

The Passion of St. Joseph



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.

As St. Joseph ceased speaking I saw his 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.

(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, OH, Pgs. 27-28.)

Sacred Scripture and Tradition give the account of the Passion and death of Christ, the Eternal High Priest and Son of God, ordained from all eternity to be that Perfect Sacrifice to end all sacrifices and to effect, not merely symbolize, the forgiveness of our sins and the reconciliation of all mankind to God. The Son's Passion was the Mother's passion, too. Picture Mary pressing on through the crowd with John to be near her Son as He was led out of Jerusalem and up that steep hill to Calvary! Feel her Immaculate Heart die a "thousand deaths" each time the executioners' whips tear mercilessly at the tender flesh of Jesus, or the crowd's spittle lays its curses upon His Holy Face. Can we not feel with Mary the shoulder wound gaping wider with the weight of the cross as it digs deeper into Jesus' flesh and pinches every nerve in that part of His body? See her gasp for breath with Jesus' every groan for air that begged to collapse into final surrender! No, it would not be finished until she had felt "Simeon's sword" pierce her own heart again and again with every nail pounded into Jesus' sacred feet and hands. Her heart must have broken open with His as together they begged that accursed old wood to rejuvenate into something new and tender, the Tree of Life! She must walk with her Son to the bitter end.

Where was Joseph during Jesus' and Mary's passions? Joseph is often called the hidden and forgotten saint. His pure and humble soul sought only to do the Will of God. That Will was to hide the virginity of Mary from Satan who knew the prophecy of Eden, that a Virgin would bear a Son Who would crush the head of the ancient serpent, a Son Who

would save God's people and rule over them. Since Mary was the spouse of Joseph, a married woman, Satan did not fear her, for he did not know her as the Virgin of the Promise. He would leave Mary at peace until the hour God had chosen to make her perpetual virginity known. And Joseph, also a virgin, in the most humble and ordinariness of life in Nazareth, would hide as well the divine Sonship of Jesus from those seeking a great world leader. To all appearances, Jesus was Joseph's son, son of a poor carpenter. Jesus, our Savior, would know no lust for fame or glory, for ambition or power or self glorification, for money or the things of the world. He would not be a political figure or social reformer but a spiritual Redeemer. Jesus, like his earthly father and His Mother, would seek only to do the Will of the Father and to live in communion with the Triune God in whom there is no deceit, no contradiction, no confusion or division, no ill will, no evil of any kind, but only utter Goodness, Purity and Holiness. It was the Will of the heavenly Father that the earthly father should disappear before Jesus' public life when his saving mission would begin, for during Jesus' mission His divine Sonship and, therefore, God's Divine Paternity would be revealed.

Joseph's simplicity was the essence of the hidden life in that quiet home and sanctuary of Nazareth, that humble place from which so many claimed no good could come. Oh the good that came from that humble place, those humble souls! Oh the good that comes from God's own **humble condescension** from the riches of His divinity into the wretched poverty of our humanity as He seeks to raise us up into His own unimaginable glory! Joseph, whose glory is his silence, his obscurity, his humble state and humble deeds, more glorious than all the angels perform, more glorious than all the great deeds of the world, has simply done the Will of God and that, and that alone, is holiness! Joseph, standing in the place of the heavenly Father over Jesus during His hidden life, would die and disappear before Jesus' public ministry so that the heavenly Father might take His rightful place over Jesus' work of redemption for which the Father had sent His Beloved Son into our world. Abba, Father! Let your Will be done in us! **“Fatherhood is from God and it must take once again its rightful place among men.”** (Diary, Pg. 27.)

St. Joseph proclaimed the greatness of his mission and its corresponding privilege and grace to Sister Mildred Neuzil in these words:

...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. (Diary, Pg. 28.)

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. (Diary, Pg.13.)

Joseph confirms his own unique privileges as Virgin-Father of Jesus and Virgin-Spouse of Mary. Destined from eternity to receive graces and privileges similar to Mary's, Joseph was likewise destined to share in the redemptive mission of Christ along with his holy Spouse. Even though St. Joseph had died prior to the physical Passion and Death of Jesus, by an extraordinary grace he endured a share in the Passion during his life by way of fore-knowledge and anticipation as he himself described to Sister Mildred. Since the Passion was always known in the Eternal Mind of God, was addressed in Paradise in the Promise of a Redeemer, was begun concretely in human history with the "fiat" of Mary wherein Jesus took flesh in her womb, it was shared unequivocally with Joseph in the moment he obeyed the angel and took Mary for his wife, uniting his own "fiat" to hers in order that God's plan of salvation through the human family would be made possible. The intimate communion of the heavenly Trinity with the earthly trinity in this plan for our salvation is more stupendous than we can imagine. This is the hypostatic order of grace, the law of the Incarnation, the law of expiation. In St. Joseph is mirrored the silence of the Lamb, led to the slaughter without uttering a word. Scripture does not record one word from St. Joseph, yet he spoke volumes in his silence, too deep for words. By some divine grace and divine sustenance, Joseph was given a share in Jesus' passion in advance as he would not be there in person to share it with Jesus and Mary. While Joseph disappeared so the heavenly Father would have His rightful place overseeing the accomplishment of Jesus' redemptive mission which He had ordained, we can be sure Joseph, from that place we call Limbo where all the blessed of old awaited the opening of the gates of heaven, was still united intimately in the events of that Passion by the power of the Holy Spirit. He stated...

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 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. (Diary, Pg. 13.)

Since Faith does not contradict reason, it is reasonable to assume that those most intimate to the Redeemer in grace and in life would also be most intimate to the Redeemer in His suffering, in His Passion and His death for the salvation of all mankind. Those who receive great favor also bear great responsibility; that is their mission. The hour has come for the Church to proclaim the magnificent glory of St. Joseph as a model of faith, of married love, of virginal love, of fatherhood, of work, as patron of the Church and of the home, which is the domestic church and cradle of all life. Joseph and Mary are co-redemers with Christ and model for us the role suffering must play, by heaven's decree, in the purification of the heart, the mind, the will, our souls and our whole being.

Our Lady spoke clearly to Sister Mildred on the role of suffering in pursuing holiness of life. God is no giant Bayer aspirin for all of our pains, although He is certainly able and willing to heal us if we have sufficient faith, and He is our **constant companion on our own Way of the Cross**, a cross that leads to glory, in His good time. He is the goldsmith Who refines the mixed metals of our being in the flaming fire of His Divine Love so we might become pure and holy, fit to enter God's Presence in the Eternal Holy of Holies. **Joseph laid his heart upon the cross of Jesus' Passion and let the fire of divine love blossom forth in him with the purity of God Himself**; so must we. What secrets St. Joseph can teach us about living intimately with Jesus and Mary! No wonder he is called the "**Patron Saint of the Interior Life**"! **It is no wonder that it was he who taught Sr. Mildred the "Secret of Secrets" of the interior life, the secret of the Divine Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity in every soul!**

In her April 12, 1958 letter to Father Leibold, Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil wrote these words from St. Joseph:

It is time. Kneel my beloved daughter, for God is about to reveal to you a secret of the interior life. Few there are who learn it, and fewer they who live it in its fullness. This SECRET, dear child, is living with Him Who is within you and has made of your soul His Kingdom. There are many who know this Doctrine, but few to whom God reveals its secret operation. Few souls there are who empty themselves of all things that they may possess this SECRET OF SECRETS, this ultimate glory of all living, this union with the Divine, ending in Eternal Vision.

This Secret cannot be written, lovely child. Its deepest meaning will be made known to you in the interior depths of your child-like soul, in your humble heart, where LOVE has found Its resting place, Its palace beautiful. They who would possess for themselves this mysterious workings of the Divine Secret must strive to cultivate in *silence* and *humility* this love for the Eternal Being within them. We lived this life, beloved child, so to attain it, souls must imitate as far as possible the fullness of our union with The Indwelling God."

Oh to ponder this Secret of secrets!

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