

SUNDAY DAYS OF PRAYER

MARCH 19, 2023

MARIAN HOUR

1. Rosary – 2. Consecration to Marie-Paule – 3. Conference

Saint Joseph the Model of the Interior Life

“There where the mystery is the most profound, covered by the densest night and the greatest silence, that is precisely where the loftiest mission and the most brilliant succession of necessary virtues are found, as are the merits stemming from them. To watch over and guard the virginity and holiness of Mary, to partake of the great mystery hidden to the eyes of the centuries and cooperate in this way in the incarnation and redemption is a unique and very lofty mission.” (Pope Pius XI, General Audience, March 19, 1928)

That comment from Pope Pius XI shows us Saint Joseph’s great holiness and the eminence of his virtues. No saint has ever been as close to Jesus and Mary and no saint has lived in their intimacy for as long as he did. Already holy because of a righteous and exemplary life, Joseph raised himself even higher as a result of this divine atmosphere. His sanctification was in the image of his deep desire to please God, to such an extent that his soul was no longer attached to anything. God’s will also led him everywhere, to the point that his soul could detect this will in the slightest details and correspond to it perfectly.

Over and above his mission of protecting Jesus and Mary, Joseph teaches us that corresponding to God’s plan requires interior reform. He was a just man, Saint Matthew told us. In our days, seeking justice translates into a yearning for holiness.

Now, *“the desire for holiness is the lever of the spiritual life,”* Marie-Paule told us. *“The more intense and real this desire will be, the more it will impel the soul to commit itself completely. God never lets himself be outdone in generosity. The more the soul gives itself to Him in an intense love, the more He gives himself to it with His grace.”* (Marie, no. 16, March 1978, p. 1) So, Joseph’s life stood out through his firm will to be united with God. That is why he constantly progressed.

It was hard for him not to be fully committed, given that he would leave everything behind to follow the divine will. Inevitably, he was not able to understand everything. And in this clear-obscure of the intelligence, there were also the unavoidable uncertainties that come with the phases of intense purification to which every soul close to God is subjected. Yes, it was hard for Joseph not to be fully committed when the “fate of humanity” in the persons of Jesus and Mary was also in his hands...!

However, *“God always anticipates through His grace,”* our Foundress wrote. *“He waits for our cooperation, our love, our surrender to His holy will. Therefore, we must tend towards*

perfection through a daily and progressive conversion. This presupposes a great spirit of renunciation in the solitude of an interior struggle and the constancy of the hidden sacrifice. All Saint Joseph’s life can be summed up by an uninterrupted adherence to the divine plan, even if it included situations that were very mysterious and obscure for him.” (Id.)

Of course, the very first thing we notice about him comes from the fact of having been the guardian and protector of Jesus and Mary. However, without his openness to grace and his having worked on himself, none of that could have taken place. Otherwise, how could God have entrusted to a man of this earth, these two great aspects of the divine mystery in the persons of Jesus and Mary. That shows God’s trust in him. It also reveals the deep discretion of Joseph’s heart.

Very often, we forget the grand role and the depth of Joseph as a person because we do not meditate on it enough. Even our Foundress admitted this. *“Today, I pray to Saint Joseph with an intense fervor. Since I have been given to know the incredible sufferings the Lord experienced, I have had an even greater esteem for Saint Joseph, for he also, like his spouse the Virgin Mary, suffered terribly in his entire being. I genuinely regret not having given him, during my life, the admiration and love that he ought to have received. Today I honor him, because his vibrant faith during the long years of intense darkness was a signal testimony to the divine authenticity of a Work of love which was to unfold for the redemption of humanity.”* (Life of Love V, p. 120)

Thus, Joseph helps us keep alive the memory of the promise and its fulfillment. Opening our eyes to the signs of the presence of the Lord Jesus and His action in our lives, Joseph can be thought of as the Father of hope.

Another one of Joseph’s traits is that he leads to the Father. The mission that was entrusted to him subsists for ever. Joseph was given the task of awakening Jesus’ human conscience to His eternal Father. He turned Jesus’ eyes to *“Him from whom all paternity comes, in heaven and on earth”*. Joseph was self-effacing before this child’s true Father, to such an extent that, in a most natural way, Jesus invoked the eternal Father with the same name He gave to Joseph, His father on earth.

These words of the adolescent Jesus, *“It is in my Father’s house that I must be”*, are not humiliating for Joseph; on the contrary, they were the most wonderful praise Jesus could have given Saint Joseph. They are like the seal confirming the perfect fulfillment of his ministry and the revelation of what ev-

ery paternity ought to be; that is, a passage, the setting on the path of, the support provided in the discovery of the heavenly Father who is the source and end of our entire existence and the meaning of our life.

There is no doubt that Saint Joseph continues to exercise

this ministry in favor of those who request it of him. To benefit from this, dear friends, all we must do is follow the road with him, placing ourselves at his school. Moreover, was that not what Jesus did, since He was submissive to him?

Father Angelo Gonthier

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EUCCHARISTIC HOUR

1. Rosary – 2. Vespers – 3. Conference – 4. Invocations – 5. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

Being United With God Is Our Strength

In volume V of *Life of Love*, Marie-Paule wrote the following concerning Saint Joseph: “*Since I have been given to know the incredible sufferings the Lord experienced, I have had an even greater esteem for Saint Joseph, for he also, like his spouse the Virgin Mary, suffered terribly in his entire being... Today I honor him, because his vibrant faith during the long years of intense darkness was a signal testimony to the divine authenticity of a Work of love which was to unfold for the redemption of humanity.*” (*Life of Love V*, p. 120)

The Virgin Mary’s righteous spouse was not spared suffering, and this contributed to purifying him even more and led him along the path of perfection. In *The Poem of the Man-God*, Mary explained the path Joseph had to follow: “[Joseph] was a man, that is, he had no other help for his spirit, except his holiness... Humanity was in him with all its heavy weight and he had to rise towards perfection with all that burden, at the cost of continuous efforts of all his faculties to reach perfection and be agreeable to God.” (Maria Valtorta, *The Poem of the Man-God*, vol. 1, p. 158)

So, Saint Joseph raised himself to perfection through constant efforts. There you have precisely a good summary of interior reform. According to Marie-Paule, it is “*a daily and progressive conversion... It presupposes a great spirit of renunciation in the solitude of an interior struggle and the constancy of the hidden sacrifice.*” She went on to say: “*Genuine and human development is enhanced, first of all, by renunciation; it requires an in-depth transformation in the love of God, of others and of oneself.*” (*Marie*, no. 16, March 1978, pp. 1,4)

How important it is, then, to empty oneself of self if, like Saint Joseph, we want to perceive God’s will or His plan in our lives. We must never forget that every soul is a project of love. Our only desire would obviously be to respond to this project with all the love and faithfulness of which our heart is capable. It is impossible to respond to this project when our being, our “self”, does not leave any room to God. Interior reform, by freeing us from our egotistical self, allows us to hear God’s call in our soul.

According to our Mother: “*The attitude of dependence on God encourages silence and recollection in a close union in conformity with God’s will so as to understand well the mysterious ways of His Love.*” (*Id.*, p. 3) In most cases, dependence is associated with a bad habit, a sin. Dependency is defined as an irresistible and uncontrollable need to consume a substance or engage in certain actions. When this need is satisfied, it provides a certain pleasure. Presently many people are collapsing under the weight of so many forms of dependence, all of them oppressive. However, only one is permitted, only one satisfies a need that is not human since it comes from the soul; only one provides a happiness that is not of the earth, and that is the dependence on God.

Saint Joseph greatly depended on God and this dependence had repercussions in the smallest details of his life. In the most ordinary situations of everyday life, he attentively scrutinized the circumstances and events so as to perceive what seemed to indicate God’s will. He was dependant on the slightest sign indicating the divine plan of love to be accomplished, even if it was disconcerting and therefore painful to follow.

As Marie-Paule indicated: “*Authentic love overcomes all obstacles, accepts all sacrifices by uniting itself to Him who is All... Being faithful to God in the total giving of self exacts the greatest renunciations.*” (*Id.*) “*Mary and Joseph,*” she told us, “*were faithful in the smallest things. Their love and their constant fidelity made it possible for God’s redemptive plan to be accomplished... Their soul aspired solely to live totally for God by fulfilling the mission He had entrusted to them.*” (*Id.*)

Being totally freed from himself through his interior reform, Saint Joseph was not attached to anything. No longer having any personal will, he simply wanted to do God’s will. Because he gave of himself in the simplicity of faith and love, God looked down upon his soul and granted him an intimate union.

“*Souls accustomed to the practice of virtues, to the observance of the commandments of God in a life of purity and union with God the Father, draw furrows of light that are followed by those who are searching for the truth.*” (*Id.*, p. 4) These words from our Mother truly summarize what Saint Joseph’s life was. The furrows of light he drew are still calling those who want to imitate this model of interior life.

May the souls of the present and the future find their inspiration in Saint Joseph. Through his intercession, may they discover, amid their ordeals, the signs God is sending them so as to guide them to the plan of love He has set out for each one of them.

Father Francis Thériault