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St, Joseph and Providence

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Recognition of St. Joseph as the greatest of the saints after Man
Rha* been growing in the Church for the last five centunce
Gerson, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Teresa, St. Francis de Sal
Suarez, St. Alphonsus, and Leo XIII taught this doctrine of St.
Joseph's high status. In his encyclical on St. Joseph as Patron of the
Universal Church. Leo XIII says: "There is no doubt that St. Insepi.
the spouse of Mary, approached more nearly than any other the
superminent dignity by which the Mother of God F elevated to
above all other creatures." For this reason it would even seem that
bt. Joseph surpasses the angels, being invoked *before them* in
pivine Praise» recited after benediction of the Blessed SacrameK-
Likewise in toe prayer. *I .-wr/, . he is named immediately^*
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obscurity exceeds that of the Apostles because it more closely touches the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation.

St. Joseph's mission was twofold, first, in relation to Mary and second, in relation to Jesus. By virtue of his first mission St. Joseph preserved Mary's virginity by contracting with her a true but absolutely holy marriage. No shadow however slight was to touch the honor of the Son and that of His Mother. Moreover, Mary depended in Joseph's help and protection. He loved her with a most pure, devoted, theological love, for he loved her in God and for God. The beauty of the entire universe was nothing compared to the sublime union of these two souls-- a union created by the Most Holy which ravished the angels and gave joy to the Lord Himself.

In relation to the Word made flesh, Joseph watched over Him, protected Him, contributed to His human education. He was more than a foster or adopted father, for a man becomes a foster father or even the adopted father of a child by chance, whereas it was the divine design that Joseph became the foster father of the Word made flesh. He was created and placed in the world to that end: it was the first purpose of his predestination and the *raison d'être* for all the graces that he received.

According to Bossuet, just as grace gives us the heart of a father toward God, just as at Pentecost grace gave an apostolic heart to the Apostles while enlightening and strengthening them and them with invincible courage, so Joseph was given the heart of a father toward Jesus as an immediate result of the divine power. For the Father gave Joseph a father's love toward Jesus; for this Joseph did not fear to command Him. Joseph was predestined of all, to serve as a father to the Savior, who could be no one on earth; then, to receive a high degree of glory and that he might be the worthy protector of the Savior of men."

St. Joseph's virtues are especially those of the hidden life and art in proportion to his *degree of sanctifying* grace: virginity, humility, piety, patience, prudence, unshakable fidelity. *Minpiitir. H**

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ket the effective and the solid . . . and yet ail the mystery of genuine
l <tie is in its secret character. . . . Otherwise there is only the seni-
fiance of virtue, which does not make a man according to the heart of
G-jd. Joseph, the simple man, sought God; Joseph, the detached man,
finiti God; Joseph, the withdrawn man, enjoyed God."

.St. Joseph s humility was confirmed by the thought of the gratuity
>iis exceptional vocation. Why did our heavenly Father give His
only' ■Son to me. Joseph, to safeguard? "What hast thou that thou hast
oa received?' Joseph appears as the mo-t humble of all the saints
■uit-r Mary, more humble than any »>f die angels. Because Joseph
is the most humble, he is the greatc-t of ail for the virtues being
Haled, the depth of humility is proportionate i- the elevation of
iharity. Jesus Himself op: "lie who i- the Ic-cr among you, he
i- the greater.'" Jos-p.l., far fr.-m boa-ting of hi- gift-, hid himself,
enjoying; peacefully vddi (ini dir m.-.terv nvc.iled to hm;. "He pos-
mS'is the God-man ?;■< -;λ - i.■.liiug ab -m it."

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li ve of God *and* souls did not cease to grow ar N.ι/.ιιπ!.. particularly
when he .held the Child Jesus in his arms, the Child wh> - the sottn e
■f ever new and ever loftier graces. The acceleration -f the growth
-> his zhiiriiv was prodigious. being far more rapid in later life than
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and that St. Joseph entered heaven with body and soul. St. Thomas is much more reserved on this point.⁴

The litany of St. Joseph offers a series of titles of supernatural splendor which clearly show us his role. Like Providence he is occupied with the most universal things (e.g., the reunion of the Church) and with most particular things (e.g., the finding of shoes for a poor man); He is mindful of the greatest sinners and the most advanced souls. Making us persevere in the road to salvation Joseph is terrible to the devil, against whom he is our great defense. In his relation to man Joseph is above all the patron of a happy death.

balance between Action and Contemplation

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