

THE MONTH OF ST. JOSEPH

WEEK 1

February 16 - EVE OF THE FIRST DAY

Ite ad Joseph. Go to Joseph.

THESE words were addressed by Pharaoh to his subjects, who, when harassed by famine and distress, implored his aid. And we introduce them at the commencement of these pious exercises in order to establish a striking resemblance between the two patriarchs who, separated by an interval of seventeen centuries, have borne the glorious name of Joseph.

FIRST RESEMBLANCE: The trials to which they were subjected. — Those of the first Joseph are so well known that there needs be no repetition of them.

Pursued by the inveterate hatred of his brothers, and traitorously sold into slavery by them, he relied on God alone as the protector of his weakness and defender of his innocence. The second Joseph, though a descendant of the kings of Juda, lived in obscurity and poverty bordering on want. An outcast in Bethlehem, obliged to flee from Egypt, and abandoned by men, he was supported in his trials by his confidence, love, and fidelity towards God.

Let us learn from the example of these two great patriarchs how to endure the trials attendant on our journey through life, and let us be animated by the influence of this thought : God is with me, He loves and protects me. *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos* — " If God is for us, who is against us? "

SECOND RESEMBLANCE: The nature of their duties, and the manner in which these duties were fulfilled. — The first Joseph was a faithful servant in the house of Putiphar, a prudent and upright minister in the court of Pharaoh. Neither the allurements of pleasure, nor the fear of chastisements, nor the perfidious fascinations of human grandeur, could shake his fidelity. Ever faithful in his duty towards God, he was likewise dutiful to his master, occupying himself with the care of his own soul in preference to all other interests. The second Joseph was also a most faithful minister

in a royalty far more exalted and important than the one with which the well-beloved son of Jacob was honored. Charged by the Almighty, the Eternal King of ages, to be the protector of the life, and guardian of the virginal purity of the august Mary, Mother of God, he was likewise entrusted with the guardian ship of the infancy and youth of the Saviour, thus bearing the relation of fosterfather to the Redeemer of the human race.

My God! what a beautiful, grand, and sublime mystery! St. Joseph fulfilled his ministry agreeably to the wishes of his Sovereign, who himself deigns to render testimony to his justice when in the Gospel He says, " Joseph was a just man." But if Joseph was a just and, by consequence, a faithful and prudent guardian of the two inestimable treasures that were confided to him, it is because, as the Scriptures express it, " He hath not received his soul in vain." He knew that an account should be rendered of the manner in which he discharged his duty as protector of the virgin Mother and her divine Son.

Each one of us has a mission to fulfill, a ministry of some kind to exercise, and we should learn fidelity from the example of St. Joseph. Our eternal salvation depends on the faithful discharge of our duties. The saving of our own soul would be in itself a ministry, but, alas! how many other souls depend also on us ! We should, then, while endeavoring to save our own souls, do all in our power towards the saving of souls confided to our care, so that at death these sweet words may be addressed to us : " Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; because thou hast been faithful over few things, I will set thee over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THIRD RESEMBLANCE : Their connection with Jesus Christ. — The first Joseph, in his trials and afflictions, as well as in his triumphs, is regarded as one of the most striking images of Jesus Christ. It was not without a mysterious coincidence that Pharaoh gave him a name signifying saviour of the world. Though the second Joseph did not himself bear the name Saviour of mankind, he had the privilege of giving it to Him by whom alone it was merited.

He was appointed protector of the person of Jesus, his guardian and foster-father. Jesus redeemed the world, and Joseph guarded and protected Jesus. We have said that he acquitted himself as a just man and faithful servant in his great and elevated mission ; but we must add here, that it was through the intimate and direct influence of the Saviour that he accomplished the designs of God, and arrived at the perfection of his ministry. He was one of the first and most admirable imitators of the great Model, whom he closely contemplated. The spirit of the Saviour became his spirit,

whereby he attained that new birth mentioned by Nicodemus, which consists of divesting ourselves of our own will, combatting our inclinations, and subjecting our passions to reason and religion, that our lives may be in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ. The first Joseph felt this influence in an indirect manner, as all the just of the Old Testament participated in the grace of the Redemption, though in a way constrained by the fact that the institutions of the old law were not in themselves perfect. Dating from St. John the Baptist, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, the spirit of the new law spreads itself with a plenitude and rapidity which manifests the presence of the Incarnate Word.

Have we entered into the spirit of Jesus Christ by our fidelity to His law and conformity with His divine will ?

Ite ad Joseph : Come, then, to Joseph. God, the Sovereign Master, invites you to Joseph in confiding the Author of grace to his care.

Ite ad Joseph : "Come to Joseph," says the Holy Church ; and it is not with her as of old with ungrateful Egypt, who, after a few centuries, had forgotten the memory of her benefactor. The Church, on the contrary, attaches itself by a closer tie to the remembrance of St. Joseph according as it recedes from the period of his mortal life. Instead of the material food with which the ancient patriarch fed the Egyptians, Joseph has received and guarded for us the life-giving bread descended from heaven to nourish and sanctify our souls. Like Jesus and Mary, you must repair the impious outrages and blasphemies against the majesty of God. Where is the virginal purity of Mary, where the glory of St. Joseph, when Jesus is spoken of by infidels as an ordinary man, and His birth not regarded as a miracle of the power of God ? Ite ad Joseph. The first Joseph demanded the Egyptians to sacrifice and abandon their individual fortunes for the common good ; and our Joseph asks you to divest yourself of your imperfections, to replace which he offers you the love of Jesus.

PRAYER

HOLY St. Joseph! behold at your feet humble clients, ardently desiring to profit by the graces attached to your example and intercession. We pray that during this month our souls may be prepared for the worthy reception of our divine Saviour. Guardian of Jesus! be our protector and our guide. Pray for us, and present our prayers, purified by thine, to the heart of Jesus and the immaculate heart of Mary. Amen.

RESOLUTIONS.

DURING the course of the day recall to your mind the preceding reflections:

Repeat from time to time the invocation : " Go to Joseph."

Enter into the spirit of the holy season of Lent, and comply with the requirements of the Church.

Do not seek dispensation from the Lenten fast without sufficient cause.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 17 - FIRST DAY

ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Sancte Joseph in Sponsum Maria pro omnibus electe, ora pro nobis.

(Saint Joseph, chosen front among men to be the Spouse of Mary, pray for us.)

FIRST POINT : The first and most essential attribute of St. Joseph is that of Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is only the foster-father of Jesus Christ, but he is the spouse of the Virgin Mother of God. He was chosen from among thousands, from among tens of thousands, from among all men, to be honored by this glorious privilege. A pious tradition relates that when the choice of a husband was imposed on the Blessed Virgin, her guardian called together all her relations of the race of David and tribe of Juda. Joseph came among the others who aspired to the honor ; but his modesty kept him at a distance until the Almighty, by a miracle decided in his favor. Each candidate left an almond-tree .rod in the temple in the evening, and the next day the dry and withered branch of Joseph, like that which of old secured the priesthood to Aaron, was found green and blossomed with fra grant flowers — graceful symbols of the virtues that had fixed the choice of God on Joseph to be the guardian of the most precious treasure, after the humanity of Jesus Christ, that earth ever possessed. That treasure belonged to God and to men, but in a particular manner to St. Joseph ; for the sacred tie that bound the affections united the lives of Joseph and Mary. Let us admire this privilege, and congratulate our glorious protector on its possession. Recall to mind the words he so frequently addressed to himself: Spouse of Mary ; what an honor ! what a grace ! what a responsibility !

SECOND POINT: One practical reflection is the mainspring of the doctrine contained in the first point of this meditation. To Mary Joseph owed the honor of his close relationship to Jesus. He was regarded as the foster-father of Jesus only by his title of spouse of Mary, and the graces and privileges granted him were essential to his connections with her. This fact, important in its application to all Christians, is

particularly so to us. Our relations with Jesus should be through Mary, since every good comes to us from Him through her. By His birth of her He became our brother, and we became her children by the adoption made at the foot of the cross on Calvary. Let us, then, go to Jesus through Mary, and to Mary through our glorious protector, St. Joseph. If we pray to him, he will obtain for us, by his intercession with Jesus and Mary, an abundance of heavenly graces emanating from the loving heart of Jesus and the maternal hands of our loving Mother, Mary.

THIRD POINT : What an honor ! Let us repeat these words in unison with St. Joseph congratulating himself on the glorious title which united him to Mary. What an honor, what a responsibility, but also what a grace ! These three words may be applied to all who have received vocations to leave all and follow Christ. Priests and religious should frequently entertain this salutary reflection : what a responsibility rests on those favored by God and honored with this grace of graces !

The Christian should ponder on these words, and apply them to himself. The vocation to Christianity by baptism is the greatest and most estimable of all graces. What an honor to be a child of God and of His Church, brother and co-heir of Jesus Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost! But, alas ! what a responsibility to be the possessor of precious treasures carried in frail vases; for baptism has not freed us from the effects of concupiscence.

The fears awakened by this responsibility may, however, be removed by the thought of the superabundant graces which flow from the mercy and love of God — graces which are intended not only to be applied to our own souls, but which also are designed and should be made profit able to the many souls whose salvation and eternal happiness depend on us.

PRAYER

GLORIOUS St. Joseph, my holy protector, obtain that my soul may derive benefit from this first exercise. Thou who didst so often conduct Jesus in His infancy, guide me and protect me during these days which I offer and consecrate to thee. Lead me to Mary and to Jesus, and teach me to know and love them more fully and ardently.

DURING the course of the day recall to your mind the preceding reflections. Repeat from time to time the invocation : St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin :

Mary, pray for us.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Restrain curiosity.

Accept, without manifesting ill-humor, the vexations consequent on the exercises of duty and charity.

Do not eat between meals.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and the St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 18 - SECOND DAY

ST. JOSEPH, FOSTER-FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST.

*Sancte Joseph, cujus filius dici putari dignatus est filius Dei, ora pro nobis.
St. Joseph, foster-father of the Son of God, pray for us.*

ST. JOSEPH is not, it is true, the father of Jesus Christ according to nature, nevertheless his office towards the Son of God gave him all the rights of paternity.

FIRST POINT : God manifestly recognized the parental right of St. Joseph. — Previous to the advent of Christ, it was the design of Providence to conceal from the world and from Satan the coming of the Saviour and his birth of a virgin ; hence God willed that St. Joseph should be regarded as the father of our Lord. To manifest this design, all the rights and all the honors of paternity were accorded to him, and his heart was animated with parental love towards Jesus. As the gifts of God are never recalled, it follows that during all eternity St. Joseph will possess these privileges. Sweet and cherished thought for hearts devoted to the service of God ! Solid and immovable foundation on which to raise a tender and ardent affection to St. Joseph ! These thoughts are evidently and clearly established, since Heaven has deigned to confirm, by a singular development, the extent of the glory of St. Joseph. Let our mind dwell on these three truths : God has given to St. Joseph, 1st, The honor of paternity towards our Lord ; 2d, The rights of this paternity ; 3d, Most paternal affection for him. What precious gifts; rich in the wealth of power implied in their possession ! What treasures of tenderness and bounty they place in the heart of St. Joseph!

SECOND POINT: St. Joseph's right of paternity is recognized by men. — That St. Joseph, during his life, was regarded as the foster-father of our divine Saviour is proved by the language of the Jews on various occasions. Is He not, say they, the son of Joseph, the son of the carpenter? These were, according to their idea, expressions of contempt for our Lord ; they knew not that these words served to increase beyond

measure the dignity and standing of His foster-father. They would have known this had the mystery of the Incarnation been revealed to them as it was to St. Joseph. But as their hearts were not prepared for this favor, the knowledge was not accorded them. St. Joseph held secret this revelation by the command of God. He loved this silence, inasmuch as it was to him a source of happiness to obey the God of mercy and truth. His title of father was universally recognized by his contemporaries ; and he regarded it as an incomparable honor to be associated in this most intimate manner with the ignominies of the Saviour. Of Jesus Christ they said : " This is the son of the carpenter ;" of St. Joseph they might have said: " This is the father of the Galilean." Let us learn from this example that, when the wicked inflict outrages and persecutions on us, they serve to promote our honor and glory, providing we suffer them for God or in the cause of religion. We should rejoice to be deemed worthy of persecution for justice's sake. Let us pardon our persecutors, and love them, that our patience may triumph over their malice, and redound to the eternal honor of the Christian faith. *Vinco in bono malum* — " Overcome evil by good. "

THIRD POINT: St. Joseph's right of paternity manifested by the actions of our Lord. — " He was subject to them." This one sentence of the Gospel suffices to show that our Lord was subject to Joseph and to Mary as a son is subject to his parents. Jesus was regarded as the son of Joseph, as much by the respect, deference, and affection which he manifested toward his foster-father, as by all the other appearances which justify this title. And Jesus would not act a part. It was necessary that He should experience — let us speak clearly — that He should really feel for St. Joseph the sentiments which were expressed in His manner towards him. Jesus Christ, then, had for St. Joseph the heart felt affection of the most tender, loving, respectful, and obedient of all sons. Let us congratulate St. Joseph on this filial tenderness which our Lord had for him. How many spiritual favors must have been given St. Joseph, and what an increase of virtue and merit must have been produced in him by the love of Jesus! A proof is hereby given us of the powerful protection of this great saint. Were I master, what would I not do for my parents ? said a good son. Jesus Christ is Master, and during life He gave His foster-father virtue, which is more than all the riches and treasures of the earth ; and now, in heaven, He gives him power.

PRAYER

HOLY St. Joseph, foster-father of Jesus Christ, behold at your feet His brethren and your children. Have for us the solitude of a father. Take from us the joys of home, family, and country, if their possession be detrimental to our souls ; seek for us if we wander from the path traced out by your example ; seek us until we will have heard

your voice ; receive our petitions ; dry our tears ; guard us, 'and grant that we may always be to you as was the divine Saviour Himself — tender, submissive, and respectful. Amen.

RESOLUTIONS

DURING the course of the day recall to mind the preceding reflections.

Repeat occasionally the invocation : St. Joseph, foster-father of Jesus Christ, pray for us.

Refrain from light reading.

Endure cheerfully the inclemencies of the season.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 19 - THIRD DAY

ST. JOSEPH, MODEL OF JUSTICE.

Sancte Joseph, qui in Evangelio vocatus est Justus, ora pro nobis.
St. Joseph, who in the Gospel is styled just, pray for us.

FIRST POINT: St. Joseph was just. "*** Every Christian should strive to merit the attribute of justice. It is not sufficient for him to possess honesty and uprightness. An honest man may be guided solely by the uncertain light of reason ; and he may be governed by a conscience which is perhaps influenced by public opinion. The just man, on the contrary, is directed by the word of God and by the will of God, as clearly demonstrated in the Church, and he relies on the assistance of grace for the accomplishment of the Divine will in himself. He says with David, " Make me to understand the way of Thy justification, and I shall be exercised in Thy wondrous works. I have run in the way of Thy commandments, and Thou didst enlarge my heart." Beautiful words ! the sense of which is a thousand times repeated by the prophet. St. Joseph must have pronounced them frequently, for they were ever in his heart. It was the law of God, the will of God, and the word of God, which served him as the rule, the principle, and the support of his life and actions. What is our principle, and what our rule of action ? Let us not be content with gaining the esteem of men, and being considered honest according to the standard of public opinion. As Christians and children of God, we should regulate our conduct by the example of Jesus Christ and the will of the Eternal Father.

SECOND POINT: St. Joseph was just. Justice, in the language of the Holy Scriptures, embraces all virtues. By failing in one, we shall incur the displeasure of Him who inculcated them all ; for as St. James says, " And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." St. Joseph was not governed by natural inclination nor self interest. He was just — just always, in all things, and towards all persons. Can we render a like testimony of ourselves ? Is there not some one virtue, the practice of which we entirely neglect ? We frequently allege our natural bent of character as an excuse for the defects over which we should watch with the greatest care, on account of their having become to us a second nature. Alas ! character and habit cause us to commit many faults, and retard us in the acquisition and practice of virtue.

THIRD POINT : St. Joseph was just. The word justice reminds us that we owe God the fulfillment of every virtue, and it is in this sense that the word is used by the writers of the sacred Scripture. To be just implies the possession of all virtues. God has an absolute right to our entire submission. He aids us by His grace in every act of supernatural virtue ; hence our virtues and merits appertain much more to Him than to ourselves, on account of the powerful and indispensable assistance given us in the acquisition of them. St. Joseph, deeply impressed with these thoughts, was just and humble. We may say that he received innumerable graces, and was almost forced to respond to them ; but every "man is likewise given grace sufficient for his justification. Let us then be just. God will demand a rigorous account of the talents He has given us, or rather confided, to each one of us. Every soul should increase in virtue according to the measure of graces which it receives. God, who is infinite justice, eternal bounty, and everlasting love, will be guided in His judgments equally by justice and mercy.

PRAYER

ST. JOSEPH, intercede for us. Ten just souls would have sufficed to save the guilty city. These ten souls could not have presented an homage so acceptable to God as thou alone canst offer Him. Their supplications could not have moved the heart of Jesus as thine can awaken its compassion. Pray, then, for us, our kind protector, and save us from the Divine anger. Obtain for us grace to fulfill our duties, correct our faults, and practise virtue.

RESOLUTIONS

RECALL to mind the preceding reflections.

Repeat from time to time, St. Joseph, Model of Justice, pray for us.

February 20 - FOURTH DAY

ST. JOSEPH, MODEL OF THE LIFE OF FAITH.

*Sancte Joseph, qui in Evangelio vocatus est Justus, ora pro nobis.
St. Joseph, who in the Gospel is styled just, pray for us.*

FAITH is the source, the rule, and the principle of the moral and spiritual life in the soul of the just man. His mind is impressed and occupied with the teachings and practices of faith. For the better understanding of this mysterious, all-ruling power, let us consider the life of faith in St. Joseph.

FIRST POINT : Faith manifested in the life of St. Joseph. — St. Joseph submitted his understanding to the most profound mysteries of faith, even when these mysteries demanded the greatest sacrifices on his part. He believed that God spoke and manifested His will to him ; hence his faith was reasonable. Our faith should be strong and lively, for it is eminently reasonable. We believe incomprehensible mysteries, it is true, but our belief is based on the word of God, for He speaks by means of enlightened prophets and incontestable miracles. Ancient proofs, some of which are renewed in our own days, attest that the Church is the divinely authorized interpreter between God and man. Faith adds to the light of reason by manifesting new objects of knowledge, and it confirms truths of the natural order by its unexceptionable testimony. If the human intellect would gain in strength and power, let it be penetrated by the life of faith. The greatest and sublimest intellects were believers.

SECOND POINT : Life of faith in the heart of St. Joseph. — Faith assumes its true character and essential quality only in the heart of the believer. The damned believe and tremble. Their knowledge gives but remorse, and causes them to blaspheme the truths to which they are forced to testify. Such is not the faith of the just man, such was not the faith of St. Joseph. He revered the mysteries which were successively revealed to him, and he lived in the hope of the promised Redeemer, ardently desiring and awaiting His coming. Let us cherish our faith, and, above all, let the emotions of our heart be directed by its saving influence. Every mystery of our holy religion proves the bounty and love of God towards his creatures. Faith finds a

subject for thanks and love even in the contemplation of hell, into which the devil fain would drag us, that there we might join with him blaspheming God. Is not the fear of hell one of the most effective means to preserve us from the severity of the judgments of God ? Though here on earth we may faintly perceive the greatness of the love that God bears us, it is only in heaven that we shall fully understand its plenitude.

THIRD POINT: Life of faith in the actions of St. Joseph. — In the various circumstances related in the Gospel concerning St. Joseph, we learn that he conducted himself according to the lights given him by God, and not merely to human wisdom and prudence. We are thereby authorized to conclude that in those actions not mentioned St. Joseph was actuated by the same principle. He was a lover of justice, and he lived the life of faith. This life does not consist in the performance of great or singular actions, nor in certain religious practices, even though these practices should form a daily order of exercises. It is a series of acts ever active and always acting. Faith harmonizes the conduct and animates every work. It directs our thoughts and moderates and purifies our sentiments. It solicits the grace and blessing of God on our repasts ; it invokes His paternal care over our repose and our relaxations, that they may exceed in no thing, and be conformed in all things to the Divine will. It supports, animates, and strengthens us in our labors and occupations, by teaching us to offer them to the majesty of God, or to honor His infinite bounty. It reminds us of heaven, and detaches us from earth, conformably to those words of St. Paul : " If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God ; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth."

PRAYER

MY God, I firmly believe all the sacred truths the Catholic Church believes and teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who neither canst deceive nor be deceived.

RESOLUTIONS

DURING the course of the day, recall to mind the preceding reflections. Repeat, from time to time, the invocation : St. Joseph, model of the life of faith, pray for us.

Conform your will to the will of God.

Say a decade of the beads for the souls in Purgatory.

Recite the Our Father and Hail Mary once, and St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 21 - FIFTH DAY

ST. JOSEPH, THE LAST AND GREATEST OF THE PATRIARCHS.

Sancte Joseph, patriarcharum culmen, ora pro nobis.

St. Joseph, the last and greatest of the patriarchs, pray for us.

FIRST POINT : We find increased and perfected in St. Joseph that which we most admire in the patriarchs. The authority of the patriarch extends itself to all, and rules all things with a sovereign independence. The patriarch is a figure of God ruling His children and servants. He commands with an absolute authority which is always respected. St. Joseph appears thus to us in the family of which he is the head. Let us follow him to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and to Nazareth, and see him everywhere supremely exercising his paternal authority. He acts in the name of God, and as His immediate representative. What family can be compared to this, wherein Jesus and Mary are members? What supereminent authority is implied in the power to command a God made man and His Mother, the most privileged of all creatures ; and at the same time, what admirable sweetness do we behold in the exercise of that patriarchal authority in him who is to become the type of Christian paternity! Christian parents, in the government of your children, take for your model the patriarch St. Joseph. Learn 'from him to command according to the right you hold from God, and with the sweetness inspired by the example of St. Joseph. Thus you will gain the obedience, respect, and love of your children. At the same time, understand that, to possess the authority of the patriarchs, it is necessary to have their spirit.

SECOND POINT: Consider the spirit of the patriarchs. St. Paul says, " All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth." The greatest among them lived only in tents. Behold the spirit of the patriarchs ! The passing enjoyments and terrestrial happiness which God allowed them did not divert their minds from the final object — the bliss of heaven ; though faith taught them this could not be obtained until after the 'death of the GodMan, and His triumphant ascension into heaven. This spirit was perfected in St. Joseph. It is true he did not wait as long as his predecessors had waited for the accomplishment of these

promises. The time of his death almost coincided with the epoch long and ardently desired by the patriarchs, when their souls should arrive at the possession of heavenly delights purchased for them through the merits of Jesus Christ. " The days of my pilgrimage are few and evil," said Jacob, notwithstanding the many consolations with which divine Providence alleviated his sorrows. Tradition tells us that the days of St. Joseph were fewer and more sorrowful. But the thought of heaven, which was to be the recompense of his life of trials and sacrifice, assuaged his pains — that heaven of which the society of Jesus and Mary had already given him a fore taste ; that heaven which he greeted as near, was to him a subject replete with desire, hope, and happiness.

Christian parents, such should be your spirit. We have not here a lasting city. Your children are given you more for the purpose of fitting them for heaven than of qualifying them for earthly positions. Possessing these thoughts and this spirit, a sense of your sublime duties will be imposed upon you, and impressed upon your children. Having the spirit of the patriarchs, you will possess their authority also, and thus perpetuate the patriarchal family.

THIRD POINT : The numerous posterity of the patriarchs. The patriarchs numbered their children by families, and, from the tribute given for each member, they knew the number of their subjects. God multiplied them so that in number they equalled the sands of the sea or the stars of the firmament. The family of St. Joseph is not less blessed in the prodigious number of his posterity. His is the family of Jesus and Mary — the Christian family. Who can enumerate this family, propagating its members everywhere, and with them their traditions and their faith ? In what is the patriarchal family comparable to the children of St. Joseph? Thank God for having called you to be a member of this family, and prove yourself worthy of the favor by maintaining yourself and your associates in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Strive to merit for yourself a plenitude of the spiritual benedictions corresponding to the fruitfulness of the patriarchal family. Your counsels, authority, and example can engender numerous children to God and to the Church. How great is the posterity of the saints, multiplied in the -orders of which they are the founders, in the sinners converted by their teachings, and the saints formed by their example, their writings, or their intercession!

PRAYER

GLORIOUS St. Joseph, whom I am happy to call father, since I belong to the family over which your patriarchal authority was exercised, obtain for me the grace to

comply with my duties. In all my undertakings, obtain for me the spirit of detachment for created things, and a desire of heavenly gifts.

RESOLUTIONS

"RECALL to mind the preceding reflections.

Repeat occasionally the invocation : St. Joseph, the last and greatest of the patriarchs, pray for us.

Restrain your desire to converse on useless subjects.

Mortify your sense of taste at dinner.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 22 - SIXTH DAY

ST. JOSEPH, MODEL OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Sancte Joseph patriarcharum culmen, ora pro nobis.

St. Joseph, the last and greatest of the patriarchs^ pray for us.

FIRST POINT : The patriarchs had a lively and a constant remembrance of the presence of God. This was incident to the expectation and hope in their redemption by the Messiah whom God, in His boundless mercy, had promised them, and of which promise we have spoken in the preceding meditation. It was owing also to the frequent communications with which the Almighty deigned to favor them, either in dreams and illuminations, or by the ministry of angels. It was likewise due to the spirit of faith by which their love was animated. This remembrance of the Divine presence caused them to address Him with remarkable familiarity as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. It was, at the same time, a powerful help to keep them in the practice of virtue, and make them advance in the perfect accomplishment of the Divine will. " Walk before me, and be perfect," said God Himself to Abraham. This attention to the presence of God is the ladder of perfection in every state and condition of life. St. Joseph, the last and greatest of the patriarchs, understood more clearly than did any other the excellence of this means of perfection, and he practised it more faithfully. To convince one's self of this truth, it suffices to consider that St. Joseph was more impressed with heavenly thoughts than the angels could have been ; that he was favored with intimate communications from God more frequently than they were; and that his whole life was animated by faith. Other proofs are to be given, but, before we offer them, let us beg of God, through the intercession of St. Joseph, that our minds may be penetrated with an habitual sense of His presence,

particularly during prayer and before our principal actions.

SECOND POINT: Two things are necessary as a means whereby to acquire this remembrance of the presence of God in a direct and practical manner: 1st, To meditate on God and His perfections, and be impressed with the necessity and plenitude of His being ; 2d, It is necessary to have these thoughts react on ourselves by considering that God, by His omniscience, knows fully and clearly the motives which animate our thoughts, words, and actions, and even the secret workings of our inmost soul. The mind and heart of St. Joseph, initiated as he was into the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, must have been continually occupied with thoughts of God — His providence, His love for man, His omnipresence, and His other infinite attributes, all of which were revealed to him. Manual labor did not distract his mind from the study of these truths. It occupied his time without debasing or entirely engaging his soul ; on the contrary, his occupations left him even more liberty of thought and leisure than the study of science, politics, or the agitations of public life could have allowed him. Mechanics, laborers, and servants — all who are occupied in manual labor — can be interiorly united to God with much greater facility than can those whom they, perhaps, envy on account of belonging to a higher rank in life. Why do we not more frequently meditate on God, His perfections, and His love? Why do we not regard Him as a father, presiding over our labors, encouraging us by His presence and promise of the reward assured to those who offer and perform their works with the intention of pleasing Him ?

THIRD POINT: Joseph had not only the remembrance of the presence of God to occupy his thoughts and rule his life ; he had God really present before his eyes in the person of Jesus Christ. " And I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God," says St. John in the beginning of his Gospel. St. Joseph was the first witness of this wonder, in order that to him might be applied what was of old said to Abraham : "I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be perfect." This actual Divine presence was almost unknown to the patriarchs.

We Christians have reason to rejoice in the privilege of being enabled to study the life of Christ in the Gospel, and in receiving Him in the Holy Eucharist. We may, at every instant, find consolation in this sweet and divine presence, in which is a treasure of grace and heavenly benediction. Do we imitate St. Joseph in this regard ?

PRAYER

HOLY Joseph, had I lived with you, my heart could have been easily impressed with

a sense of the presence of God by thy example. Obtain for me that my heart be animated by a lively faith, so that all things may speak to me of God and remind me of His presence.

RESOLUTIONS

DURING the course of the day, recall to mind the preceding reflections. Repeat often the invocation : St. Joseph, the last and greatest of the patriarchs, pray for us.

Do not contradict others nor criticise their actions.

Submit your will to the will of others. Mortify your sense of taste at supper.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and St Joseph, pray for us, three times.

February 23 - SEVENTH DAY

ST. JOSEPH CONFIRMED IN GRACE.

*Sancte Joseph ineffabilibus benedictionibus dotate, ora pro nobis.
St. Joseph, confirmed in grace, pray for us.*

FIRST POINT : St. Joseph is the Isra elite descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All the blessings given to the first-born of the patriarchs were united in him ; and they assumed a new character hitherto understood with difficulty by the holiest persons, and seldom known through experience. St. Joseph, in the obscurity of his humble life, was animated by the spirit of the new law which the example and teachings of St. John the Baptist were soon to preach to all Judea. The old law promised temporal prosperity and eternal felicity to the Israelites who would be faithful in its observance. The joys of the other life were to them remote consequences attendant on the coming of the Redeemer. The reward of a hundredfold in the life to come, promised by Jesus Christ for the trials and sacrifices endured here for His sake, must have been without attraction previous to the teachings of Christianity, and until a practical know ledge had been obtained of the merits of a soul suffering in union with a crucified God, and leading a life most opposed to the yearnings of nature. St. Joseph was, after the Blessed Virgin Mary, the first to manifest in his life this transformation of the blessings of the old law. Circumcised in the flesh according to the Jewish rite, he was circumcised in heart in the new spirit. His share of family inheritance during his existence on earth was poverty, exile, persecution, and the beatitudes of the Gospel. Do we understand and appreciate the blessings of the new law of love? Have we tasted of the happiness purchased by

them ? Are we circumcised in heart so as to joyfully endure poverty and suffering, and find therein that holy, ineffable, hidden sweetness promised by the infallible word of Almighty God? Do we not, on the contrary, imagine that happiness unalloyed is experienced by those only who are possessed of riches and enjoy worldly pleasures, than which no spirit is more opposed to the spirit of the Gospel ?

SECOND POINT : St. Joseph was the son of David, the descendant of princely ancestors, to whom the throne of Juda had been promised as an eternal benediction. He was nevertheless a workman, and lived in obscurity, without influence, and not receiving the honors attendant on rank, position, and fortune. But he possessed a noble heart, which placed him far above his humble condition ; and, despising the grandeur of an earthly kingdom, he has for a home the heart of Jesus, which is the new favor and the true royalty promised to the Christian family, of which he is the most illustrious representative. The royal line of David seemed to have terminated in the person of Joseph ; but, on the contrary, it reigns for ever through Joseph and Mary, ennobled and transformed by their connections with Jesus Christ. And do we, who belong to this royal family, comprehend and esteem this sublime elevation ? Are our hearts animated by sentiments of noble, generous, royal greatness, even though in an humble and lowly condition, or do we desire the honors and privileges of those above us in worldly standing? If Providence has blessed us with riches and honors, do we not prize them too highly, forgetting that the love of Jesus should be the highest ambition of a soul created to the image of God ?

THIRD POINT : St. Joseph was the last just man under the old law, favored by God with dreams of prophetic import. He was the first who enjoyed those intimate ecstatic revelations with which the saints were afterwards blessed. He derived an abundance of precious graces from his constant relations with Mary and with Jesus Christ, the source and giver of all graces, and the mediator between God and man. St. Joseph was not elated by these many mysterious favors. He faithfully co-operated with them, thus meriting an increase of grace. We Christians receive frequent communications from heaven. What use do we make of them ? Our guardian angels watch over and obtain innumerable favors for us ; the Holy Ghost, by his sanctifying and inexhaustible love, is in close union with a soul faithful to his inspirations ; and the Sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist, place us in the most intimate relations with Jesus Christ.

Christians ! recognize your dignity ; live in correspondence with these precious,

superabundant, and divine blessings.

PRAYER

GLORIOUS St. Joseph, obtain for us the grace to profit by these blessings in which we as Christians participate. We are of the priestly and royal race, and have received the most glorious privileges. But are we conscious of the favors bestowed on us, and do we esteem them according to their worth? Your greatness consisted in virtue. Obtain for us that we may not by a criminal abuse of grace render ourselves the more guilty in the sight of God.

RESOLUTIONS

DURING the course of the day recall to mind the preceding reflections. Repeat from time to time the invocation : St. Joseph, confirmed in grace, pray for us. Listen to others with attention and respect, and, if there is error in their words, excuse their intention.

Say frequently, " Thy will be done."

Fast one day this week in honor of St. Joseph.

Recite the Pater and Ave once, and St. Joseph, pray for us, three times.