

# Living in a Presence Too Great for Words

## The Contemplative Life of St. Joseph

**“It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. ... The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men. ...The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, you also will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace.”**

(Our Lady to Sister Mildred Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, Pg.8.)

With God, first is given the grace and then the mission. Mary was granted a fullness of grace and the singular privileges of her Immaculate Conception and her perpetual virginity, meriting her glorious Assumption, because God had chosen her from eternity to be the Virgin-Mother of the Incarnate Word. Her divine maternity is the reason for all her other graces and privileges. St. Joseph, too, was chosen from eternity to be the Virgin-Father of the Incarnate Word and was given a fullness of grace and privileges similar to Mary's. Mary was **preserved from original sin at the moment of her conception** in anticipation of Christ's redeeming death. She is purer than the purest gold that lined the Ark of the Covenant, for she is the Ark of the **New** Covenant who bears God into our world. St. Joseph, in the message of Our Lady of America©, states that he was **cleansed from original sin the moment after his conception**, through the future merits of Jesus, because he was destined to stand in place of the heavenly Father over Jesus on earth. Edward Healy Thompson states:

**From Holy Scripture we also learn that some souls through the divine predilection, as those of Jeremias and of the Baptist, were sanctified before they saw the light of day. Now, what shall we say of Joseph? Since in dignity and holiness he is inferior to Mary, we cannot assume with any certainty that God granted to him the same privilege as to her; and the Church has never made any utterance on the subject. Still, Joseph surpasses all the other saints in dignity and sanctity; we are, therefore, free to conjecture that, although this is not signified in Scripture, he must have been sanctified before his birth earlier than any of them, for all the holy doctors agree in saying that there was no grace conceded to any other saint, except Mary, which was not granted to Joseph. As Mary, above all, was nearest to Jesus, so Joseph was nearest to Mary; and for the sake of Jesus, and also for Mary's sake, we may justly conclude that to Joseph must have been conceded a privilege second only to hers.**

(Edward Healy Thompson, M.A., THE LIFE AND GLORIES OF ST. JOSEPH, Tan Books, Pg. 41.)

Scripture affirms that Mary had made a vow of virginity, for when Gabriel announced she would give birth to the Savior, she questioned how that could be, for she does not know man. The angel assured her that her virginity would remain intact and the child would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture does not speak of the chastity of St. Joseph prior to his marriage to Mary, but based on the same principle already stated, if St.

John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, by divine predilection, led totally virginal lives, how much more so must have St. Joseph, greater in holiness than they. This was a marriage truly made in heaven before it was contracted on earth. Thompson states:

**That Joseph was the spouse of a virgin and of a Virgin-Mother such as Mary, was quite sufficient to persuade the great body of the Fathers to hold with security that Joseph was a virgin by his own election before he was chosen to be the husband of Mary.... As early, indeed, as the third century St. Athanasius spoke these short but weighty words of Joseph and Mary: that "both remained intact, as was proved by many testimonies," and after him St. Jerome, defending the perpetual virginity of Mary against the heretic Helvidius, maintained that, not only Mary, but her spouse Joseph was ever a virgin, so that of this virginal marriage a virginal Son should be born. Hence, St. Peter Damian asserts...that the Son of God, not content with having a virgin for his mother, willed that he who represented His Father should also be a virgin. (Thompson, Pgs. 89-90)**

In the message of Our Lady of America©, St. Joseph confirms this belief.

**"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." (The Diary, Pg. 13)**

There is no place in our Catholic understanding to see St. Joseph as an old man or a widower with other children, or as a young man Mary's age, or to understand the term "brethren" used in the Gospels to mean Mary or Joseph had other children. Brethren is a term used for cousins. Jesus was the only Child of Mary and Joseph had no natural children; Jesus was his sacred trust and son in the order of grace. Mary was around fifteen when she married and St. Joseph is commonly believed to have been in the prime of his life, between 30-40, mature, strong and holy befitting his awesome responsibilities as guardian, protector and provider for Jesus and Mary. Because of the sublime roles Mary and Joseph shared in Christ's work of Redemption, they constitute a class all their own, the order of the hypostatic union. They were at the immediate and intimate service of the Hypostatic Union of the God-man. In the message of Our Lady of America© St. Joseph speaks of his passion in union with the Passion of Jesus and Mary, his role as co-redeemer with them in the work of salvation.

**"My heart suffered with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Mine was the 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 beforehand 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." (The Diary, Pg. 13)**

Holy Scripture does not record a single word spoken by St. Joseph to Mary, Jesus, the angels or anyone else. No wonder he is called “**the silent saint.**” No wonder his was a “**silent suffering!**” Scripture does tell us, however, that Joseph was a descendant of the Patriarchs, of the Kings of Judah and of the house of David. As the first Joseph, son of the Patriarch Jacob, was put over the household of the Pharaoh in Egypt, so St. Joseph, son of Jacob, himself the last of the great Patriarchs, was given the greater charge over the household of the Messiah. As the family of the first Joseph flocked to Egypt to feast on the bread and wine of the Pharaoh to avoid starvation, so the family of St. Joseph, the whole Church of which he is custodian, comes to his house to feast on the living Bread and the chalice of salvation so they might live. In his encyclical letter, ***Novo Millennio Ineunte***, St. John Paul II exhorts us to “Duc in altum,” push out into the deep, into the oceans of God’s mystery, to contemplate the Face of Christ, and to make our homes a school of prayer. What home was more a school of prayer than Joseph’s, for in it dwelt Mary, Ark of the New Covenant, and the Holy of Holies, the Divine Indwelling Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Wherever Jesus is, all three Persons are. Daily Joseph joined in the prayers of Jesus and Mary, contemplated Christ’s Face, and lived in the Presence of God. What splinters of glory must Mary and Joseph have seen. What spiritual illuminations and ecstasies must have held them in rapture, beyond comprehension. If other saints, even Sister Mildred Neuzil herself, had spiritual illuminations, ecstasies and flights of the spirit, how much more must Mary and Joseph have enjoyed such favors. St. John the Evangelist in Revelation describes his vision of the Son of Man and the august silence in heaven for half an hour as the heavenly creatures fell prostrate in adoration. The mystics speak of Mary often prostrate and silent before our Infant God. Must not Joseph have been so, too? Surely heaven had to suspend that glory that hovered over them like the cloud of old or like the pillar of fire burning within them so they might fulfill the duties of everyday life. This home was indeed a temple. It was heaven on earth! Every day was a transfiguration day!

The order of the hypostatic union roots Mary and Joseph in a special relationship to each of the three Persons of the Trinity. Mary is the beloved daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was given the Heavenly Father’s authority over Jesus to be, not merely the legal and putative father, but a true father to Jesus on earth. The Son of God called him father and obeyed him. The Spirit of God gave Joseph God’s three sacred trusts: the Son of God; the Mother of God and Spouse of the Spirit; and the secret of God: the divinity of Jesus and the virginal motherhood of Mary. These great truths were to remain hidden until God wished them revealed. Mary, too, obeyed Joseph and deferred to him in all things as her head and master. What a loving master he was!

**In all orders of things great privileges are attached to being the eldest, the first. The first Apostle, the first Martyr, the first Seraph, the first son of the Patriarchs, all have special rights which belong to no others; therefore I conclude that St. Joseph has singular prerogatives above all other men, for he was the first to contemplate the admirable humanity of Our Lord Jesus, the first to adore Him, the first to touch Him, the first to serve Him, to nourish Him, and to dwell with Him, the first to hear Him speak and to be enlightened by His divine instructions. He is the first confessor for the faith, since he first suffered for the love of Jesus Christ, forsaking his home and his country to fly with Him; the first Apostle making the Messiah known to men, by announcing Him to Egypt; the first man, perhaps, who made a profession and vow of**

virginity, and kept it in the state of marriage, the first Christian and the first model for the children of the Church. All these distinctions give Joseph great pre-eminence over all other saints, and are almost infinite, so that we may apply to him what Jacob said of his eldest son Reuben: "Excelling (his brethren) in gifts, greater in command."

Theologians teach that the office of St. Joseph was more exalted than any other in the Church. We do not speak of Our Lady, who is always above all comparison. They acknowledge, it is true, that in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and in the order of sanctifying grace, the office of the Apostles is the most sublime; but they recognize in the Mother of God, and in St. Joseph, an order, a hierarchy apart, that of the hypostatic union, destined to the immediate service of the person of the Word made flesh, and this second hierarchy is superior in dignity to the first. The Apostles...are only the servants of Jesus Christ; Mary and Joseph are His mother and His father.

(Pere Binet, S.J., THE DIVINE FAVORS GRANTED TO ST. JOSEPH, Tan Books, Pgs. 20-21.)

St. Bernardin states that St. Joseph was the living image of his virgin spouse, who was the living image of Jesus, but the resemblance was not merely outward. **"All the glory of the King's daughter is within."** The same is true of St. Joseph. St. Bernardin says:

... that as the virginal marriage of Mary and Joseph consisted in the union of their wills, the friendship of their hearts, and the love of their souls increased to such a degree that there never were two hearts more completely identified, two souls more dissolved into one, and he adds that the Holy Spirit would never have formed this union without rendering the husband perfectly similar to the wife. It was beseeching that the likeness of these two suns should be so striking, that it would be difficult to distinguish one from the other. On one hand, the holiness of Our Lady outshines the holiness of all creatures; on the other hand, the holiness of Joseph is entirely alike the holiness of Mary. (Binet, Pgs. 30- 31.)

If those who touched the hem of Jesus' cloak obtained great blessing, how much more was given to Joseph who held Jesus in his arms, pressed Him to his heart and kissed His Holy Face? St. Joseph's heart is like the book presented to St. John in his vision of the Son of Man as described in the Book of Revelation. St. John could not read it until the angels and the Lamb opened it for him. In the Book of Esther we see how King Assurus rewarded the fidelity of Mardochai by clothing him with his royal cloak and royal crown and having him led through the streets to the chant: **"Thus shall he be honored, whom the king hath a mind to honor."** Our Lady once thanked St. Teresa of Avila for the honor her zeal had brought to St. Joseph. **It is time for us to open the book on St. Joseph and give him his rightful place as the third heart in the earthly trinity.** Gerson asks:

**"Who will give me words to explain worthily the ineffable mystery of this admirable Trinity, Jesus, Mary and Joseph?"** For those three persons are a true and living image of the adorable Trinity, where there is one Father, one Son, and one Spirit, Who is the bond, the love, and the gift of both. Here also we find a father, a son, and the immaculate heart of a Virgin, who is the love of both, and who forms a very close bond, uniting father to son, and son to father, mother to son, and son to mother, husband to wife, and wife to husband. A bond so identifying, that these three hearts seem to be no longer three, but one and the same heart. (Binet, Pg. 114.) [What God has joined together, let no man put asunder!]

Sister Mildred Neuzil had a vision of St. Joseph on March 18 and 19, 1958. His pure heart was lying on a brown cross. Flames gushed from the top of the heart out of which a pure white lily rose. He said:

**“... 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. ...I will make known to you how God wishes me to be honored in union with Jesus and Mary to obtain peace among men and nations. ....**

**“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. ... 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 Diary, Pgs. 26-29.)**

Then Sister saw St. Joseph looking up to heaven, his hands in the position of the priest at Mass. The Spirit was hovering over him and on either side was an angel holding a satin pillow on which rested a gold crown and a gold scepter. Then was heard: **“Thus should he be honored whom the King desires to honor.”** (The Diary, Pgs. 28-30.) On March 30, 1958, St. Joseph again appeared to Sister and spoke these words:

**“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 sorrow 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. (The Diary, Pgs. 31-32.)**

**“O ineffable transformation! O new trinity of persons and unity of hearts!”  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph!  
True and living image of the heavenly Trinity!**

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