

MARCH 19 - THIRTY-FIRST DAY

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO ST. JOSEPH

I PRESENT myself before thee at the close of these exercises, to consecrate the remainder of my life to thee. Accept, I beseech thee, this poor offering, and, in union with thy immaculate Spouse, present it to Jesus, thy divine Son, by Him to be offered to His Heavenly Father, to receive the smile of approbation and the grace of final perseverance. I consecrate to thee my thoughts, that they may be always subject to reason, and guided by faith. Preserve me from being biased in my opinions by the vain judgments of a wicked, deceitful world. I consecrate to thee my heart, with its emotions, desires, and affections ; it needs more restraint than my understanding, on account of its many attractions, preferences, and weaknesses. I consecrate my senses to thee, together with all the actions in which they participate. Grant that, in being organs of the soul, they may be used in procuring the greater honor and glory of God. Instill into my soul a love of virtue which will be the governing principle of all my actions, and guard me by thy grace and love against all the attacks of the evil one. I am surrounded by dangers which threaten to prove my ruin ; even the little good I do is so fraught with self-love that it corrupts my best intentions. Overwhelmed with fear at the sight of so many obstacles, I cast myself before thee, imploring thy assistance, and renewing the offerings already made, as also the resolution of doing all for Jesus, in Him and through Him, that, serving Him faithfully in this life, I may enjoy Him for all eternity. Amen.

BENEFITS DERIVED FROM DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

IN closing this month of St. Joseph, we will form the resolution of reciting each day some prayer in his honor. We will endeavor to form the habit of frequently invoking the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which will serve as ejaculatory prayers, to be repeated during the day and in the hour of temptation, trial, and danger, when everything seems dark around us, and we feel abandoned by God and man. This practice, together with sacrifices

offered daily through the merits of Jesus Christ, in union with his blessed Mother and our dear father, St. Joseph, will aid us in keeping the resolutions formed during this month, and serve as incentives to our spiritual progress. Various examples have been set before us for our encouragement, and from which we are to select those most suitable to our station in life as rules for our future conduct. The author of the "Imitation of Christ" justly observes that "without sacrifice we cannot live the life of love."

Our progress in virtue will be according to the violence offered to self. Those souls, then, that are really desirous of advancing in perfection should endeavor to be penetrated with the precious lesson, applicable to every condition of life, and suitable to the acquirement of all Christian virtue.

When, at the close of day, we find that we have done nothing for the glory of God, we may justly say with the pagan emperor, Titus, who, regretting that no occasion of pleasing or benefiting others had been given him, exclaimed, "I have lost a day." Following the example of many devout clients of St. Joseph, let us choose Wednesday in each week as a day on which to render special homage to him, and endeavor to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on that day. St. Francis de Sales calls the Mass the sun of spiritual exercises, centre of Christian religion, heart of devotion, soul of piety, and abyss of divine charity, in which God, applying the merits of His precious blood, communicates to us His special graces and favors. If on that day we have not the happiness of making a sacramental Communion, we should at least make a spiritual one, which may be done by ardently desiring to receive our Lord at the moment when the priest and faithful communicate, offering to Him sentiments of humility, respect, and love, imploring the forgiveness of our sins and the grace of being more faithful in future. In fine, during the course of the day, beg St. Joseph to offer all your actions to the Blessed Virgin, and through her to Jesus, that they may be offered by this divine Mediator to His Heavenly Father.

We will strive to be faithful each year to the practices laid down in the month of St. Joseph, and during the month select a few days on which, in retreat, we may review the principal actions of our past life.