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Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "*Not my will . . .*" The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #532*

## Introduction

As a small boy, I was intrigued by an embroidered phrase which read, *Ita Ad Joseph*, on the altar cloth of St Joseph's chapel in my old parish church, St Mary's in Limerick, Ireland. I had no idea what it meant, until I had my first Latin class and then I discovered from my teacher that the phrase was taken from a passage of the Old Testament: *But when the whole land of Egypt also was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph' and do what he tells you* (Gen 41:55). So it translated *Go to Joseph!* And it took me years more to know the meaning that Joseph of the Old Testament was a type or a foreshadow of the Joseph of the New Testament. As the Egyptians were advised to go to the Joseph of old to satisfy their hunger, we of the New Testament are

advised to go to Joseph, spouse of Mary and provider of Jesus and Mary, to ask him to heal our famished lives.

After all the years that have passed and hopefully I have gained a little more learning, the altar cloth, still there, keeps reminding me that I must still go to Joseph. Now, however, I would like as many as possible to come with me, because he who was then the provider, is still the provider to us as we go into a new millennium.

After Mary, the Mother of God, he is the greatest saint whom God has given to us. He seems to cry out in this modern age of alienation, *Come to Me!*

Many wonderful books have been written about this great saint and so many people have heard his cry. I thought that I might write a little book suitable for our fast age where sometimes little might catch the eye of those in a hurry. However, I would advise that for those who are brought closer to St Joseph by this book there are many greater ones which would be of great benefit to bring them closer still to the wonders of Joseph, the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus, Our Redeemer.

### **Much Information Available**

For those who want to know more about the life of Joseph I would suggest *The Life and Glories Of St Joseph*, by Edward Healy Thompson, written over a hundred years ago and still in print. Pope John Paul II has written much on St Joseph, as have most of the modern popes. I have included a talk of Pope Paul VI and the encyclical *Quamquam pluries* by Pope Leo XIII. Chapter 10 gives a sample of what has been written about the saint throughout the years.

After the Blessed Virgin, St Joseph had the greatest vocation of any person created by God. Looking at his life from the gospel story it seemed very ordinary at first glance; but when we meditate upon it we realize how heroic it was.

The Blessed Virgin, herself has urged us to grow in devotion to her beloved spouse. She said to Sister Mary of Agreda; *The whole human race has much undervalued the privileges and prerogatives conceded to my beloved spouse and they know not what his intercession with God is able to do. I assure you, my dearest, that he is one of the greatly favored persons in the divine*

*presence and has immense power to stay the arms of divine vengeance . . . .*

*From now on, during the rest of your mortal life, see that you advance in the devotion and hearty love toward my spouse, and that you bless the Lord for thus having favored him with such high privileges, and for having rejoined me so much in the knowledge of all his excellences. In all your necessities you must avail yourself of his intercession. You should induce many to venerate him . . . . That which my spouse asks of the Lord in heaven is granted on earth, and on his intercession depends many and extraordinary favors for men if they do not make themselves unworthy of receiving them.*

*All these privileges were to be a reward for the gracious perfection of this wonderful saint and for his great virtues; for divine clemency is favorably drawn forth by him who looks upon St Joseph with generous liberality, ready to shower down its marvelous mercies upon all who avail themselves of his intercession.*

### **St Joseph's Faith**

So we should take advantage of the great graces that God is willing to give us through the

intercession of our beloved Joseph. As he was Christ's father on earth, he is ours; as he helped Christ on earth, with his great love, he also wants to help us here on earth, by a still greater love for Christ and for us.

For so long he was almost forgotten by the faithful and even the Church had not said very much about him until modern times. One hundred years ago (August 15, 1889) Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Quamquam phuries* reiterated what Pope Pius IX had declared about the saint less than twenty years before (December 8, 1870) when he was made the Patron of the whole Church, that St Joseph was a powerful intercessor (see Chapter 7).

In a talk given by Pope Pius XI on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 1928, after having spoken of the work of St John the Baptist and St Peter, he said: *Between those two missions there appears that of St Joseph, one of recollection and silence, one almost unnoticed and destined to be lit up only many centuries afterwards, a silence which would become a resounding hymn of glory, but only after many years. But when the mystery is deepest it is there precisely that the mission is highest and that*

*a more brilliant string of virtues is required with these corresponding echo of merits.*

We shall see that even though St Joseph does not speak a word in the Gospels, he is very present in four of the joyful mysteries of the Holy Rosary, which depict the beginning years of Christ's life. We see him as a man of action, but we also know him as a man of contemplation. He spent the second part of his life in the actual physical presence of God.

Somewhere along the line St Joseph has been made an unofficial patron of buyers and sellers of real estate. One is suppose to bury the saint's statue or medal on the property one wants to buy or sell, pray to St Joseph and the sale will be made. The story goes that Blessed André, the Canadian Brother who had and spread so much devotion to St Joseph, buried medals galore to get the property on which the great Oratory of St Joseph is built, overlooking the city of Montreal. This is fine and I'm sure that St Joseph won't object, but I think that we might get his attention quicker by spreading his devotion and distributing his medals.

### **St Joseph's Faith**

Getting to know St Joseph will help us to strengthen our faith. We will be inspired to imitate him as we accept our vocation in life and take up our cross doing the will of God.

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Guardian of the Redeemer* writes in 1979: *In the course of that pilgrimage of faith which was his life, Joseph, like Mary, remained faithful to God's call until the end while Mary's life was bringing to fullness of that 'fiat' first spoken at the Annunciation, at the moment of Joseph's own 'annunciation' he said nothing; instead he simply 'did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.' And this first 'doing' became the beginning of 'Joseph's way.'*

W. Doyle Gilligan  
May 1, 2000