

Go To Joseph

By A Devotee of Saint Joseph.

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1809a (2006)

“GO TO JOSEPH!” has long been a directive of saints and popes, yet how many of us do go to Joseph? Next to Our Blessed Mother, there is no greater saint but, sad to say, too often we ignore him — this, in spite of the fact that the Church has dedicated the month of March to him, has established several feasts in his honor, and has proclaimed him patron of the Church, of the family, of the worker, and of the dying.

Which of us, therefore, does not need his help? Which of us can afford to ignore him in the difficulties and problems of our lives and at the time of our deaths?

Perhaps we take Saint Joseph so much for granted because we rarely stop to think about him and so we do not know him and do not appreciate him. A little thoughtful reading of the Gospels and a little knowledge of the life of his times reveal many things about Saint Joseph.

We know that Joseph was a carpenter, a working man, but he was also of the royal lineage of David. Among his ancestors were Abraham and David. If the kingdom of Jerusalem had been established in favor of the Jewish race, Joseph could have been a noble, but the descendants of David had become a conquered people, the Jewish throne was destroyed, and so Joseph lost his right to royalty with all of its power, wealth and prestige. Still, God chose him — above all men — to be the Foster-Father of His Divine Son, the King of Kings; to be, after Mary, an effective instrument in the work of the redemption.

Since the all-wise God predestined Joseph to be the head of the Holy Family and the protector of Jesus and Mary, it is beyond question that God must have given him extraordinary graces to be worthy of such a marvelous privilege. In fact, the Gospel speaks of Joseph as “a just man,” that is, a holy man, a man of outstanding goodness.

Query: Is the example which we give to our family and to others — our speech, our actions and our works — such that we can readily be recognized as “good” Catholics?

Joseph’s role as a common workman and his residence in a small, insignificant village were natural aspects of a hidden, humble life. Humble must have been his unsuccessful seeking of shelter at Bethlehem for the birth of the Holy Infant; and humble, too, must have been his inability to furnish anything but a pair of turtle doves for the offering at the presentation of the Divine Babe at the Temple.

Query: Are we content with our lot in life? Do we refrain from trying to keep-up or out-do “the Joneses?” Do we quietly work in parochial endeavors and apostolic efforts or must we always be in the limelight?

JOSEPH’S obedience to the Will of God is clearly manifested in his quick response to the Angel’s messages to leave Bethlehem and go into the foreign land of Egypt; and later, to leave Egypt and return, not to Bethlehem, but to Nazareth. Joseph’s obedience to the law of his Faith is evidenced in

his fulfilling its precepts for the circumcision of the Child, for the presentation of the Holy Infant at the Temple, and for bringing the 12-year-old Jesus to the Temple, according to Jewish custom. And Joseph's obedience to lawful civil authority is shown in the journey which he and Mary undertook from Nazareth to Bethlehem — this, regardless of the difficulties and the inconvenience that they could have avoided by staying at Nazareth.

Query: Are we truly obedient to the commandments of God and the laws of His Church or do we set forth our own little arguments as excuses for disobeying? Do we obey lawful civil authority?

Though Joseph could not understand how Mary, a professed virgin, could be with child, still he left the anguish of his dilemma up to God. And then when he had almost decided that he must follow the laws of his religion and must "put her away privately," God solved his problem by sending an angel to tell Joseph not to be concerned for "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

Query: How deep is our trust in God's loving providence? Do we turn to Him in sincere, constant prayer for enlightenment and assistance in the problems, which confront us? Do we seek solutions based on the teachings of Christ and His Church?

Saint Joseph accepted his role as head of the Holy Family, not only in providing for the needs of Jesus and Mary and protecting them through the dangerous flight into Egypt, but also in seeing to it that the "Child advanced in wisdom and in grace."

According to Jewish law, the father was the first and the official teacher of his children.

Just as soon as a child learned to speak, the good Jewish father began his religious instructions. So, the devout Joseph must have taught Jesus the fundamental texts of the Scriptures, as well as the Commandments. He must also have helped the Child memorize psalms for special occasions and prayed along with Him.

Query: Am I a truly Catholic parent? Do I provide not only for the material comfort of my children but also — and with great vigilance — attend to my responsibility in seeing to it that they learn about God and the true doctrines of His Church so that they, too, may "advance in wisdom and grace"?

THE JOURNEY from Nazareth to Bethlehem at a time when Mary expected delivery of the God-child, must have been very difficult and the deep disappointment at being turned away from the inn and other places of shelter must have been heart-breaking to Joseph. The subsequent flight into Egypt and certainly the loss of the Holy Child in Jerusalem must have been frightful trials to Joseph — times requiring great faith and patience, times to pray, to do the best that he could under the circumstances, and to trust in God for deliverance.

Query: How do we react to the anxieties, struggles and sufferings of our daily lives? Do we complain or do we accept them patiently, do the best that we can about them, and turn to God for assistance, according to His Will?

Through the ministry of His angels, God specifically directed and assisted Saint Joseph in many of his difficulties. The Gospels relate that an angel appeared to Joseph, relieving him of his anxiety about Mary's pregnancy; later an angel warned him about the dangers to the life of the Holy Infant; and still later, an angel advised him to take the Child and His mother back into the land of Israel.

Query: Do we recognize the existence of the angels given to us by God to be our special allies against Satan and his cohorts? Among these are the great archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael,

as well as our Guardian Angels who are especially assigned to personally protect and assist each one of us. Do we turn to the angels often in prayer?

Joseph spent his adult life serving Jesus and Mary in joy and in sorrow, to the best of his ability. At his death, he had the great privilege and consolation of dying in their presence.

Query: Do we live “in the presence of Jesus and Mary” — in sickness and in health, in sadness and in joy — in a life, which will bring us a holy, peaceful death in Their presence and that of Saint Joseph? Or is Sin master of our lives?

Throughout the centuries, people from all walks in life have revered Saint Joseph, sought his help, and received innumerable favors through his intercession. Some were sinners, some were saints, some were popes.

Among the saints was Saint Theresa of Avila. This remarkable saint — proclaimed Doctor of the Church by [the Venerable] Pope Paul VI on September 27, 1970 — attributed the cure of a serious illness to Saint Joseph and when she entered the Carmelite Order, she did all that she could to honor him and to foster devotion to him. She wrote many beautiful tributes to him, dedicated 15 of her foundations to him, and ordered that his statue be placed above the doors of her convents.

AMONG the popes especially devoted to Saint Joseph was [Blessed] Pius IX. On December 8, 1870, he declared Saint Joseph patron of the Universal Church and urged all bishops to spread devotion to the saint. He often spoke of Saint Joseph as, after our Blessed Mother, the hope of the Church.

“If Mary and Joseph,” he often said, “find again the place that they never should have lost in men’s hearts, the whole world will be saved. Go to Joseph! Have confidence in him, for his protection, as the patron of the Church, is most powerful.

Consecration to Saint Joseph.

BELOVED Saint Joseph, adopt me as your child, take care of my salvation, watch over me day and night, preserve me from the occasion of sin, obtain for me purity of soul and body!

Through your intercession with Jesus, grant me a spirit of sacrifice, of humility and self-denial, a great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and a tender love for Mary, my Mother.

Saint Joseph, be with me living, be with me dying, and obtain for me a favorable judgment from Jesus, my merciful Savior.

WHY CATHOLICS HONOUR MARY.

The Virgin Mary was the Mother of Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ was God, and therefore Mary was the Mother of God Incarnate (Matthew 1:18). That is the fundamental reason why Catholics honour her.

To carry out the purpose of His Eternal Wisdom to redeem humankind, God the Son came into this world as a Man Himself. In becoming Man, God chose to be born of a human mother. By His Omnipotence and Wisdom He was able to choose, from all the nations and peoples existing throughout the ages, the one woman who was to be His Mother. God's choice fell upon Mary, the Virgin Spouse of Joseph, who was living in the little village of Nazareth in Palestine.

Mary was the Mother of Jesus Christ, True God and True Man. Catholics, therefore, honour Mary because:

1. GOD CHOSE HER ABOVE ALL OTHER WOMEN.

Would one not look for the greatest perfections in the woman God chose to be the Mother of Christ, His Eternal Son? Surely, God could choose a perfect mother; it was fitting that He should do so; therefore, He did choose a perfect Mother.

The Angelic Salutation.

God Himself, through the mouth of His Archangel Gabriel, has told us that Mary was perfect. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you: Blessed are you among women" (Luke 1:28). Catholics do but follow the Archangel's example when they repeat the prayer well-known as the "Hail Mary."

The Salutation of Elizabeth.

When Mary visited her, this same salutation was repeated by Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:41-42); and in reply Mary herself was inspired by God to make this prophecy: "For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. Because He that is mighty has done great things to me" (Luke 1:48-49).

Mary then was perfect in the eyes of Almighty God, who is Infinite Purity Itself. She is more worthy of love and honour than any other of God's creatures. If it is wrong to love and honour Mary in a special way, then surely the words 'love' and 'honour' have lost their very meaning.

2. SHE IS CHRIST'S MOTHER.

Although Jesus Christ was truly God, He was also truly Man; as a man, therefore, He depended on His Mother during His childhood and youth for nurture, training, and education. During the three years of His public life, Christ taught a doctrine, which is the admiration even of those who deny His divinity. He went about healing and doing good, and showing men the way of salvation. His preparation for all this was thirty years spent with His Mother at Nazareth.

She shared in His work.

Through Mary's consent when she said to Gabriel, "Be it done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), the Redeemer came down on earth. This consent brought her the immense privilege and honour of the divine motherhood, but it involved also suffering, labour, and tremendous sacrifice. It brought joy with the visit of the shepherds, sent to the Infant Christ by angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest"; joy with the visit of the Wise Men, led from the East by the star. It brought suffering in the flight from Herod to exile in Egypt, sorrow at Calvary when all the disciples but John had fled away and "there stood, by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother" (John 19:25). Then was fulfilled Simeon's prophecy to Mary: "And your own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke 2:35). Mary, therefore, claims our love since she shared so closely in the joys and sufferings of Him who laid down His life that we might be His friends for all eternity.

3. SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

But Mary as the Mother of the Redeemer is more to us than the Mother of our dearest Friend and our greatest Benefactor; she is our Mother as well. Redeemed by the Blood of Christ, we become sons of God by adoption. So we are Mary's children since we are brethren of Mary's Son, "the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). It was to this that Christ referred on the Cross when He

said to His Mother, "Woman, behold your son," and to His disciple, Saint John, "Behold your Mother" (John 19:26).

She is our Helper.

We pray direct to Christ, the One Mediator, but since Mary is our Mother and the Mother of Christ, what wonder if we sometimes pray to her to intercede for us with her Son; for we show special love and honour to Our Lord when we approach Him through the Mother whom He loves so well, and whom He has given to us, to be our Mother also. At her request, Jesus performed the first miracle recorded in the Gospels, the changing of the water into wine at Cana (John 2:3-9). What wonder then, if the sick, the lame, and the blind go to her shrines, at Lourdes and elsewhere, in hope of cure, and when God sees fit, are cured? What wonder then, if millions of Christians daily beg of her, "Pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death?"

Seeing what Mary is, how can we be surprised that all Christians of both East and West, during all the centuries the Church has been in existence, have, with the unhappy exception of the Protestant Reformers in the last five centuries or so, been jealous of her honour, and have felt that not to love Mary is to fail in love for her Son!

As [Blessed John Henry] Cardinal Newman wrote: "If we take a survey, at least of Europe, we shall find that it is not those religious communions which are characterized by devotion to the Blessed Virgin that have ceased to adore her Eternal Son... They who were accused of worshipping a creature in His stead, still worship Him; their accusers... have ceased to worship Him altogether."

This Apologetic leaflet was first issued by the Bellarmine Society of Oxford University. We are proud to reproduce it here in the hope that many more souls will benefit by its wisdom.
