

Fatherhood Must Take Once Again Its Rightful Place Among Men



Just as Mary's singular privilege was to be the Virgin-Mother of Jesus, so St. Joseph's singular privilege was to be the Virgin-Father of Jesus, standing in place of the heavenly Father over Jesus during his hidden life, hiding both the divine sonship of Jesus and the divine maternity of Mary from public scrutiny until the appointed time to reveal them. As putative or legal father of Jesus, having given Jesus His name, the general public **would have assumed** Joseph was the natural father of Jesus and the fruit of Joseph's marriage to Mary as in any other marriage. **Such was the plan of God to conceal the great mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus' miraculous conception and birth in our humanity, and Mary's privileges of the Immaculate Conception and Perpetual Virginity until the time He had ordained from eternity to unfold these awesome mysteries of grace to mankind.** The message of Gabriel to fear not to take Mary for his wife disclosed the divine sonship of Jesus and the virginity of Mary to Joseph, but the first truly public revelation of Jesus divine sonship was at His Baptism with that great Theophany of the most Holy Trinity in which the Father, the voice from heaven, proclaimed Jesus His dearly beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove resting on Jesus' shoulder, gave testimony to these two great mysteries of our Faith, the Incarnation and the Most Holy Trinity.

The Church teaches that when God gives one a mission, He first gives profound blessing and grace to enable one to carry out that mission. Just as the Eternal Father adorned Mary with a fullness of grace befitting her mission as Mother of the Redeemer, so the Eternal Father adorned Joseph with a similar fullness of grace befitting his mission as Guardian of the Redeemer and of the Mother of the Redeemer. Joseph is the embodiment of the Father's love for His Son and for all of us who are wed to Christ in His Sacred Humanity. St. Joseph spoke of this favor in a locution with Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, visionary of the Our Lady of America® message, in early October of 1956, shortly after Our Lady's first appearance under the new image.

"It is true, my daughter, that *immediately* after my conception, I was, through the future merits of Jesus and because of my exceptional role of future Virgin-Father, cleansed from the stain of original sin. I was

from that moment confirmed in grace and never had the slightest stain on my soul. This is my unique privilege among men.

My pure heart also was from the first moment of existence inflamed with love for God. *Immediately*, at the moment when my soul was cleansed from original sin, grace was infused into it in such abundance that, excluding my holy spouse, I surpassed the holiness of the highest angel in the angelic choir.

My heart suffered with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Mine was a silent suffering, for it was my special vocation to hide and shield, as long as God willed, the Virgin Mother and Son from the malice and hatred of men. The most painful of my sorrows was that I knew before hand of their passion, yet would not be there to console them. Their future suffering was ever present to me and became my daily cross. I became, in union with my holy spouse, co-redemptor of the human race. Through compassion for the *sufferings of Jesus and Mary* I co-operated, *as no other*, in the salvation of the world.”

Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, Pg. 13.)

On the eve of his feast, March 18, 1958, two years later, St. Joseph appeared to Sister and spoke these words about his fatherhood and all fatherhood.

“All fatherhood is blest in me whom the Eternal Father chose as His representative on earth, the Virgin-Father of His own Divine Son. Through me the Heavenly Father has blessed all fatherhood, and through me He continues and will continue to do so till the end of time.

My spiritual fatherhood extends to all God’s children, and together with my Virgin Spouse I watch over them with great love and solicitude. Fathers must come to me, small one, to learn obedience to authority: to the Church always, as the mouthpiece of God, to the laws of the country in which they live, insofar as these do not go against God and their neighbor. Mine was perfect obedience to the Divine Will, as it was shown and made known to me by the Jewish law and religion. To be careless in this is most displeasing to God and will be severely punished in the next world.

Let fathers also imitate my great purity of life and the deep respect I held for my Immaculate Spouse. Let them be an example to their children and fellowmen, never willfully doing anything that would cause scandal among God’s people.

Fatherhood is from God, and it must take once again its rightful place among men.” (Diary, Pg. 27.)

As we reflect on our times, we see why St. Joseph's words are so important for us today. The humble, obedient faith of Joseph is a challenge to our present world filled with so much apostasy from the Faith and disobedience to Christ's Vicar on earth and to the teachings of Holy Mother Church. His immediate surrender to the Divine Will challenges our intense attachment to our own wills and/or to the politically correct will over the divine. His deep respect for his spouse stands against the mounting divorce rate which so often results from rugged individualism and the absence of communion and mutual self-giving between spouses which corrodes the community life and bonding within the family and threatens the extension of healthy families through the generations. Joseph understood the Will of God for him in the duties of his life, expressed in obedience to the laws of his religion and the laws of the land, provided the latter was not contrary to Divine Law, in which case it must be opposed. The renunciation of the thinking and ways of the world and the embrace of simplicity of life and a life centered on Jesus ensured a **culture of life** in the Family of Nazareth. Imitation of the simple virtues of this Holy Family should inspire us to reject the consumerist, materialistic and self-indulging ways of our **culture of death with its utilitarianism** which denies the sacredness of life itself and the incomparable dignity and worth of the human person, while often reducing the person to an object for pleasure or for profit by those who control the machinery of marketing our so called science of progress that can as easily destroy us as aid our well being. Who can fathom what **heaven on earth** existed in St. Joseph's home where freedom from the excess of man-made things left this family free to be consumed with the things of God, living already on earth a foretaste of what they would live in heaven, perfectly. Prayer and contemplation of the Face of Jesus was their daily bread and wine of ecstasy. The pure hearts of Mary and Joseph made their humble home a sanctuary of devotion to the living God, a temple where the incomprehensible Triune Love of God Himself dwelt in quiet solitude and unspeakable joy. This earthly trinity--Jesus, Mary and Joseph—extends the heavenly Trinity into human experience.

Sister Mildred described her vision of St. Joseph's most pure heart.

It seemed to be lying on a cross which was of brown color. It appeared to me that at the top of the heart, in the midst of the flames pouring out, was a pure white lily. Then I heard these words:

"Behold this pure heart so pleasing to Him Who made it. ...The cross, my little one, upon which my heart rests is the cross of the passion, which was ever present before me, causing me intense suffering.

I desire souls to come to my heart that they may learn true union with the Divine Will." (Diary, Pg. 28.)

God created man as family in the image of His own Trinitarian family, a community of persons formed by intense bonds of love. Since sin entered our world by way of the **natural family**, so God ordained that salvation should come by way of the **restored human family, the Holy Family**. Just as the Divine Family has headship under the Father, so the human family would have headship under its father, too. For Jesus, Son of God, to fulfill the redemption of the human family, he would need to be totally immersed in a natural family as created by God with both a father and a mother to form a community of persons with Jesus, mirroring Trinitarian love in self-gifting, one to another. Joseph was, therefore, vital to the plan of redemption and is co-redeemer with Jesus and Mary in the hypostatic order of grace which God willed for our salvation. **St. Joseph is the *third heart*, so often neglected in the earthly trinity**, and is worthy of honor precisely because of his proximity to Jesus as legal father to Him, and proximity to Mary, his spouse, as Mother of Jesus, the Word Incarnate. On his feast in 1958, St Joseph spoke to Sister Mildred of the Trinity's desire to honor him.

“My child, I desire a day to be set aside to honor my fatherhood. The privilege of being chosen by God to be the Virgin-Father of His Son was mine alone, and no honor, excluding that bestowed upon my Holy Spouse, was ever, or will ever, be as sublime or as high as this. The Holy Trinity desires thus to honor me that in my unique fatherhood all fatherhood might be blessed.

Dear child, I was king in the little home of Nazareth, for I sheltered within it the Prince of Peace and the Queen of Heaven. To me they looked for protection and sustenance, and I did not fail them. I received from them the deepest love and reverence, for in me they saw Him Whose place I took over them. So the head of the family must be loved, obeyed, and respected, and in return be a true father and protector to those under his care. In honoring in a special way my fatherhood, you also honor Jesus and Mary. The Divine Trinity has placed into our keeping the peace of the world.

The imitation of the Holy Family, my child, of the virtues we practiced in our little home at Nazareth is the way for all souls to that peace which comes from God alone and which none other can give.”
(Diary, Pgs. 28-29.)

Then Sister Mildred had a vision of St. Joseph in his glory in heaven.

He seemed suspended, as it were, a short distance above what had the appearance of a large globe with clouds moving about it. His head was slightly raised, the eyes gazing upward as if in ecstasy. The hands were in a position similar to that of the priest during the celebration of Holy Mass, only they extended upward somewhat more.

The color of his hair as also of his rather small and slightly forked beard seemed a very dark brown. His eyes resembled in color the hair and beard. He was clothed in a white robe that reached to his ankles. Over this he wore a sort of cloak which did not come together at the throat, but covering the shoulders and draped gracefully over each arm, reached to the hem of the robe. The cloak at times had, or seemed to have, the appearance of a brown, sometimes a purple, hue, or perhaps a slight blending of the two. The belt about his waist was of a gold color, as were his sandals.

His appearance, though quite youthful, gave at the same time the impression of rare maturity combined with great strength. He seemed a bit taller than medium height. The lines of his face appeared strong and purposeful, softened somewhat by a gentle serenity. I also saw his most pure heart at this time. Moreover, I saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering above his head.

Standing sideways, facing each other, were two angels, one on the right, the other on the left. Each carried what appeared to be a small pillow in a satin covering, the pillow on the right bearing a gold crown, the one on the left, a gold scepter. The angels were all white, even their faces and hair. It was a beautiful whiteness that reminded me of the stainlessness of heaven. [Then he said] **Thus should he be honored whom the King desires to honor. ...** [He promised to come again, then blessed Sister as she knelt.] (Diary, Pgs. 29-30.)

How fitting are these words and visions of St. Joseph in an age when fatherhood and the traditional family and traditional marriage have come under so much attack. By the 1950's the long term effects of the Second Industrial Revolution of the late 1800's had changed our lives dramatically. Assembly lines increased production and drew workers away from the land and the extended family into the cities and places of work. Two World Wars in the 50 years prior to Joseph's words led women out of the home and into the workforce with its effects on the family: two-parent working families; a rise in the divorce rate, so often from economic pressures; latchkey kids or non-family babysitters; increased marketing and pressure to consume this new abundance of goods, pushing families into consumerism and materialism, keeping up with the Jones. Technology increased alienation in families and communities and brought that utilitarian mindset that so often dehumanizes people by increasingly treating people as things, cogs in the wheel of progress, valued more for productivity and profit than for themselves. Greed in industry brought increasing injustice and unequal distribution of the world's resources and a greater divide between the haves and the have-nots. The sexual revolution around the time of St. Joseph's appearances brought a rapid decline in morals, especially in regard to purity, as fornication, adultery, artificial birth control and abortion became more easily available and more openly legitimized. Soon after

the tendency toward today's policies of assisted suicide and euthanasia and health rationing would be pursued under euphemistic terms of medical directives.

At Fatima in 1917 Our Lady warned of the threat of **communism and the errors of atheism** spreading throughout the world and **even into high places within the Church**. Today we have a **culture of death**, the **reversal of the natural and the moral law**, division and widespread disobedience within the Church, false teaching and compromise of the Truth. Subjectivism, relativism, rationalization, individualism, self-worship, excessive humanism and the over-glorification of human experience, the legalization of behavior contrary to divine law, especially regarding sexual perversions, and misguided nationalism are everywhere. Even Catholic institutions and those mandated to teach and to defend the Faith have become cafeteria styled believers and often teach or condone the opposite and lead many astray. Externalism has replaced the interior life, so vital to growth in holiness and toward a pure heart, which is necessary for pure thinking and pure behavior. These contrary behaviors all speak to the errors of atheism which attack God by attacking the supreme authority of His Law and His Divine Order, His Infinite Purity and Lordship over all life and creation, and especially, His Fatherhood. Blasphemy and a reversal to pre-Christian and pagan religious views abounds.

Paul Vitz, Ph.D., a former atheist of 30 years, studied the lives of the most prominent atheists of the last century or so and notes in his book **FAITH OF THE FATHERLESS: The Psychology of Atheism**, the profound effect of the absence of a father or meaningful father figure, or the presence of an abusive or neglectful father in the lives of them all. Atheists claim God is a figment of the imagination for believers who need a security blanket. The late Bishop Fulton J. Sheen once confronted an atheist suggesting that if God were a fantasy, then atheists, by organizing such vehement attacks against Him, are actually admitting His existence, for no one would see fit to battle a fantasy. Atheists, as well as other non-believers, **do not want God to exist**, especially not as a loving Father, because admitting this would demand a radical change of life. Is it any wonder then, that St. Joseph should model for us the Fatherhood of God so essential in our journey of Faith back to the Father's house from which we came, and that he should remind us that all fatherhood comes from God and is blessed by God, and that fathers must once again stand against a culture trying to eliminate fathers from the human family and reclaim their rightful place among men as ordained by God?

When St. Joseph appeared to Sister Mildred on March 30, 1958, he spoke of being the protector of the Church and the home and asked that we honor him. Let us trust our marriages and families, and the whole Church and the whole family of mankind to his ever faithful guardianship. Surely Jesus cannot refuse St. Joseph anything, just as He cannot refuse His Mother anything that she asks of Him on our behalf. His first

miracle at Cana tells us so. St. Joseph tells us that the Most Holy Trinity has chosen the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to bring peace to the world. Oh how we need that peace! Let us pray for it as we ponder St. Joseph's request!

“I am the protector of the Church and the home, as I was the protector of Christ and His Mother while I lived upon earth. Jesus and Mary desire that my pure heart, so long hidden and unknown, be now honored in a special way. Let my children honor my most pure heart in a special manner on the First Wednesday of the month by reciting the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary in memory of my life with Jesus and Mary and the love I bore them, the sorrows I suffered with them. Let them receive Holy Communion in union with the love with which I received the Savior for the first time and each time I held Him in my arms.

Those who honor me in this way will be consoled by my presence at their death, and I myself will conduct them safely into the presence of Jesus and Mary.” (Diary, Pgs. 31-32.)

How can we ignore such a reward for so little effort?

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