continue His mission, to preach His Gospel, to dispense His graces and blessings.

Sustain them in their fatigue and work, strengthen them in their struggles, protect them from the evils of sin. Obtain for them the humility of John the Baptist, the faith of St. Peter, the zeal and charity of St. Paul, the purity of St. John, the spirit of prayer and recollection of which you yourself are the model, so that after faithfully dispensing on earth the mysteries of your foster son Jesus, they may in heaven receive the reward promised to bishops and priests according to the heart of God. Amen.

TO ST. JOSEPH IN ANY DIFFICULTY

With childlike confidence I come to you, St. Joseph, faithful virginal father of Jesus. I ask your compassionate intercession and support in this my present necessity. I firmly believe you are most powerful at the throne of God who chose you for the virginal father of His well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ. O blessed saint, you who saved that divine Treasure and His virgin mother from the rage of His enemies, you who with untiring industry supplied His earthly needs, you who protected Him with fatherly care in all the journeys of His childhood, take me also, for the love of Jesus, under your protection. Help me in my present difficulty with your prayers before God. The Sacred Heart of our Savior, who loved you and honored you as His father upon earth cannot refuse you any request now in heaven.

So many souls have sought help from you in their needs, so many have experienced with joy how good, how ready you are to assist us. How quickly you turn to those who call on you with confidence. How powerful you are in bringing help, in restoring joy to anxious and dejected hearts. Therefore do I fly to you, O most worthy father of Jesus, most chaste spouse of Mary. Console me in my distress, present

my petition through Jesus and Mary before the throne of God. Most joyfully shall I praise Him and you, most sincere will be my gratitude. Amen.

FOR A HAPPY DEATH

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. (No. 636; I)

SHORT PRAYERS

O Joseph, virginal father of Jesus, and most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us daily to Jesus, the very Son of God, that being defended by the help of His grace while duly striving in life we may be crowned by Him at the hour of our death. (No. 477; D)

Help us, Joseph to lead an innocent life; may it be kept ever safe under your patronage. (No. 458; B J)

Be mindful of us, blessed Joseph, and by the power of your prayer intercede for us with your foster Son; make propitious too, your spouse the Blessed Virgin, she who is the mother of Him who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. (No. 475; E J)

O Saint Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us. (No. 459; A K)

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
(any personal prayer may be added) (No. 274; P)

LIST OF INDULGENCES

(Capital letter refers to the letter printed after indulgenced prayers.)

A—300 days' indulgence, once per day.

B—300 days' indulgence.

C—500 days' indulgence, once per day.

D—500 days' indulgence.

E—3 years' indulgence.

F—3 years' indulgence; 7 years' indulgence throughout October, after the recitation of the Rosary, and also on every Wednesday.

G—3 years' indulgence; 7 years' indulgence on each day of March and also on every Wednesday.

H—5 years' indulgence.

I—7 years' indulgence for each of these invocations; plenary indulgence under the usual conditions, for the recitation of each of these invocations, continued daily throughout a month.

- J—Plenary indulgence under the usual conditions provided this prayer is devoutly recited daily for an entire month.
- K—The following concession is made to the faithful, who, to obtain the aid of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the various spiritual and corporal needs of their lives, devoutly call on his holy name: 300 days' indulgence; plenary indulgence under the usual conditions, provided they have piously recited this same invocation daily for an entire month.
- L—The following concession is made to the faithful who during the month of March, or because of some hindrance, during some other month of the year, have devoutly been present at a pious exercise publicly performed in honor of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed virgin Mary: 7 years' indulgence, any day of the month; plenary indulgence, if they have attended such an exercise for at least ten days, and in addition have obtained pardon of their sins, have received Holy Communion, and have prayed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.—The following concession is made to those who during the month of March have privately offered prayers or other works of piety to St. Joseph: 5 years' indulgence once on any day of this month; plenary indulgence under the usual conditions, provided they have performed this pious work daily throughout this entire month; but in places where such exercises are held publicly, this indulgence can be acquired only by those who are legitimately prevented from attending the public devotions.
- M—The following concession is made to the faithful who have devoutly been present at a public novena in honor of St. Joseph: 7 years' indulgence each day; plenary indulgence, understanding sacramental confession, Holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, if they have been present for at least five days of the novena; and to those who during this time have privately offered prayers in honor of St. Joseph with the intention of continuing this pious exercise for nine days, the following concession is made: 5 years' indulgence, once daily; plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions, when the novena is completed. However, in places where the novena is conducted publicly, this indulgence can be acquired only by those who are legitimately prevented from attending the public devotions.
- N—The following concession is made to the faithful who have performed some pious exercise in honor of St. Joseph on the first Wednesday of each month: 5 years' indulgence; plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.
- O—The following concession is made to the faithful who devoutly recite an **Our Father**, **Hail Mary**, and **Glory be to the Father** together with the invocation, "Saint Joseph, pray for me," before an image of St. Joseph: 300 days' indulgence; plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions provided they have performed this exercise of piety daily throughout a month.
- P—The following concession is made to the faithful who devoutly invoke the holy names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph together: 7 years' indulgence; also see J.

. . .

The "usual conditions" for obtaining plenary indulgences are confession and Holy Communion, the visitation of a church, and vocal prayers. The confession is to be made within eight days either preceding or following; Communion is to be received either the day before or within the next eight days; and those persons who customarily go to confession at least twice a month, or receive Communion daily or at least five times per week, may acquire all such indulgences without the separate confession that is otherwise required. Some vocal prayers (selected at option) are to be recited for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff at the visitation of a church or public oratory, as, for example, an **Our Father**, **Hail Mary**, and **Glory be to the Father**. (Canon 931, 934, S. Paen. Ap., 20 Sept., 1933)

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN REFERENCES

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
AG	Assemani, <i>Ephraem Syri opera omnia</i> , Greek-Latin
AGI	<i>Arabic Gospel of the Infancy</i>
ANL	<i>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</i>
AS	Assemani, Syriac-Latin
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
CB	<i>Corpus Berolinense</i>
CJ	<i>Cahiers de Joséphologie</i>
CG	Caillau-Guillon, <i>Collecta Selecta SS. Patrum</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
DB	Denzinger-Bannwart
DR	Pius XI, <i>Divini Redemptoris</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</i>
EJ	<i>Estudios Josefinos</i>
GNM	<i>Gospel of the Nativity of Mary</i>
GT	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
HE	Eusebius, <i>Hist. Eccl.</i>
HJC	<i>History of Joseph the Carpenter</i>
IP	Pius IX, <i>Inclytum Patriarcham</i>
JJ	Filas, <i>Joseph and Jesus</i>
MNC	Filas, <i>The Man Nearest to Christ</i>
NF	Leo XIII, <i>Neminem Fugit</i>
PG	Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PJ	<i>Protoevangel of James</i>
PL	Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PM	<i>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</i>
QD	Pius IX, <i>Quemadmodum Deus</i>
QP	Leo XIII, <i>Quamquam Pluries</i>
SI(J)	<i>Summa Josephina</i>
ST	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i>

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4. Mt. 1:24-25.
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8. Lk. 2:22-36.
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Part IV ST. JOSEPH'S FATHERHOOD

Chapter X: The Gospel Texts and Their Analysis

1. Cyprien Macabiau, S.J., *Primauté de Saint Joseph d'après l'épiscopat catholique et la théologie*, reprint, Fides, Montreal, (1945), 67. The signature on the title page of this and a companion work, *De Cultu Sancti Josephi Amplificando*, is "C.M." F.M. Cavallera, S.J., *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, 24 (1948), 295.

Chapter XI: Patristic References to the Fatherhood

1. Origen, *In Ep. ad Rom.*, 1, 5 (PG 14:851).

2. F. Cayre, A.A., *Manual of Patrology and History of Theology*, Paris, Desclée, Vol. 1 (tr. by H. Howitt), (1936), 197.

3. 4 Kings 8:25.

4. Origen, *loc. cit.*

5. Origen, *In Ioann.* 32, 9 (PG 14:783).

6. Cf. Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* 6 (PG 13, 1814-1815; CB 9, 36).

7. *Ibid.*
8. Origen, *Hom. in Luc.*, 17 (PG 13:1843; CB 9, 112).
9. J.M. Bover, S.J., "De S. Ioseph S. Ephraem Syri Testimonia," in *Eph. Theol. Lov.* 5 (1928), 221 ff.
10. Ephrem, *De sup. B.V. Partu*, *Sermo* 148, 31 (CG 37, 209-210; AG 2, 276-277).
11. *Ibid.*
12. Ephrem, *Sermo* 148.
13. Ephrem, *Sermo in Natal. Dom.* 4; *Sermo 5 de Myst.* (CG 37, 307; AS 2, 415).
14. Ephrem, *In Natal. Dom.* 14; *De Divers. Sermo* 1 (CG 37, 339; AS 3, 600).
15. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Macmillan, London, 1926, 3, 387.
16. Ephrem, *In Natal. Dom.* 4., *loc. cit.*
17. Ephrem, *In Natal. Dom.* 14., *loc. cit.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 3, 2 (PL edit. of 1845: 15: 1589; edit. of 1882: 15:1671; CSEL 22.4, 98).
21. John Chrysostom, *In Matth.*, hom. 4, 6 (PG 57:47).
22. Bossuet, *Premier Panegyrique de Saint Joseph*, Pt. 2, in *Oeuvres Oratoires*, ed. Lebarq, Desclée, Paris, (1927), 2, 134.
23. Michel, A., "Saint Joseph," in *DTC*, esp. 8, 1512, No. 2.
24. Jerome, *Adv. Helvid.* 19 (PL 23:213).
25. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 29, art. 2, ad 1 et 2.
26. Augustine, *De nup. et concup.* 1, 11 (PL 44:421; CSEL 42. 8, 2-225).
27. Augustine, *Sermo* 51, 10-21 (PL 38:342), here and in following selections.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Col. 348.
32. Col. 350.
33. Col. 350, 351.
34. Col. 348.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Col. 351.
37. Cf. Lk. 3:23.
38. *Sermo* 51 (Col. 351).
39. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* 2, 1 (PL 34:1071; CSEL 43. 3, 4-83).
40. *Op. cit.*, col. 1072.
41. Augustine, *De nup. et concup.* 1, 11 (PL 44: 421; CSEL 42.8, 2-224).
42. *Ibid.*
43. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 3, 2 (PL 42: 214; CSEL 25.6, 1-262).
44. Pseudo-Augustine, *In Append. Sermo* 195, 6 (PL 39:2110).
45. Pseudo-Justin, *Quest. et Resp. ad Orthod.*, q. 133 (PG 6:1386).
46. Seitz, 83.
47. Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Hom.* (PG 50:793).
48. John Damascene, *Hom. 1 in Nat. B.V.M.* (PG 96:671); also cf. *De Fid. Orthod.* 4, 14 (PG 94: 1159).
49. This hymn can be found in Greek and Latin translations in Jos. Cozza-Luzi, "De S. Iosepho Viro Mariae Cantica Liturgica Graecorum, auctore Iosepho Melodo," *Bessarione*, 5 (1899), 429-448.
50. Haymo of Halberstadt, *Hom.* 13 (PL 118:83).
51. *ibid.*
52. *ibid.*
53. Rupert of Deutz, *In Matth.* 1 (PL 168:1317).
54. Col. 1319.
55. *ibid.*
56. Rupert of Deutz, *De div. offic.* 18, 19 (PL 170:75 and 78-79).
57. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Hom.* 2, *super Missus Est* (PL 183:69).

Chapter XII: Medieval Theologians and the Fatherhood

1. Albert the Great, *Mariale, sive 230 Quest. super ev. Missus Est*, Q. 23, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Borgnet, Paris, Vives, 1890, 37, 50.
2. *In Matth.* 1:21 (Borgnet, 20, 52). 3. *Ibid.*
4. *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, a. 9 ad 3 (Borgnet, 30, 222).
5. *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, a. 10, ad 2 (Borgnet, 30, 223).
6. *Ibid.* (Borgnet, 30, 224).
7. Peter Lombard, *Lib. Sent. IV*, Dist. 31, cap. 1; cap. 3.
8. Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, a. 12 (Borgnet 30, 225).
9. *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, a. 10, ad 4 (Borgnet 30, 224).
10. Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4 (Parma ed., 7, 950).
11. *In IV Sent.*, Dist. 30, q. 2, art. 3, ad 4.
12. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 28, art. 1, ad 1.
13. *Lect. in Matth.* 1:21; *Opera Omnia*, ed. Parma, 1861, 10, 16.
14. *Lect. in Ioannem* 2, lect. 2, 1 (ed. Parma, 10, 335); *Lect. in Gal.* 1, lect. 5 (ed. Parma, 13, 390).
15. For the entire list, cf. *SJ*, No. 69-297.
16. *SJ* No. 128-213; especially here *Consid.* 4.
17. *SJ* 193. 18. *Ibid.* 19. *SJ* 194. 20. *SJ* 195.
21. Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus de duodecim honoribus S. Ioseph*; *SJ* 1079-1102. 22. Honor 5; *SJ* 1084. 23. *SJ* 1098.
24. Seitz, 206. 25. Seitz, 337-373. 26. Seitz, 352.
27. Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M., "Le Patronage de saint Joseph d'après l'école franciscaine du XIII siècle," in *Le Patronage de Saint Joseph*, Actes du Congrès d'études, Fides, Montreal, (1956), 245.
28. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo de S. Ioseph*, Art. 1; *SJ* 11.
29. Art. 2; *SJ* 47. 30. Art. 2; *SJ* 47, 43, 44.
31. Art. 2; *SJ* 54. 32. *Ibid.*
33. Isidor of Isolani, *Summa de donis Sancti Ioseph*, Polyglot Press, Rome, 1887, 88-89; P. 2, c. 4.
34. *Op. cit.* 116, 44, 116; P. 2, c. 11; P. 1, c. 13; P. 2, c. 11.

Chapter XIII: Seventeenth-Century Opinion of the Fatherhood

1. William Estius, *In IV Lib. Sent. Comment.*, Venice, 1778, 6, 165 ff. (Dist. 30, No. 8-10, and esp. 11). 2. *Op. cit.*, N. 8; 6, 168.
3. *Op. cit.*, No. 9; 6, 170. 4. *Op. cit.*, No. 11; 6, 171.
5. Pseudo-Justin, *Quest. et Resp. ad Orthod.*, q. 133 (PG 6, 1386).
6. Estius, Dist. 31, No. 1; 6, 173.
7. Dist. 30, No. 11; 6, 172.
8. Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* 17 (PG 13, 1843; CB 9, 112).
9. Estius, No. 11; 6, 173.
10. M. J. Scheeben, *Mariology*, tr. by T.L.M.F. Geukers, Herder, St. Louis, 1946, 1, 130.
11. Francis Suarez, "De Mysteriis Vitae Christi," Disp. 8 (*Opera Omnia*, Vivès, Paris, 1860, 19, 121-128).
12. Disp. 5, Sect. 4, No. 9 (Ed. Vivès, 19, 92).
13. Disp. 6, Sect. 2, Nos. 2-3 (V. 102); Disp. 7, Sect. 1, No. 8 (V. 117).

14. Disp. 7, Sect. 1, No. 2 (V. 114); Disp. 8, Sect. 1, No. 2 (V. 122). Not all theologians agree with Suarez on this censure.
15. Disp. 7, Sect. 2, No. 2 (V. 117). 16. *Ibid.*
17. Disp. 8, Sect. 1, No. 3 (V. 122). 18. No. 4 (V. 122).
19. *Ibid.* 20. Deut. 33:13.
21. Suarez, Disp. 8, Sect. 1, No. 4 (V. 123).
22. No. 6 (V. 124). 23. No. 10 (V. 125). 24. Ps. 91:13.
25. Ephrem, *De sup. B.V. Partu*, Sermo 148, 31 (CG 37, 209; AG 2, 276).
26. Francis de Sales, *Entretiens spirituels*, Nierat, Annecy, 1895, 19; Eng. tr. in *The Spiritual Conferences*, Burns, Oates, London, 1909, 366. 27. *Ibid.* 28. *Op. cit.*, 367. 29. *Ibid.* 30. *Ibid.*
31. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Isaia*m, 8 (*Comment. in Script. Sac.*, Vivès, Paris, 11, 214); *pater matrimonialis*: *In Matth.* 1:16 (V. 15, 57).
32. Bossuet, *Oeuvres*, Desclée, Paris, 1927, 2, 131; "Premier Panegyrique sur S. Joseph," Pt. 1. 33. *Ibid.* 34. *Ibid.*
35. Chrysostom, *In Matth.*, hom. 4, 6 (PG 57, 47).
36. Bossuet, *op. cit.*, Pt. 2; *Oeuvres*, 2, 134. 37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.* 39. Pt. 2; 136, 137. 40. *Ibid.* 41. Pt. 2; 139.

Chapter XIV: Church Documents

1. QD, ASS 6, 193. 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*
4. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Hom. 2 super Missus Est* (PL 183, 61 ff.); in the prayers before Mass in the *Roman Missal*; and Lesson 6 of Monday in Octave of (suppressed) Solemnity of St. Joseph.
5. IP, ASS 6, 324. 6. QP, ASS 22, 66. 7. *Ibid.* 8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* 10. *Ibid.* 11. ASS 22, 67. 12. *Ibid.* 13. *Ibid.*
14. NF, ASS 23, 318. 15. BS, AAS 12, 315.
16. DR, AAS 29, 106.
17. *Angelicum*, 5, 1928, 210; also *La Vie Spirituelle*, 19, 1928-29, 678; partial Italian version in *Civiltà Cattolica*, Series 79, 2, 1928, 74.
18. ASS 24, 462. 19. Cf. p. 454.
20. AAS 1, 290. 21. AAS 11, 191.
22. *Raccolta*, Benziger, 1943, No. 439; *Enchirid. Indulg.* 1950 No. 477.
23. Pius X, rescript in his own hand, October 11, 1906; exhib. Nov. 26, 1906; S.P. Ap., May 23, 1931: an indulgence of 500 days.
24. 3 Stanza, Vespers, Feast of the Holy Family.
25. 5 Stanza, Matins. 26. 4, 5, 6, Stanzas, Lauds.
27. 2, 4 Stanzas, Matins, March 19.
28. 1, 2 Stanzas, Vespers, March 19 and St. Joseph the Worker.
29. Tr. from Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Welter, Arnheim & Leipzig, 1927, 53, 575 ff.
30. Mansi, 53, 577 A. 31. Mansi, 53, 579 A, D.
32. Macabiau, 4 ff. 33. Mansi, 53, 581.
34. ASS 41, 43; Feb. 26, 1907. *Il Monitore Ecclesiastico*, 19, 2 (1907), 433.
35. Condemnation by Holy Office sent to editor and author concerning "La Paternità di S. Giuseppe," in *Divus Thomas* (Piacenza).

- 31 (1928), 29-49; Editorial declaration and retractation by author, 361.
 36. August Deneffe, S.J., in *Scholastik*, 4 (1929), 299. Also cf. Reg. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. in *Angelicum*, 22 (1945), 108.

Chapter XV: Toward A Full Concept of the Fatherhood

1. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 32, a. 3.
2. Aquinas, ST, 1, q. 27, a. 2.
3. "Processio viventis de vivente coniuncto in similitudinem naturae."
4. Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, d. 8, a. 5; Parma ed., 7, 103.
5. Joseph-Marie Parent, O.P., "La Paternité de Saint Joseph," *Théologie*, Ottawa, Levrier, 1948, 4, 76, on Aquinas.
6. Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, art. 1; Parma, 7, 918.
7. *Ibid.*, ad 4.
8. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 29, a. 2.
9. Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2, ad 4; Parma ed., 7, 950.
10. Parent, 78.
11. Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4; Parma ed., 7, 950.
12. Joseph M. Bover, S.J., *De Cultu Sancti Josephi Amplificando*, Barcelona, Subirana, 1926, 12.
13. Michel, DTC, 8, 1512, 2.
14. E.g., Augustine, Gerson, Francis de Sales, to mention a few.
15. E.g., Suarez, Cornelius a Lapide, Bossuet.
16. Most explicitly, Estius.
17. Cf. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 29, a. 2; *In IV Sent.*, d. 30, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4. Treated fully in Chapter 12.
18. Matt. 1:21.
19. Reimsbach, 345. (see ref. 61)
20. Parent, 88.
21. Joseph Mueller, S.J., *Der heilige Joseph: Die dogmatischen Grundlagen seiner besonderen Verehrung*, Innsbruck, Rauch, 1937, 148.
22. SJ 195.
23. Mueller, 148.
24. Presented and discussed by Mueller, 147; Parent, 88; Holzmeister, 84; Reimsbach, 345.
25. Giacomo Sinibaldi, *La Grandezza di S. Giuseppe*, Rome, 1927.
26. Cf. Chapter 14, ref. 34.
27. Cf. Chapter 14, ref. 35.
28. As claimed by Mgr. Gabriel Breynat, O.M.I., *Saint Joseph, Père Vierge de Jésus*, Fides, Montreal, (1944), 38, 84. Cf. Ref. 70, 71, and 72, in the present chapter, for full explanation.
29. Holzmeister, 84.
30. Parent, 88.
31. F.-X. Maquart, *Elementa Philosophiae*, Blot, Paris (1938), 3-2, 234.
32. Martin Hagen, S.J., ed., *Lexicon Biblicum*, Lethielleux, Paris, (1907), 2, 816.
33. Joseph Knabenbauer, S.J., *In Matth.* 1, 16, Lethielleux, Paris (1903), ed. 2, 47.
34. Paul J. Glenn, *Ontology*, Herder, St. Louis, (1937), 319.
35. Mueller, 141.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 2, art. 11, ad 3.
38. Mueller, 141-142.
39. Cf. Mueller, *ibid.*
40. Cf. Mueller, 139.
41. John 10:17-18.
42. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Angelicum*, 22 (1945), 111; cf. *Tabula Aurea* (Parma ed., Vol. 25, 372, 217): *Pater*, n. 3; *Filiatio*, n. 6, 11.
43. Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. 6, c. 4, 7 (DB 795, 799); Rom. 8:15.
44. Augustine, *Cont. Mendac.* 10, 24 (PL 40, 533).
45. Funk and Wagnalls *New Standard Dictionary*, New York, (1934).

46. Stephen J. Brown, S.J., *The World of Imagery*, Kegan Paul, London, (1927), 68-71. 47. Aquinas, ST, 1, q. 33, art. 3, c.
48. E.g., Mueller, 161; Bover, 35; cf. F.W. Faber, *Bethlehem, The Blessed Sacrament*, Burns, Oates, London, *passim*.
49. A. H. Card. Lepicier, O.S.M., *Tractatus de Sancto Joseph*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1908, 134
50. Louis Card. Billot, S.J., *De Verbo Incarnato*, ed. 5, Giachetti, Prati, (1912), 421.
51. Macabiau, *De Cultu*, 87, offers other confirmatory reasons.
52. Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, Dist. 30, q. 2, art. 3, ad 4. Cf. Chap. 12, ref. 11.
53. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* 2, 1 (PL 34, 1071; CSEL 43. 3, 4-83). Cf. Chap. 2, ref. 71. 54. Luke 3:23.
55. Augustine, *Contra Iulian. Pelag.* 5, 12 (PL 44, 811, 810.
56. E.g., Luke 2:27, 2:33. 57. Macabiau, 91.
58. Deut. 25:5-6. A fourth and otherwise little known meaning has been suggested by Antolin (*Antonianum* 22 [1947], 102).
59. Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* 17 (PG 13, 1843; CB 9, 112.)
60. A Lapide, *In Matth.* 1:16.
61. Joseph Reimsbach, S.J., "Le Patronage de St. Joseph," "*Gregorianum*, 2 (1921), 337-351; "Vicaria paternitate Parens Dei," 347.
62. Discussed by St. Thomas in ST, 3, q. 32, art. 3.
63. Parent, 99. 64. Holzmeister, 88.
65. Mueller, 107. 66. Macabiau, 91.
67. Cf. Ch. 9 for evidence concerning the nature of the espousal.
68. P. Hormaeche, S.J., "Derecho de San José a la protodulia," *Estudios eclesiásticos*, 6 (1927), 21, cited by Mueller, 107; not available to author. 69. Cf. Mueller, *loc. cit.*
70. Mgr. Gabriel Breynat, O.M.I., *Saint Joseph, Père Vierge de Jésus*, Fides, Montreal, (1944). The first article appeared in *Revue de l'université d'Ottawa*, 5 (1936), 73-80. In April, 1938 (8, 81-111). there appeared a second which formed the nucleus for the book.
71. Breynat, 38.
72. Breynat, 84. This doctrine was severely criticized in various articles: Blanchin, *Revue de l'université d'Ottawa*, 6 (1936), 149-158; Al. Janssens, *Eph. Theol. Lov.* 16 (1939), 154-155 (review); M. Fournier, in *Le seminaire de Montréal*, March, (1943); and Garrigou-Lagrange, in *Angelicum* (1945), 105-109. The book was removed from sale in March, 1945.
73. Roland Gauthier, C.S.C., *La Paternité de Saint Joseph*, Oratoire saint-Joseph, Montreal, 1958, 217 ff.; Holy Office Protoc. num. 445/47, April 23, 1948. 74. Holzmeister, 87. 75. Mueller, 107-108.

Part V OTHER THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING ST. JOSEPH

Chapter XVI: Introductory Notions

1. Hippolyte Delehaye, S.J., In *Analecta Bollandiana*, 28 (1909), 313.
2. Bonifacio Llamera, O.P., "Introducción a la teología de San José," in *Ciencia Tomista*, 66 (1944), 259.

3. Among other writers echoing these ideas are Cyprian Macabiau ("C.M." and "C. Mariani"), *De Cultu Sancti Josephi Amplificando* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1908), xi; Eugenio Canterã, O.A.R., *San José en el plan divino*, Santa Rita, Monachii, 1917, vi, 18; Joseph Seitz, *Die Verehrung des heiligen Joseph* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1908), vi. 4. Edgar Hocedez, S.J., *Historie de la Théologie au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), 3, 317.

5. Joseph Mueller, S.J., *Der heilige Joseph—Die dogmatischen Grundlagen seiner besonderen Verehrung* (Innsbruck: Rauch, 1937); A. H. Card. Lepicier, O.S.M., *Saint Joseph, Epoux de la très sainte Vierge* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1932), and also *Tractatus de Sancto Joseph* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1908) (3 ed., Rome, 1933); Macabiau, *op. cit.*; Joseph M. Bover, S.J., *De Cultu Sancti Josephi Amplificando* (Barcelona: Subirana, 1926); Henri Rondet, S.J., *Saint Joseph, Textes Anciens avec une Introduction* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1954); Bonifacio Llamera, O.P., *Teología de San José*, La editorial catolica, Madrid, 1954.

6. A. Michel, "Joseph, Saint," in *DTC*, 8, 1510.

7. Llamera (*Ciencia Tomista*), 265.

8. The material in this section is built on Cantera, 1-10; Llamera, 255-275; and *idem*, "La paternidad de San José en la teología católica," in *EJ*, 5 (1951), 205-211.

9. Macabiau. 39.

10. A. Lukyn Williams, "Joseph, Saint," in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Scribner, 1902), 2, 777.

11. Salomon Reinach, *Orpheus* (London: Routledge, 1931), 418.

12. Alexis Lepicier, O.S.M., *Tractatus de B.M.V. Matre Dei*, P. 3, c. 2, art. 2, n. 15, 2; G. Démaret, *Marie de qui est né Jésus*, tom. 6, "Saint Joseph" (Paris: Spes, 1939), 313.

13. Alexis Lépicier, O.S.M., *Tractatus de S. Joseph*, Rome, 1933, 330-331.

14. Joseph Dusserre, "Les origines de la dévotion à saint Joseph," in *CJ*, 1 (1953), 24.

15. With the introduction of the feast of St. Joseph in the Roman church in 1479, the cultus became official and public, at least for the area in which the feast was permitted. Seitz, 211.

16. J. H. Cardinal Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans* (New York: Longmans, 1891), 2, 26; 2, 30-31.

17. Frederick William Faber, *The Blessed Sacrament* (London: Burns, Oates), no date, 170-174.

Chapter XVII: The Dignity of St. Joseph

1. Aquinas, *ST*, 2a 2ae, q. 162, a. 4, c.

2. Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 27, a. 4, c.

3. Cf. *L'Ami du Clergé*, 38 (1921), 101, referring to Terrien, *La Mère de Dieu*, Paris, 1902, III, c. 2, t. 1, 259.

4. Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 27, a. 5, c.

5. In Suarez, "De Mysteriis Vitae Christi," disp. 8, and attributed by him to Damascene. *Oratio 3 de Nativ. Vir. Mariae*, its source, is not in the Migne Greek patrology. Romualdo Galdos, S.J., *Suarez Vulgarizado*, Granada, 1917, 6, locates it in the Paris edition of 1628 (383,10) of Damascene, noting that "by the singular gift of God" is not included.

6. Cf. p. 588-9. 7. *Ibid.* 8. Mueller, *Der heilige Joseph*, 184.

9. *Ibid.*, 181. 10. *Ibid.*, 185-188. 11. For the incorrectness of "adoptive father," cf. p. 320. 12. Mueller, 186.
13. Prayers before Mass, *Roman Missal*. 14. Cf. p. 590.
15. Cf. p. 246. 16. Suarez, *Disp.* 8, sect. 1, n. 10.
17. Cf. p. 591. 18. *Ibid.* 19. Michel, *DTC*, 8, 1516, n. 2.
20. Cf. *L'Ami du Clergé*, 38 (1921), 105. This article is anonymous, but the article on St. Joseph in *DTC*, 8, 1510 ff. follows it almost verbatim; hence, the authorship must be the same.
21. Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 30, a. 2, ad 1. 22. Cantera, 340-342.
23. Benedict XIV, *De Beatificatione Servorum Dei et Canonizatione Beatorum*, Venice, 1767, 4, 2, c. 11, n. 20.
24. *Analecta Juris Pontificii*, Series 20 (1881), 842. This text was printed in Rome in 1869 in a 34-page pamphlet under the title, *Votum P. Fr. Hieronymi Pii Saccheri, O.P., S.R.C. Consultoris circa quatuor petitiones*. 25. Suarez, *Disp.* 8, sect. 1, n. 10.
26. M. J. Lagrange, O.P., *Evangile selon S. Luc*, Paris, 1925, 221.
27. Cornelius a Lapide, *Comm. in Matth.* 1:16 (*Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram* [Paris: Vivès, 1862], 15, 58).
28. A. Jones in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Orchard, Nelson, London, 1953, 871 (par. 694d-f).
29. Aquinas, *Comm. in Ep. ad Eph.* c. 1, lect. 3.
30. Cf. D. J. Leahy in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 1121 (par. 899b); Kleist-Lilly, *The New Testament* (Milwaukee: Bruce), 487, "with this grace He has inundated us," Knox, *The New Testament* (New York: Sheed and Ward), 409, "so rich is God's grace that has overflowed upon us."
31. Suarez, *Disp.* 8, sect. 1, n. 10.
32. Michel, *DTC*, 8, 1515, n. 2.

Chapter XVIII: St. Joseph's Holiness

1. Cf. Reg. Garrigou-Lagrange in *La Vie Spirituelle*, 19 (1928), 662; Michel, *DTC*, 8, 1516, 2^o.
2. As in Bover, Garrigou-Lagrange, Lépiciér, Macabiau, Michel, Mueller. 3. Cantera, 345; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 2a 2ae, q. 81, art. 8.
4. As translated by Knox and by Kleist. Cf. Kleist-Lilly, *The New Testament*, 16.
5. John Chrysostom, *In Matth.* hom. 5, 3 (PG 57, 58).
6. *In Matth.* hom. 4, 3; 4, 5; 5, 3; 8, 3 (PG 57, 43-46; 57; 85).
7. Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 27, a. 4, c.
8. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo de S. Joseph*, Introd. (SI 1, 2); for the literary dependence of Bernardine on Ubertine of Casale, who in *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* (1305) wrote much of the material Bernardine later used, cf. Joseph Dusserre, "Les Origines de la dévotion à saint Joseph," in *CJ*, 1 (1953), 186, and 2 (1954), 17. Cf. p. 226 and also Ch. 23.
9. John Gerson, Sermon of September 8, 1416, Exordium, *Consid.* 4 (SI 134, 133, 198). 10. Macabiau, 167-168.
11. Aquinas, *ST*, 3, q. 27, a. 5, c.
12. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Hom. 2 super Missus Est*, 16 (MI 183, 70).

13. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo de S. Joseph*, art. 2, 1 (SI 17).
14. Suarez, Disp. 8, sec. 2, n. 1; sec. 1, n. 6.
15. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo*, art. 2, 2 (SI 37).
16. Aquinas, ST, 2a, 2ae, q. 83, art. 11, resp.
17. A. Michel in DTC, 8, 1514; also in *L'Ami du Clergé*, 38 (1921), 102. 18. Cf. p. 603. 19. Cf. p. 578. 20. Cf. p. 581.
21. Cf. p. 588. 22. Cf. p. 594. 23. Cf. p. 597.
24. AAS, 1, 290.
25. Francis de Sales, *The Spiritual Conferences*, tr. by Sisters of the Visitation (London: Burns, Oates, 1909), 368.

Chapter XIX: St. Joseph's Privileges

1. Gotti, *De Veritate Religionis Christianae*, Rome, 1736, tom. 4, p. 1, c. 4, No. 7, p. 113, quoted by Llamera in *EJ*, 2 (1948), 175.

2. Cantera, 373.

3. José Domingo María Corbató, *El Inmaculado S. José*, Valencia, 1907; condemnation in ASS, 41, 43; February 26, 1907. Corbató suggested that the Holy Spirit gave St. Joseph a physical supernatural fatherhood by transplanting seed from St. Joseph into Mary's body; Cantera, 379, lists criticisms calling the book erroneous, contrary to Scripture and Christian tradition, fantastic, and extravagant.

4. So mentioned though not clearly affirmed by Bernardine of Busti, in *Mariale*, P. 4, Sermo 12 (SI 953); also mentioned without being defended by John of Carthage, *Homil. Cathol.*, tom. 1, 4, "De S. Joseph," hom. 12, n. 2 (SI 781).

5. Session 5, Canon 2 (DB 792). 6. DB 1641.

7. Cf. Raff. Petrone, C.M., in *Divus Thomas* (Piacenza), ser. 3, 5 (January, 1928). These statements were made in an article on the fatherhood of St. Joseph which was condemned by the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office and was subsequently retracted by the author for any error or offense it contained against Catholic sense (*ibid.*, 361). Precisely what was the error was not stated. But it is to be noted that the distinction between the *exclusiveness* and the *merely special nature* of the definition of the Immaculate Conception may legitimately be made. Cf. Llamera, *EJ* 2 (1948), 178; Merkelbach, *Mariologia*, Strasburg, 1946, P. 2, p. 109: "It is not perfectly clear that the Church wished to define [the Immaculate Conception] as unique and completely exclusive."

8. Lépicier, *Tractatus de S. Joseph*, P. 2, art. 1, 2; 141.

9a AAS 45 (1953), 580.

9. Cantera, 381, 377; cites De Lugo, *De Ver. Fidei Divinae*, Disp. 20, sect. 3, for the rashness of holding the immaculate conception of St. Joseph.

10. Gerson, Sermon of September 8, 1416, Consid. 2 (SI 154); Llamera in *EJ*, 2 (1948), 179, lists some of those who hold the affirmative view: Isidor de Isolani, *Summa de donis S. Josephi*, P. 1, c. 9; Bernardine of Busti, *Mariale*, P. 4, Sermo 12 (SI 954); Alphonsus de Liguori, *Sermo I de S. Josepho*, Pt. 2 (in *The Glories of Mary*, ed. Grimm [New York: Benziger, 1887],) 2, 350; John of Carthage, *Hom. cathol.*, lib. 18. hom. ult. (SI 781); Petrus Morales, S.J., In

Caput I Matth. (Paris: Vivès, 1869), 1, 214, Giacomo Sinibaldi, *La Grandezza di San Giuseppe*, Rome, 1927, 172; Démaret, 86.

The negative opinion: This can be said to be implicitly taught in St. Thomas, but he does not explicitly teach that Joseph was not sanctified in the womb. Cf. ST, 3, q. 27, a. 6, resp.; Cajetan, *In III*, q. 27, a. 6; Benedict XIV, *De Beatif. Serv. Dei*, 4, 2, c. 20, n. 31; Gotti, *De Ver. Relig. Christ.*, 4, P. 1, c. 4, No. 7; Lépicier, *Tractatus*, P. 2, a. 1, No. 7, p. 144. 11. Suarez, *Disp.* 8, sect. 2, No. 6, 8.

12. John of Carthage, Lib. 18, "*De Cultu et Devot. erga B. V. et D. Joseph.*" hom. ult. (SI 366). 13. Isidore de Isolani, P. 1, c. 9.

14. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 27, art. 6. 15. Lépicier, *Tractatus*, 146.

16. Cantera, 386.

17. On the other hand, C. Lattey, S.J., in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Orchard, 575 (par. 454c), takes the view in favor of such sanctification of Jeremias—"the more likely view"—although he admits that "There is no strictly systematic theology in the OT." Against the view, cf. *L'Ami du Clergé*, 38 (1921), 106, whose author, evidently A. Michel, believes that "sanctify" means merely "destine." In the article reprinted practically verbatim from this issue of *L'Ami*, Michel holds against prenatal sanctification (DTC, 8, 1517).

18. Benedict XIV, 4, 2, c. 20, n. 31.

19. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 27, art. resp. 20. Démaret, 86.

21. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Matth.* 1:16 (*Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram* [Paris: Vivès, 1862], 15, 58).

22. Based partially on Cantera, 388-395; Llamera, 2 (1948), 165, 172; 184-185; Michel, DTC, 8, 1518; Démaret, 89 ff.

23. Richard, art. "Impeccabilité," in DTC, 7, 1274.

24. Canon J. M. Hervé, *Man. Theol. Dog.*, ed. 17, Paris, 1935, 2, 652. 25. Session 6, canon 23 (DB 833).

26. Michel, DTC, 8, 1518. 27. Session 5 (DB 792).

28. Cf. Zubizarreta, *Theologia dogmatica scholastica*, Bilbao, 1937, 2, 506. 29. Llamera, EJ, 2 (1948), 185. 30. Cantera, 391.

31. Quoted, p. 174; from F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 3, 387.

32. Cantera, 390-392; Llamera, EJ 2 (1948), 185; Sinibaldi, 174; Lépicier, *Tractatus*, III, 2; p. 152 ff.

33. A. Jones in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 903 (par. 722 f.); Aquinas, *Comment. in Matth.* 27:52.

34. Augustine, *Ep. ad Evod.*, 9 (Ep. 164, PL 33, 712).

35. Augustine, *In Joann.*, 124, 2 (PL 35, 1970).

36. Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, *Comment. in Matth.* 27:52; *In IV. Sent.*, dist. 43, q. 1, a. 3, q. 4, ad 3; ST, Suppl., q. 77, a. 1, ad 3.

37. Aquinas, ST, 3, q. 53, art. 3, ad 2.

38. Martin Jugie, A.A., *La mort et l'assomption de la sainte vierge*, Vatican City, 1944, 51 ff. The Lilly translation of the Epistles is contained in Kleist-Lilly, *The New Testament* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1954).

39. Jugie, ix.

40. Suarez, *In III*, q. 53, a. 3, n. 15.

41. Jugie, 52.

42. Benedict XIV, 4, 2, c. 20, n. 33.

43. F. Prat, S.J., *Jesus Christ*, tr. by John H. Heenan, S.J. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1950), 2, 399. 44. Jugie, 54.

45. Sinibaldi, 206, quoted by Urban Holzmeister, S.J., *De Sancto Ioseph Quaestiones Biblicae*, Rome, 1945, 116, citing twelve authors.
46. Holzmeister, 116.
47. Gerson, Sermon of September 8, 1416, *Consid.* 3 (SI 184).
48. Jerome, *In Matth.* 4 (PL 26, 222).
49. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo de S. Joseph*, c. 3, art. 3 (SI 59-61; 65).
50. Suarez, *disp.* 8, sect. 2, n. 8.
51. Francis de Sales, *The Spiritual Conferences*, 19, 383.
52. AAS 52 (1960), 455-456.

Chapter XX: St. Joseph's Patronage

1. The material of this chapter is discussed in Macabiau, 142, 236; Lepicier, 265 ff.; Mueller, 205 ff.; Bover, 48 ff.; Cantera, 417 ff.
2. Pius IX, *Q. D.*, ASS, 6, 193; later, I. P., ASS, 6, 324.
3. Cf. p. 587.
4. Quoted from Bartholomew de Pisa, *De vita Beatae Mariae Virginis*, Venice, 1956, lib. 2, fruct. 18, 265, in *CJ*, 2 (1953), 193.
5. Bernardine of Siena, *Sermo de S. Joseph*, art. 2 (SI 49).
6. John Gerson, Sermon of September 8, 1416, *Concl.* (SI 213).
7. Isidore de Isolani, *Summa de donis S. Joseph*, III, 8.
8. Cf. p. 452-3.
9. Cf. p. 592.
10. Benedict XIV, *De Beatif. Serv. Dei*, 4, 2, c. 20, n. 57 (SI 2881).
11. Indul. 500 days, S. P. Ap., Jan. 20, 1933; *Enchirid. Indulg.* (1950), n. 472.
12. Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, AAS, 29, 106.
13. QP.
14. Leo XIII, *Neminem Fugit*, *Decr.* 3777, C.S.R.
15. Benedict XV, *Bonum Sane*, AAS 12, 313.
16. Andrew A. Bialas, C.S.V., *The Patronage of Saint Michael the Archangel*, Clerics of St. Viator, Chicago, 1954, 132-133.
17. ASS, 1, 290.
18. Teresa of Avila, *Autobiography*, c. 6, n. 11.

Chapter XXI: The Petitions for St. Joseph's Advance in the Liturgy

1. Aloysius Marchesi, *Amplificationis Cultus Sancti Iosephi B.M.V. Sponsi* (Rome: Marietti, 1870), II, c. 6. art. 2, 238.
2. M. F. Cavallera, S.J., in *Revue d'ascétique et de Mystique*, 24 (1948), 295-296.
3. Michel, *DTC*, 8, 1520.
4. *Authent. Collect.* S.R.C., *Decr.* 3789.
5. Macabiau, 16.
6. Josef Andreas Jungmann, S.J., *Missarum Sollemnia* (Vienna: Herder, 1948), 1, 212.
7. G. Démaret, *Marie de qui est né Jésus*, Paris, 1939, tom. 6, 339.
8. Jungmann, 1, 212.
9. Cf. Ch. 25.
10. Jungmann, 2, 375.
11. *Ibid.*, 2, 56
12. *Ibid.*, 2, 214.
13. *Ibid.*, 2, 215.
14. *Ibid.*, 2, 346.
15. Lambertini's report to the Congregation of Rites in SI 2854-2881 cf. SI 2866 for hypothesis on printers' omissions.
16. Marchesi, II, 9, 241.
17. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, AAS 39, 521; par. 50 of NCWC ed., *Vat. Lib. tr.*
18. *Ibid.*, par. 54.

19. *Ibid.*, par. 61, 62, 63.

20. *Ibid.*, par. 58.

21. The most complete and detailed study of the question to be found anywhere is the Memorandum, *For the Insertion of the Name of St. Joseph in the Prayers of the Mass*, Research and Documentation Center, St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, 1961. It was largely the work of Guy-M. Bertrand, C.S.C., at the instigation of Roland Gauthier, C.S.C., then Superior of St. Joseph's Oratory, who also contributed his store of extensive Josephological data. The capable English translation is the work of James J. Davis, O.P.

Part VI THE HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

Chapter XXII: Early Centuries and the Byzantine Church

1. Nicephorus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 8, 30 (PL 146, 113).

2. PL 121, 571.

3. Seitz, 67.

4. Concerning the authorship of this canon see Papebroek, *Acta Sanctorum*, III, 6, and Seitz, 91.

5. Strophe 10, 11 ff., ode 4.

Chapter XXIII: The Devotion to St. Joseph in the Western Church before 1550.

1. Walafrid Strabo, *In Lucam*, 2, 16 (PL 104, 896).

2. Remigius of Autun, *Homilia* 4 (PL 131, 881).

3. *Analecta Bollandiana*, 72 (1954), 357-362. Cf. Seitz, *passim*, for earlier evolution of the martyrology and listing of St. Joseph.

4. Lessons of the Second Nocturn for March 19.

5. cf. "Prayers Before Mass" in the *Roman Missal*.

6. Éphrem Longpré, O.F.M., "Le Patronage de saint Joseph d'après l'école franciscaine du XIIIe siècle," in *Le Patronage de Saint Joseph*, Actes du Congrès d'études, Fides, Montreal, 1956, 216-254.

7. J. Dusserre, "Les origines de la devotion a S. Joseph," in *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 1 (1953) 23 ff.

8. Bonaventure, *In Vig. Epiph.* sermo 3, t. 9, 144. Longpré, 234-5.

9. Longpré, 235.

10. Longpré, 238.

11. Peter Olivi, q. 11 MS fo. 24b in Longpré, 240 ff. This selection is from a *Commentary on St. Matthew*, second chapter. Of its thirteen questions, the first eleven concern St. Joseph. Longpré has located copies of this manuscript at Florence, Paris, and Toulouse.

12. Longpré, 245.

13. The passages cited are taken from various sections of Gerson's *Considerations sur S. Joseph* and the *Sermo in Nativitatem B.M.V.*

14. Petrus Alliacus, *Tractatus de duodecim honoribus s. Joseph.*

15. *Summa de donis S. Ioseph*, III, 6 and III, 8.

16. The medievals saw here a reference to the St. Anasthasia commemorated on Christmas Day. As a matter of fact, St. Anasthasia was a Roman widow martyred in the persecution of Diocletian.

17. Seitz, 161.

18. Seitz, 164.

19. *Liber venerabilis fratris Simonis de Casia, ord. fr. eremit. S. August. super totum corpus evangeliorum* (Basiliae: 1527), liber 2,

c. 16. 20. *Revelations of St. Gertrude of Helfta*, book 4, chapter 21.

21. *Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden*, Book 6, chapter 59.

22. Seitz, 172. 23. Seitz, 169. 24. Seitz, 289. 25. Seitz, 290.

26. The artistic treatment of St. Joseph during the first fifteen centuries is described at great length in Seitz, pp. 71, 110, 175, 293 ff.
27. Benedict XIV, *De Beatificatione Servorum Dei et Canonizatione Beatorum*, Liber IV, Pars 2, p. 470. Not a reference to some other St. Joseph because of the veneration of the Bolognese for Joseph, for which there is very good evidence.
28. *Annales PP. Servorum B.M.V.* I, 248.
29. Franc. Florentinus, *Vetustius occidentalis Ecclesiae Martyrologium D. Hieronymo tributum, Lucae*, 1668 p. 390.
30. Lucot, *Saint Joseph. Étude historique sur son culte* (Paris: 1875), p. 24. Lucot's earliest manuscript is of 15th century origin, but Seitz (p. 193) shows internal evidence pointing to a Carmelite feast in the late 14th century.
31. Paulus de Barry, *Alimenta pietatis erga S. Josephum*, Monachii, 1650, cap. 4, p. 44 ff. Also see *Acta SS., Martii*, III No. 9, p. 17.
32. Royal Library of Brussels, cod. 9598-9606.
33. Such is the description given in *Authentica Collectio Decretorum Sacorum Rituum Congregationis*, No. 3252; also in Pauwels, *Periodica de Re Morali et Canonica*, IX, 59.
34. Benedict XIV, *op. cit.*, IV, 2, 20, No. 20; in No. 19 Benedict states, "But because his [Sixtus] decree lacked execution or did not signify the feast as of obligation, on May 8 in 1621, Gregory XV ordered its observance as of precept."
35. Seitz, 215.
36. As listed in MNC, 204.

Chapter XXIV: The Devotion to St. Joseph after 1550.

1. Ignatius of Loyola, Letter 135.
2. *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus, Written by Herself*, tr. Lewis, ed. Zimmerman, Newman, Westminster (Maryland), 1943; 32, 14; 33, 14; 33, 16; cf. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, 7 *passim*.
3. Francis de Sales, *The Spiritual Conferences*, tr. by Sisters of the Visitation (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1909), 368.
4. The foregoing statistics are calculated from art. "Joseph," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Hofmann, Buchberger, Herder, Freiburg in Breisgau, 1935, 5, 565-570.
5. Otto Pfülf, "Die Verehrung des hl. Joseph in der Geschichte," in *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*, 38 (1890), 294.
6. The pertinent documents of the controversy are printed in Benedict XIV, 4, 2, c. 14, No. 11. For Leo XIII's letter to Spain, ASS 22, 462; to Portugal, *Sanc. Dom. No. Leonis Papae XIII, Allocutiones, Epistolae, Constitutiones*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1894, 4, 53 (June 3, 1890).
7. Vincent Baesten in *Précis historique*, Brussels, tom. 28 (1879), 196, 203.
8. Tr. from *Oeuvres Oraatoires de Bossuet*, ed. Lebarq, Desclée, Paris, 1927, 2, 127, 133, 140; pts. 1, 2, 3 of the "First Panegyric."
9. This account follows *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed. R. G. Thwaites, Burrows, Cleveland, 1896-1901; here, Relation of 1637; 2, 67. For other favors and marks of devotion to St. Jo-

seph on the missions cf. Antonio Savani, S.J., *S. Giuseppe e la Compagnia di Gesù*, Bassano, 1950, 206-252. 10. Relation of 1635; 8, 73.

11. Relation of September 10, 1640; 18, 69.

12. Relation of May 27, 1640; 19, 137.

13. AAS, 48, 237.

14. Cf. p. 610.

15. Chapter at Vespers, March 19; cf. Prov. 28:20, 27:18.

Chapter XXV: Modern Papal Documents concerning St. Joseph

1. ASS, 6, 193. Translation by present author.

2. Abstention from servile work, and obligatory attendance at Mass, as a holyday of obligation. March 19 was not made obligatory in the United States because the bishops at a later date felt the number of holydays should be kept to a minimum, since in a country so non-Catholic they were difficult to observe. An indult releasing March 19 from the holydays of the Universal Church was granted by the Holy See to the III Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884.

3. ASS, 6, 324. Translation by present author.

4. ASS, 22, 65. Translation by present author.

5. Author's translation of sections of decree No. 3777 of the Congregation of Sacred Rites.

6. This translation (except for editorial variations) is taken from the *Catholic Mind* for September 22, 1920.

7. This translation is taken from the official English text issued by the Vatican Polyglot press and reprinted in the *Catholic Mind* for April 22, 1937. Original in AAS 29, 106.

8. Translated from *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22-23 Aprile, 1926, p. 1, and *Discorsi di Pio XI*, Vol. 1, 1922-28, Roma, 1959, 574; translation by James J. Davis, OP., in *For the Insertion of the Name of St. Joseph in the Prayers of the Mass*, St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, 1961, 58.

9. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20-21 Marzo, 1928, p. 1; *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 779-780; translation by Davis, *op. cit.*, 59.

10. *Bollettino del clero romano*, 16 (1935), 57. Davis, 61.

11. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20-21 Marzo, 1938, p. 1. Davis, 62.

12. AAS 47, 402. English translation from *Catholic Documents*, Salesian Press, London, No. 18, July, 1955, 31-35.

13. Translated from the French edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 28, 1958; AAS 50, 335.

14. *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 20, 1958; AAS 50, 174.

15. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20-21 Marzo, 1959; tr. by Davis, *op. cit.*, 68-69.

16. Translation by present author, based on text in *The Pope Speaks*, 7 (1961), 123-130; Italian text in *L'Osservatore Romano* 19 Marzo, 1961; and French version of 31 Mars, 1961.

17. Selections taken from *The Pope Speaks*, 7 (1961), 131-135

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(Note: "St. Joseph" is regularly abbreviated here as "J"; separate headings are not given for "Jesus" or "Mary" since they are regularly included in the references of Joseph. "Fatherhood" is also abbreviated as "Fhood.")

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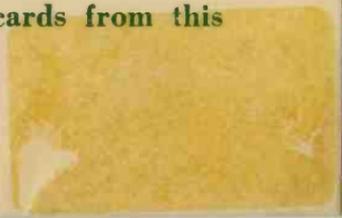
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*About
the
Author*

Described by the *Oratory* magazine of St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, as "one who has probably said more about St. Joseph than any other man in history," Father Francis L. Filas, S.J., was born in Cicero, Illinois, in 1915, entered the Society of Jesus at the age of 17, and was ordained in 1945. Later studies and teaching took him to the University of Detroit, where he pioneered in introducing the Cana Conference movement for husbands and wives in the Detroit area. Since 1950 he has been stationed at Loyola University, Chicago, and since 1959, has been chairman of its department of theology. His interests in family life have appeared in lectures to parents' groups or as a member of the board of Cana Conference conductors in the Archdiocese of Chicago. He has spoken before more than 140,000 husbands and wives or couples preparing for marriage.

During the course of his Jesuit studies he became interested in the history of the devotion to St. Joseph, an interest that has led to the publication of six of his eight books, four pamphlets, and numerous articles about the Saint. He is also known to television viewers for his educational and religious telecasts, chief among which is the annual Good Friday "Shroud of Turin," which has been presented regularly since 1951. Already seen nationally by 36,000,000 viewers, this was chosen by *Time* magazine as one of the outstanding telecasts of the Easter weekend. *Time* also called Father Filas "sparkplug of the international campaign" to put St. Joseph's name in the Mass.