

ST. JOSEPH

HIS LIFE, HIS VIRTUES, HIS PRIVILEGES
HIS POWER.

A Month of March in his Honour

BY

VERY REV. ARCHDEACON KINANE, P.P.

Fethard, Co. Tipperary.

AUTHOR OF "THE DOVE OF THE TABERNACLE," "THE ANGEL OF
THE ALTAR;" "MARY IMMACULATE, MOTHER OF GOD;"
"THE LAMB OF GOD."

With a Preface by

HIS GRACE THE MOST REV. DR. CROKE,

Archbishop of Cashel and Emly.

Seventh Edition.

DUBLIN

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✠ THOMAS W. CROKE,
ARCHIEPISCOPUS CASSLIENSIS.

DEDICATION.

To St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus ;
To St. Joseph, who, first after Mary, adored the Incarnate Word, and watched over the Nativity of the Saviour of the world ;

To St. Joseph, who protected the Divine Babe, and saved the very life of the Infant Redeemer from the cruelty of Herod ;

To St. Joseph, so often visited and instructed by the Angel of the Lord, God's Ambassador ;

To St. Joseph, privileged to carry in his arms, and to press to his bosom the Divine Infant Jesus ;

To St. Joseph, favoured to supply, by the labour of his hands, the wants and comforts of the Saviour of the World ;

To St. Joseph, who, for thirty years, lived in the school of Jesus, and whose departing soul was absolved by Jesus Christ Himself ;

To St. Joseph, chosen by the Almighty, and made worthy to be the spouse of the purest of virgins, Mary Immaculate, Mother of God ;

To St. Joseph, the Guardian of God's choicest jewel and most precious treasure on earth, the Virgin Mother of the Redeemer of the world ;

To St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, Jesus and Mary ;

To St. Joseph, styled by the Holy Ghost a "just man ;"

To St. Joseph, after the Blessed Virgin, the most exalted, the most privileged, the most holy, and the purest soul ever created by the hands of the Almighty ;

To St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church ;

To St. Joseph, the Patron of a happy death :

In thanksgiving for all graces received through his intercession ;

In reparation for all sins committed, and graces abused ;

In petition for the grace of a holy life, but still more especially for the grace of a happy death, this little book is most humbly, most reverentially, and most affectionately, dedicated.

PREFACE

IT must be next to impossible, one would imagine, for an Irish missionary priest, especially if in charge of a widespread and populous district, to find time for applying himself, with even the most moderate relish and smallest chance of success, to any manner of occupation, not immediately, and of its own nature, connected with the business of his sacred ministry.

The duties of a Christian Pastor are numerous and exhausting. Besides attending sedulously, as he is bound to do, to his own private and personal devotions (“*attende tibi*”), it is gravely incumbent on him to pray much and earnestly for his flock. Or his soul’s peril he has also to preach to them

to offer sacrifice for them, to visit them in sickness and in sorrow, as well as in their hours of gladness, and to be to them, at one and the same time, a friend, a father, and a protector.

In truth, when not engaged in the all-important work of the confessional, the really good pastor can scarcely help being on his feet all day. Schools are to be looked after, erring parishioners to be seen to and admonished, the sick are to be comforted, confraternities organised and upheld, parochial abuses to be hunted up and corrected. Perhaps a new church is in progress, or an old one undergoing repair. In both cases he will have to superintend the work, and supply, in due course, the means of paying for it. Then, when indoors, at his own residence, he has to see and speak to all who call on him in quest either of charity or advice; he has frequently to maintain a heavy, and, perhaps, troublesome correspondence; he is occasionally called upon to

give practical proof of that spirit of hospitality, particularly towards his brethren in the priesthood, which so well becomes an Irish ecclesiastic; and, withal, preparation must be made, and carefully made, if he desires to be fruitful and effective, for his Sunday exhortations, and other pastoral addresses, throughout the year.

How on earth, then, can he find time for deep and prolonged study, and, above all, how can he manage, as a result, to write sound and useful books of piety and instruction?

Let the earnest and hard-working Archdeacon of Cashel answer the question. He has already given us, in quick succession, "The Dove of the Tabernacle," "The Angel of the Altar," "The Lamb of God," and "Mary Immaculate"—all standard works of devotion, as is fully attested by the fact that they have gone through numerous editions, while nearly all of them are to be found, beautifully brought out, in the French,

German, and Italian languages. To-day we have another valuable publication from his fertile and vigorous pen. "St. Joseph : His Life, his Privileges, Prerogatives, and Power," is the title of the Archdeacon's latest production ; and having somewhat carefully perused it, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that my disappointment shall be great, indeed, if those capable of forming a just estimate of its merits do not pronounce it to be one of his most useful and edifying works.

There is, perhaps, no saint in the calendar of whom less is generally known than of St. Joseph. One out of every ten thousand otherwise well-informed Catholics could not tell you anything concerning him, beyond the fact that he was the reputed father of Our Lord and the husband of Our Blessed Lady ; that he is supposed to have been a carpenter by trade, and that he contributed, as such, to the support of Our Divine Saviour during a considerable portion of his life.

Indeed, the Sacred Scripture speaks but seldom of him. It tells us, however, the all-sufficient truth that he was "the husband of **Mary.**" It tells us, moreover, that an angel revealed to him the miraculous conception of the Incarnate Word ; that he was present in the stable of Bethlehem when the **Wise Men** from the East came to adore their new-born King ; that he was admonished by a celestial messenger to fly into Egypt with the Divine Infant and His Mother ; that he did so ; that, after a rather protracted stay in that country, he returned home ; and that he was certainly alive when Our Lord had attained the twelfth year of His age.

But when he was born ; how old he was when he espoused the Blessed Virgin ; when and where he died and was buried ; what became of his remains, of which absolutely no trace has been found ; when precisely he was first publicly honoured as a saint in the Church : these are points, together with

countless others, of greater or less consequence, on which the ordinary Catholic mind is wholly uninformed.

All these interesting questions are proposed in the Archdeacon's "Life of St. Joseph," and treated by him with much felicity of expression, singular clearness, great wealth of argument and illustration, and with that peculiar warmth, that compactness and solidity of construction for which his other literary efforts are so justly and so generally commended.

Besides the historical, and what may, perhaps, be termed the dogmatic aspect of the work, *Part the Third* supplies an admirable and much-needed manual of devotion in honour of St. Joseph. The month of March is St. Joseph's month, just as the month of May is the month of Mary; and for each of the thirty-one days of March there is a suitable meditation based on some special phase of the great Patriarch's life; and after each meditation comes a short form of

prayer, together with a salutary practical reflection.

Whilst this book, because of its simple structure and consecutiveness, is admirably adapted to the humble capacity of the poor and unlettered, it will be found, at the same time, to be well reasoned throughout and convincing; and of this I can advance no better proof than by referring the intelligent reader to the chapter on the Catholic doctrine of the Invocation of Saints, which is very clearly set forth therein according to the teaching of the great Council of Trent, and established beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt or contradiction.

“The Life of St. Joseph” is published by Messrs. GILL & SON, of Dublin. It has the accessory advantages of fine type and excellent paper. Its orthodoxy is vouched for by the approval of the distinguished President of Maynooth. It is offered to the public at a moderate price. It treats of one who, after Our Blessed Lady, is entitled to our highest

homage ; and I wish it, accordingly, a large circulation, and predict for it the most salutary and substantial results.

✠ T. W. CROKE,

Archbishop of Cashel.

THE PALACE, THURLES,

*Feast of the Espousals of the
Blessed Virgin, 1884.*



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APPROBATIONS.

4 Rutland-square, E., Dublin.
22nd February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON.

Accept my thanks for your kindness in sending me a copy of your "Life of Saint Joseph." Although in the estimation of the mere critic the holy Gospels tell us little of the great patron of the Church, there is in that little an inexhaustible treasury of consolation and instruction for the humble Christian. He was a "just man." He was the Spouse and noble protector of her who was dear to the Adorable Trinity beyond all mere creation besides; to him as to Mary was the Incarnate Word subject at Nazareth. In these sublime privileges he can have no partner. But his life, hidden in God, is a lesson we can all study. It teaches us to disregard the honours and distinctions of the world for which men struggle, and sometimes secure at the risk of character and conscience. It tells the occupant of the palace that true nobility is not always lodged in stately mansions; and that in the judgment of Him whose judgments are just, the cottage of the poor man who in the sweat of his brow earns his daily bread is oftentimes, a thousand times more splendid than the golden palaces of the Cæsars.

For the poor the life of Saint Joseph is the most eloquent of exhortations, calling on him to rest in joy and contentment in the humble sphere where God has placed him for the few days of his mortal life. Restless ambition, grasping cupidity, and discontented poverty must stand rebuked in the light of this great Saint's simple life. That life, if well studied, will bring charity, and joy, and peace, and patience, into the cabins of thousands of our poor people who read your exquisite and solidly pious little book; and whilst with their ever grateful hearts they bless God for the grace of such an example, they will not forget to pray for the self-sacrificing friend, who stole, from

his few hours of legitimate recreation, time to place before them, in simple colours, the picture of sublime sanctity.

Believe me, yours sincerely,

✠ E. CARD. MAC CABE.

The Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

Archbishop's House, Westminster, S. W.

17th February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I was unwilling to seem slow to thank you for your very acceptable book on St. Joseph ; and I was so pressed by work when it came that I desired F. Guiron to thank you in my name.

But I am glad to do so now. The devotion of the Church to St. Joseph springs from the Incarnation and protects it, as St. Joseph guarded the Divine Infant ; and in this he is the special Patron of Priests, who guard our Divine Master in the Sacrament of the Altar.

You have therefore given to us and to the faithful in your excellent book, a store of motives to ask and to confide in his prayers, in the power of which I have both faith, trust, and experience.

Believe me always, my dear Archdeacon,
Yours very truly in Jesus Christ,

✠ HENRY EDWARD,

Car. Archbishop of Westminster.

The Very Rev. Archdeacon of Cashel.

The Oratory, Birmingham,

February 8, 1884

VERY REV. FATHER,

I beg to thank you for your precious volume. I would I could promise myself the pleasure of reading it over ; but at my age I find a great difficulty in expediting the various duties which lie upon me. Pray accept this apology,

Your faithful servant,

✠ JOHN H. CARD. NEWMAN.

Armagh,
19th February, 1884.

VERY REV. DEAR SIR,

I thank you for your beautiful gift "St. Joseph." The book is one with which every devout reader will be charmed.

It cannot be more highly praised than in saying that it has the best qualities of the author's universally prized works.

To all who are able to buy it, I would say, get it, read it, and give it away to some poor person, when you have got the good out of it for yourself.

Wishing you every blessing,

I am your grateful and faithful servant,

DANIEL M'GETTIGAN.

Primate.

Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane, P.P.

St. Jarlath's, Tuam.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

Many thanks for the copy of your latest truly solid and edifying book, "St. Joseph," with which you kindly favoured me.

The subject has been, indeed, well chosen, and admirably handled.

After Jesus in the altar, and his Immaculate Mother, naturally comes in order the Foster Father of the Son of God. You have laid the Catholic public, already so deeply indebted to you, under heavy additional obligations by treating of such a subject and treating of it so well.

No sweeter devotion, nor any that speaks more feelingly to every Catholic heart, than that shown this great Saint, who ought to be, and no doubt is, after the Immaculate Mother, the most powerful in the court of heaven.

As he guarded the Church in his Divine Head, in her cradle, so he seems destined to guard her at the close of her existence, especially in these evil days, when the general departure from the principles of faith, and the universal defection of the rulers of this earth, from the allegiance

due to the Vicar of Christ, would seem to indicate that, if not the end, at least some great change is near at hand.

I shall not fail to recommend your admirable book on a subject in which I feel the deepest interest, to the faithful of this diocese. I trust it shall soon be in the hands of all.

With veneration

Believe me very faithfully yours,

✠ JOHN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

*Archdiocese of Glasgow,
158 Renfrew-street, Glasgow,
12th February, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I write to thank you very much for having sent me a copy of your beautiful book, "St. Joseph." From what I have already been able to read of it I have formed a high opinion of the book, and can state that I am satisfied that it is a most valuable manual of devotion to St. Joseph; a very important addition to the few books that we have in the vernacular in honour of the Foster Father of our Lord; and a most useful compendium of instructions, meditations, and prayers, suited for all seasons and especially for the month of March.

In my household we shall use it every day during the coming month.

Again thanking you for the book,

I remain, very faithfully yours,

✠ CHARLES,
Archbishop of Glasgow.

Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

*The Palace, Limerick,
10th February, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I have much pleasure in recommending to the Catholics of Limerick your new book on St. Joseph. It

is in every way worthy of your pen. It would be high praise to say that it is not inferior to any of your previous publications ; but I am inclined to join your illustrious archbishop. and say that I, too, " shall be disappointed if those capable of forming a just estimate of its merits do not pronounce it one of your most useful and edifying works."

Believe me to be, yours most faithfully,

✠ GEORGE BUTLER,

Bishop of Limerick.

Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

*Tullow, County Carlow,
February 12th, 1884.*

MY DEAR FATHER KINANE,

As you say your charming little book on St. Joseph was written at my suggestion, I fondly hope to come in for some share of the innumerable blessings and graces which it is sure to procure for its pious readers. I am truly delighted with its modest, lucid, simple, and touching exposition of the devotion of our Holy Church to its beloved patriarch, St. Joseph. As it is with God, the more he is known the more intensely he is loved ; so also with His Saints, the more they are known the more they are loved and honoured, and the more they are loved the greater our devotion, and the greater our devotion the more abundant the graces procured for us by their powerful intercession. As your incomparable panegyrist and holy archbishop has remarked, in his beautiful preface to your little work, " there is no saint in the calendar, perhaps, of whom less is generally known than St. Joseph," you have done much to make him better known as the highest and most holy, after His own Immaculate Spouse, of God's saints in heaven—the ever glorious St. Joseph. You here let in a clear and beautiful light in the somewhat obscure passage relating to the saint's thought of putting his sacred charge away privately. Your interpretation of the text is well calculated, supported, as

it is, by irresistible arguments, to bring conviction to every pious mind. I have been greatly touched by your warm love of our dear old country, as evidenced in the pages in which you speak of Ireland, of her glories, and of her sorrows. How charming is patriotism when embalmed in the unctuous piety of the heart of an Irish priest. As you so justly remark, the ever-religious Saint Joseph is, in a special manner, invoked as the patron of a happy death. I think you may well take to your heart the sweet consolation of a well-grounded hope that your advocacy of the saint will procure for him many clients, who, through his intercession, will die the death of the saints. May you and I be amongst their number is the sincerest wish of your devoted friend in Christ,

✱ J. LYNCH.

P.S.—Pray for me as I do every day for you.

*The Abbey, Ballaghdeerin,
8th February, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I thank you very cordially for the copy of "St. Joseph, His Life," &c., which you have kindly presented to me. I have devoted my first leisure hours in looking over it, and hasten to express my admiration of your work and my delight at its publication.

At best there had been up to this but a very meagre outline of the saint's life and prerogatives; but you have the merit of filling in the details, and grouping them with the master-hand of a practised and successful writer.

The English-speaking world were already under many obligations to your pious and learned zeal. But now you lay on an additional obligation; for this work harmonises with your other books in beauty of subject and excellence of treatment. Here and there are to be found special spots that must gain upon the Irish Catholic; aye, and even charm the Irish Catholic heart. I would particularly refer the children of St. Patrick and St. Bridget to sec. 8,

c. ii., p. 1, where you paint the "golden age" of our ancient National Church with rare touches of eloquent pathos.

I am confident that the sale of your new book will attest a high appreciation of its merits by the Catholic reader, and afford proof of the deep love in which Catholics hold the head of the Holy Family, the patron of a happy death, and the protector of the universal Church.

It will give me sincere pleasure to recommend your work to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Achonry.

I remain, my dear Archdeacon,
Yours very faithfully,

✠ F. J. MAC CORMACK,
Bishop of Achonry.

The Ven. Archdeacon Kinane.

Kilkenny, 9th February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

Your new work will be a welcome gift, indeed, to the countless clients of St. Joseph. It appears to me to be admirably suited to promote in the faithful a true and solid devotion to the great patron of the universal Church. The sixth section of chapter the third has taken my fancy very much. I will not fail to commend this treatise on St. Joseph to all intrusted to my spiritual care.

Yours faithfully and devotedly,

✠ PATRICK MORAN,
Bishop of Ossory.

*Bishop's House, Waterford,
February 12th, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I have been reading with great satisfaction your recently published volume on "The Life, Virtues, Privileges, and Power" of St. Joseph, of which you have favoured me with a copy.

In addition to the universal devotional works with which you have enriched religious literature, you have in the treatise appropriately named *St. Joseph* given to the public a work of rare merit, which I venture to say will be eagerly sought for, and will command an extensive circulation. The amount of information, scriptural, theological, and devotional, which you have compressed in that volume, whilst it attests deep research, is a marvel of methodical condensation.

You have, my dear Archdeacon, placed the Catholic public under weighty obligations by the incentives to enlightened piety and practical devotion which you have furnished in *St. Joseph*, no less than in the previous works which have emanated from your zeal for the promotion of religion. How you have been able to combine, with the unceasing duties of an active missionary life, the countless hours given to deep and varied research, and the labour of placing its fruits in vigorous and lucid language, in order to attract attention and suit the tastes of discriminating readers, is an instance of rare industry and generous self-sacrifice pre-eminently yours.

I would greatly wish that this highly instructive and devotion-inspiring production would have a large circulation amongst the members of my flock.

I remain, my dear Archdeacon,

Yours sincerely,

✠ T. POWER,
Bishop of Waterford.

The Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

Sligo, February 11th, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I am in receipt of your *Life of St. Joseph* and after reading it over I am of opinion that in his preface, flattering as it is, your venerated archbishop has scarcely done justice to its merits. It is indeed a solid devotional work, written in a simple, attractive style, and appealing no less to the heart than to the mind of the reader. It breathes a

spirit of fervent piety, in which your other devotional works had prepared us; but we may well wonder, with your own venerable prelate, how you could have found time, in the midst of pastoral duties so numerous and so engrossing, for original work like this, so full of thought and research.

All good Catholics must feel deeply grateful to you and I am sure I only express their heartfelt wish when I pray that God may reward your zeal by making your book widely instrumental in spreading devotion to the glorious St Joseph.

Believe me, my dear Archdeacon,
Very sincerely yours,

✠ L. GILLOOLY,
Bishop of Elphin.

*Bishop's House, Salford,
February 20th, 1884.*

MY DEAR FATHER KINANE,

My appreciation of your admirable work on St. Joseph, which you so kindly sent me, may be best tested by the fact that I have placed it, with your other valued and pious work of devotion, on the select list of books, which is imperative in all our "Church Libraries." . . . I do not meet with Suarez's (whom you quote so often) strong and beautiful expression, that St. Joseph belonged to the Hierarchy of the Hypostatic Union, and to the Hierarchy of the Incarnation. It always struck me as a happy and forcible expression.

Yours faithfully

✠ HERBERT,
Bishop of Salford.

*Queenstown,
February 23rd, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I have to apologise to you for having delayed so long to thank you for the presentation-copy you sent me

of your new book. Owing to a variety of business matters pressing on me, I have not been able yet to read your book through. I have read enough of it, however, to satisfy me that it is a most useful and meritorious production, calculated to promote devotion to St. Joseph by the clear and comprehensive exposition which it gives of the eminent sanctity and exalted prerogatives of the great patriarch, selected by God to be the chaste spouse of the Virgin Mother, and the guardian and foster-father of our Redeemer. The recent appointment of St. Joseph as patron of the universal Church made it very desirable that the general body of the faithful should have a fuller and more perfect knowledge of his life and virtues than could be acquired from any English work on the subject with which I am acquainted. This want you have admirably supplied in a manner worthy of the subject. The simple and devotional spirit in which your book is written, and the clearness and naturalness of its style—free from any affectation of fine writing—is exactly what was required for the class of readers for whom, I am sure, it was principally intended by you, namely, the simple faithful of your urban and rural districts, who form the great bulk of our population. Earnestly praying that your book may have a success commensurate with its merits, and with that of the other works of yours which preceded it,

I am, my dear Archdeacon,
Yours most sincerely.

✠ JOHN M'CARATHY.

The Ven. Archdeacon Kinane, P.P., V.F.,
Fethard, Co. Tipperary.

Letterkenny,

11th February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I beg to thank you most sincerely for your beautiful volume on St. Joseph. It will be a welcome gift to

our Catholic people who so frequently and lovingly unite the name of this great saint in their pious aspirations with those of our Divine Lord and his Blessed Mother.

In your book they shall find everything which can conduce to render their devotion deep, solid, and enlightened. While the meditation, vocal prayers, and practical resolutions supply abundant matter for their pious exercises, your clear exposition of Catholic teaching, the light which you throw on St. Joseph's life, and the prominence which you give to his leading virtues, furnish them with a sound and accurate knowledge, which is the most solid foundation on which they can ground their devotion.

It strikes me that in this, as in your previous works, your twofold object for inspiring devotion, and bringing it into perfect harmony with the requirements of sound doctrine, has been most successfully accomplished. Indeed, the chapter on the Catholic doctrine of the Invocation of Saints renders this important service not only to the particular devotion of which you treat but to every devotion connected with the saints. I think, therefore, the introduction of this chapter was a happy thought. If anything could be happier it is the success with which you have so united solidity and clearness in your treatment of this important question as to render it at the same time attractive to the best instructed, and intelligible to the simplest of your readers.

I shall feel great pleasure in recommending your admirable book to the faithful of this diocese, and I trust it is not the last work from the same pen I shall have to bring under their notice.

Wishing you every blessing and every success in your edifying labours,

I am, dear Archdeacon Kinane,

Yours most faithfully,

✠ MICHAEL LOGUE,
Bishop of Raphoe.

*Seminaire St. Sulpice,
Paris, 9th February, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

Accept my best thanks for the copy of "St. Joseph" which you have so kindly presented to me. I have looked through it with much interest, and I have every confidence that it will greatly contribute to promote devotion to the Guardian of our Divine Lord, to whom He vouchsafed to be subject for so many years in Nazareth, and whom, through his vicar on earth, He has proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church.

Wishing "St. Joseph" a wide circulation, and its pious author every happiness,

I remain, my dear Archdeacon.

Very sincerely yours in Christ,

M. FLANNERY

Bishop of Killaloe.

**The Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane, P.P.,
Fethard.**

*Cullie's House, Cavan,
10th February, 1884.*

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I have to thank you for the copy of your latest work, "St. Joseph," which you were so kind as to send me. Like the other books which we have had from your gifted pen, "St. Joseph" seems to be an exceedingly sweet little manual, containing much sound instruction on the "worship of the saints" in general, whilst it supplies most abundant materials for devotion to our great patron, St. Joseph, in particular. Independent of the Scriptural proofs you adduce, I believe the chapters on the practice of the Early Greek and Latin Churches, followed up by the examples so happily culled from our own Irish Church, will be read with much avidity and profit by the faithful. There could be no more entertaining book for

pious reading on Sunday evenings. Would that it may find a place especially in every family where the sensuous novel and frivolous, poisonous journal form the staple of Sunday afternoon reading.

I wish it much success

Faithfully yours,

* NICHOLAS CONATY.

Bishop of Kilmore.

Galway,

February 11th, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

If your latest book of devotion, "St. Joseph : his Life, his Virtues, his Privileges, his Power," came to me without any previous knowledge of the author, but recommended as it is by the *imprimatur* and preface of your own illustrious Archbishop, by the second *imprimatur* which it bears, given by the highest ecclesiastical dignity in the Irish Church, and by the *Nihil Obstat* of the learned and indefatigable President of Maynooth College, I should unhesitatingly take it on trust as a work of rare excellence.

But when I know that its author is the author of at least four other works of singular merit, and when I have looked through this appropriate crown of your former labours, I feel that you have done me a great favour in sending an early copy of the book, and that you have rendered most meritorious service to the Irish Church by producing a work which will be read with profit and with pleasure wherever the English language is spoken.

I remain, my dear Archdeacon,

With many thanks, your faithful servant,

* THOMAS J. CARR.

The Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

Bishop's House, Skibbereen,

23rd February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I duly received, and have just read over, your last truly excellent and welcome contribution to the Catholic and religious literature of our country. By this recent and valuable publication on "St. Joseph, his Life and Virtues," you have given still further evidence of your great research, industry, and piety, and have placed in the hands of your Catholic readers at home and abroad a carefully written, solid, and instructive work.

I am,

Very Rev. and my dear Archdeacon Kinane,
Yours very faithfully in J. C.,

* WM. FITZGERALD.

St. Mell's, Longford,

9th February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I have in due time received your beautiful book on "St. Joseph," and I hasten to thank you for this new and rich treat which your piety has given to the numberless souls throughout Ireland who are devout to *Jesus*, *Mary*, and *Joseph*. The confraternities of "The Holy Family" in this diocese will, I am sure, give a hearty welcome to this work, and derive from it great spiritual advantages. As yet I have not been able fully to enjoy the abundance of the sweetness which has flowed anew from your pen, but I have tasted enough of it to feel convinced that you have worthily completed your trilogy; and having in the past praised in sweet accents the "Lamb of God" and the "Immaculate Mother of God," you have now, in the same happy strain, declared the glories of St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary, and the Foster-Father of Jesus.

Wishing you many years to labour for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and to see the abundant fruit of your labours,

I remain, my dear Archdeacon,
Yours most sincerely,

✠ B. WOODLOCK,
Bishop of Ardagh.

The Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane.

Loughrea,

10th February, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

By the present book, which you kindly forwarded me a few days ago, you placed the Catholic public under additional obligations. You have condensed into the present volume the incidents of the life of the great patron of the Universal Church, hitherto not accessible to ordinary readers. It will be read with interest and profit by all who are anxious to secure the protection of the Patron of a happy death. It is a matter of surprise to me how you were able to read over so many authorities on the subject amid your varied missionary duties. It forms a complete manual, doctrinal and devotional, for all clients of St. Joseph.

Very sincerely yours,

✠ PATRICK DUGGAN.

Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane, P.P.,
Fethard.

50 Rathgar Road,

Dublin, February 14th, 1884.

DEAR ARCHDEACON.

Permit me to thank you very heartily for the copy you forwarded to me of your latest literary production, "St. Joseph," and to thank you still more heartily for the instructive and edifying reading it has afforded me

during the past few days. With your revered Archbishop, I am forced to wonder how you can steal time from your other absorbing duties to enlighten and inflame our good and pious people with such genuine manuals of devotion as have come from your ready pen. I can only wish that it may meet the success of its predecessors. I pray that the great patriarch whose glory you proclaim may shed his powerful patronage over you. I am deeply grateful also for your kind wishes in my regard, and trusting I may have the benefit of your good prayers to help me forward in my arduous task,

I remain, sincerely yours,

* N. DONNELLY,
Bishop of Canea.

Very Rev. Archdeacon Kinane, P.P.

Bishop's House, Monaghan,
25th February, 1884.

DEAR ARCHDEACON KINANE,

I found the perusal of your book on St. Joseph so fascinating that, beginning with the beautiful introduction of the Archbishop of Cashel, I could not stop myself till I had reached the end of the volume. You have given us a most admirable treatise on the virtues and prerogatives of St. Joseph, replete with solid matter, and warmed up with devout meditations and pious prayers: the narrative built on the foundation of sacred Scripture, and illustrated by copious extracts from the Greek and Latin fathers, as well as from the records of the ancient Church of Ireland. I heartily congratulate you on having woven with loving fingers this chapter of choicest flowers for the Foster-Father of *The Lamb of God* and the spouse of *Mary Immaculate*.

I remember how, in the preface to "The Lamb of God," you presented that volume to us as your "last little book." The announcement, I confess, appeared to me premature, considering what service you seemed capable of rendering, and that you were still so young a

man, comparatively. Great reason have we now to rejoice that you have either forgotten or disregarded that over-hasty resolution, and that in this your latest book no word appears which forbids the hope of seeing many further valuable contributions from your prolific pen.

Permit me to say that I think your fellow-countrymen have a right to be proud of that series of devotional books, already translated into the leading languages of Europe, with which you have enriched a department of literature hitherto almost untouched by Irish writers. Your brethren, too, of the clergy may well thank you for supplying to their hand so many well-stored repertories of matter for sermons on subjects of popular devotion, and for showing them how extensive reading, and even the composition of useful works, may be combined with the labours attending the charge of a large and populous parish.

I remain, dear and Very Rev. Sir,
Faithfully yours,

✱ JAMES DONNELLY.

Very Rev. T. H. Archdeacen Kinane. P.P.,
Fethard.

Chichester Park,
February 26th, 1884.

VEN. AND VERY REV. SIR,

Any book from the pen of the author of "The Dove of the Tabernacle," or "Angel of the Altar," needs no recommendation.

What is to be wondered at is, that any hard-worked missionary priest can steal time for such painstaking and laborious work.

I have read enough of "The Life of St. Joseph" to convince me that it is more than it professes, for it explains and instructs in all the virtues, and is a valuable *Vade mecum* for the month of March.

Yours faithfully,

✱ P. DORRIAN.

Very Rev. T. Kinane, P.P.

Bragansa, Carlow,

February 8th, 1884.

MY DEAR ARCHDEACON,

I was favoured with your excellent book, the "Life of St. Joseph." I pray you to accept my many thanks for your kind attention, and I hope I will derive much edification from its *perusal*.

Again thanking you,

I am, my dear Archdeacon,

Yours faithfully,

* W. WELSHE

The Venerable Archdeacon.

Derry, February 8th, 1884.

VERY REV. DEAR SIR,

I feel very grateful for the valuable work you have presented to me, and I beg to return warm thanks.

In my present state of health I am quite unable to write, but I make an effort to acknowledge your great kindness.

Wishing you every blessing,

I remain, Very Rev. dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

* FRANCIS KELLY.

Very Rev. T. H. Kinane.

Part I.



THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH.

SAINT JOSEPH:

HIS LIFE, EMINENT VIRTUES, AND POPULAR
DEVOTIONS IN HIS HONOUR.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH.

SECTION I.

Jesus.

O SWEETEST, and dearest Jesus! To think on Thee makes the devout soul happy; to love Thee is a foretaste of heaven; but to possess Thee is heaven itself. To labour solely for Thy greater glory, O Jesus; to touch and win the sinner's heart; to bring back the strayed sheep to Thy fold; to diffuse among men a greater knowledge and love of Thee, O Saviour of the world, is the most noble occupation of the mind of man; and imparts to the pious soul the most supreme happiness that can be tasted here below. Jesus is our all; for Jesus is God: "In the beginning," says the Evangelist, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John, i. 1). Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among

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us (and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John, i. 14). Jesus is not only our glory, and the glory of paradise, but the glory of his eternal Father. "Every tongue," says St. Paul, "shall confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 11). He is "the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance" (Heb. i. 3).

Jesus was the ray of hope that shone upon Adam, cast out from paradise upon a cold, bleak world. Jesus was the Messiah; the "Just One;" "the desired of the eternal hills." Jesus was the long-expected Redeemer, for whose coming the Patriarchs and Prophets sighed and prayed. The Prophet Isaias, in touching accents, thus prayed: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour" (xlv. 8). "Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth" (xvi. 1). Having petitioned the earth and the heavens for mercy, the Prophet appeals to the Messiah himself: "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down; the mountains would melt away at thy presence. They would melt as at the burning of fire, the waters would burn with

fire, that thy name might be made known to thy enemies: that the nations might tremble at thy presence" (lxiv. 1).

Jesus, as God, is power and glory; but far dearer and sweeter to us is Jesus as merciful Saviour; "with him," sings the Psalmist, "is plentiful redemption" (Ps. cxxix. 7). The name Jesus, or Saviour, is the most noble and the most exalted of all the titles of our Blessed Redeemer. "God," says St. Paul, "also, hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9).

The sweet and all-holy name of Jesus was brought from heaven, and pronounced for the first time on earth, by the lips of the Archangel Gabriel. At the Annunciation, the Archangel delivered his heavenly message to the Blessed Virgin: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke, i. 31). Another "Angel of the Lord" appeared to St. Joseph, and said: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her,

is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 20, 21). Jesus is our Saviour; through the merits of His Precious Blood we have been redeemed. "Neither is there salvation," says the word of God, "in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts, iv. 12). The Precious Blood of Jesus was the price of our Redemption. "Thou art worthy," says the inspired writer, "to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. . . . The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and benediction" (Apoc. v. 9, 12). "Power," therefore, "and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction," adoration, love, praise, and thanksgiving be to Jesus, our Saviour, and our Lord, from every creature for all eternity.

The holy name of Jesus is the power of the Catholic Church. To-day, as during the last nineteen centuries, the apostolic missionary quits country, home, and kindred, to evan-

gelise the heathen nation, with his breviary under his arm, his crucifix in hand, his rosary beads in his pocket, and the holy name of Jesus on his lips. Jesus said to His Disciples: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. . . . In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly things, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark, xvi. 15-18). Confiding in the mighty power of the holy name of Jesus, St. Peter cured the "man who was lame from his mother's womb," by saying, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk. . . . And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and went into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God" (Acts, iii. 6). No wonder that the lame, the blind, the sick, and those labouring under "all manner of diseases," recognised their God, and became "whole" at the power of Jesus; for Jesus said to His Disciples, "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you" (John, xvi. 23).

No wonder that the name of Jesus is sweet, holy, and powerful; for the name Jesus brings to our mind the whole scheme of man's Re-

demption. Jesus, as we have seen, was "the Just One," "the desired of the eternal hills," "the Lamb," "the Ruler," the long-expected Messiah, for whose coming the Patriarchs and Prophets prayed and sighed. The winning, the infinite love of Jesus in the Incarnation, in the Nativity, in His Hidden Life, and yet more in his Passion and Death, has won the admiration of the world; has peopled Christendom with cloisters, thus captivating in every age, and in every clime, the pure affections, the warm love of the young, the beautiful, and the fair. O dearest Jesus! may we love Thee; O Jesus, may we serve Thee. To Thee, O Jesus, we consecrate all the affections of our hearts, now and for ever. O Jesus, purify and chasten our affections, and make them acceptable in Thy sight.

The holy name of Jesus, not only reminds us of His Life and of His Death, but it brings to our mind His mystical Life and Death upon our altars. The holy Mass is nothing less than the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In the holy Mass Jesus descends from heaven; and, to use the words of St. Augustine, "becomes incarnate in the priest's hands as He did in Mary's womb." In the Mass Jesus mystically dies, and sheds His Precious Blood for the Redemption of

mankind. "The same Christ," says the Council of Trent, "is contained and immolated (on the altar) in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross. . . . For the Victim is one and the same; the same now offering Himself by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the Cross" (Sess. xxii., Can. 2). The sweet name of Jesus brings to our mind the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist; "the heavenly manna," "the bread of angels," "the wheat of the elect," "the wine producing virgins." In the Holy Communion we receive Jesus Christ Himself—His Body and Blood. The Council of Trent, assisted by the Spirit of God, defined, "that in the Sacrament of the most holy Eucharist are contained truly, really, and substantially the Body and Blood together with the Soul and the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Sess. xiii., Can. 1). O holy Faith! that teaches us such sacred, such sublime, and such consoling doctrines. O Jesus! may we love, and hear daily, if possible, holy Mass; O Jesus! may we love and receive worthily, and frequently, holy Communion.

Jesus, at His Ascension, returned to the bosom of His Eternal Father; yet, by a miracle worthy of the infinite love and mercy

of God for man, the same Jesus remains day and night in every land, and in every clime, on countless altars throughout Christendom. From the tabernacle Jesus says to His children, "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). And, again, "This is my rest for ever and for ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it" (Ps. cxxxi. 14). All—the poor as well as the rich, the sinner as well as the saint—can approach Jesus; speak to Him, and tell Him their wants, their joys, and woes. The name of Jesus, therefore, is holy, powerful, sweet, and brings to our mind the whole scheme of Redemption and sanctification. Jesus is our hope and strength living and dying; and Jesus will be, we trust, our crown beyond the grave.

No wonder that St. Bernard, who tasted the sweetness of the love of Jesus, thus writes: "O name of Jesus, worthy of all blessing and praise. What so fills the soul with sweetness and spiritual joy? . . . All food is dry if this oil be not poured upon it, and insipid unless seasoned by this salt. If thou writest, I find no relish in it unless I read there the name Jesus. If thou disputest or holdest conversation, I find no relish in it unless the sound of the name of Jesus be heard there. Jesus is honey in the mouth,

music in the ear, and jubilation in the heart.”
(Serm. xv. in Can.)

The loving heart and honeyed pen of St. Francis of Sales have delighted the world with the following exquisite passage on the name of Jesus: “I have no time to write,” says the Saint, “only the great name of salvation—Jesus. Oh! could I, oh! could we, pronounce this holy name of salvation from our hearts, what sweetness would it diffuse into our souls! How happy should we be had we nothing in our memory or mind but Jesus; nothing in our will but Jesus; nothing in our understanding but Jesus; nothing in our imagination but Jesus. In all things Jesus would be to us, and we should be in all things to Him. But, alas! I cannot express what I mean by pronouncing this holy name of Jesus; to speak of it, or to express it, we ought to have a tongue of fire.”

O sweet, and holy, and adorable Jesus! may Thy loving name be ever on our tongues, and engraven on our hearts during life; and may it be our last invocation at death.

SECTION II.

Mary.

After the great and holy names of God, the Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Ghost, and Jesus the Incarnate Son of God; and all the titles and names applicable to God alone, and which no creature dare assume—the next dearest and sweetest name on the Christian's lips is the name of Mary. The name Mary signifies "Sovereign Lady;" and how just are Mary's claims to this superb and unique title; for she is the Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth; crowned, not by the hands of an earthly monarch, but by the King of heaven, her own Divine Son, with the brightest diadem of glory.

The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of Jesus, Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of God; and hence, in the mind of the Almighty from all eternity, she entered largely into the scheme of man's Redemption. After his fall, Adam was cast out of paradise upon a cold, lonely, bleak world; and the first gladdening ray of hope that shone upon his sad, despairing soul, was reflected from the star of Mary. The serpent seduced Eve, and through Eve fell Adam, drawing with him in his fall the whole human family. God promised a second Eve. "I will put enmities," said God to the serpent, "between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head" (Gen. iii. 15). Centuries rolled by; God sent Patriarchs and Prophets who foretold the lineage, name,

and glories of Mary; and even the very year of Redemption. Among others, the Prophet Isaias thus writes: "Hear ye, therefore, O house of David, . . . the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (vii. 13).

We need no apology to the devout clients of Mary for transcribing from the Old Testament a few of the many exquisite passages applied by the Fathers, and by the Church in her Liturgy to the Blessed Virgin Mary. "And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut: it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut. For the Prince. The Prince Himself shall sit in it" (Ezek. xliv. 2).

Again: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived; neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung up. The mountains, with their huge bulk, had not as yet been established; before the hills I was brought forth. He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the

world. When He prepared the heavens, I was present, when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths. When He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters. When He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when he balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him forming all things" (Prov. viii. 22).

God, from all eternity, had destined the Blessed Virgin to be the Mother of Jesus; from the pure blood of Mary's Immaculate Heart was formed, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost, the Body of Jesus; so that Mary's heart was the remote fountain or source of the Precious Blood of Redemption. No wonder, then, that the Almighty showered upon the Blessed Virgin His choicest blessings in their plenitude. God was pleased, so to speak, with the work of His Hands; and seeing Mary's soul so pure, so chaste, so immaculate, so perfect, He thus saluted her: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in thee" (Can. iv. 7); "Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem One is my dove, my perfect one is but one. She is the only one." (Can. vi. 8.)

The New Testament verifies the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the Blessed Virgin, and trumpet-tongued proclaims her dignity and sanctity. The Archangel Gabriel is the ambassador, sent from heaven by the most adorable Trinity, to treat with Mary concerning the Incarnation.

With what respect and reverence the Archangel treats the future Mother of God. The Gospel says: "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in, said to her: Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God, Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke, i. 26, &c.). Thus God's Ambassador, in the inspired text, proclaims Mary's sanctity, styles her "*full of grace*;" announces that she had "*found grace with God*;" that "*the Lord is with her*;" and that she is "*blessed among women*." With what respect, therefore, and fervour ought we ever to recite that sweet prayer, the "*Hail Mary*"—a prayer first pronounced on

earth by the lips of the Archangel Gabriel. O Mary! may we love and recite daily and piously the holy Rosary, that sweet Canticle in honour of Jesus and Mary.

St. John the Baptist, while yet unborn, recognised the presence of Jesus, and of Mary His Mother, and was sanctified in his mother's womb. The Gospel thus narrates it: "And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb: and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me. For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. . . . And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (Luke, i. 39, &c.)

In this sublime Gospel we find that St.

Elizabeth, "*filled with the Holy Ghost,*" proclaimed the Blessed Virgin to be *the mother of her Lord*, and pronounced her "*blessed;*" and the unborn babe "*leaped for joy*" in his mother's womb. And the Blessed Virgin, inspired by the Holy Ghost, prophesied "*behold all generations shall call me blessed.*"

Thus, the Old Testament, as applied by the Fathers, styles the Blessed Virgin, "the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel;" "the enclosed garden;" "the sealed up fountain," "all fair," "without spot," "beautiful, sweet, and comely;" the "only one," the "perfect one;" the New Testament pronounces her "full of grace," and having "found grace with God;" and in no fewer than *four* places styles her "blessed," and proclaims that "all generations shall call her blessed."

From the authority, therefore, of the inspired Volume, we conclude, as we have before stated, after the sacred and holy names of the Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; after the sweet name of Jesus, and all the holy titles given to our Blessed Lord, as God, and God Incarnate; that the next dearest, sweetest, and holiest name in heaven above, as well as on earth below, is **MARY, THE BLESSED VIRGIN, THE MOTHER OF GOD.** "When we speak of Mary, we speak of Jesus; speaking of her grandeur,

we speak of God's own grandeur. After God nothing in heaven or on earth is greater than Mary," writes the devout Cardinal de Berulle.

O Mary Immaculate, Mother of God! pray for us, watch over us, obtain for us from Jesus thy Divine Son, the grace to serve and to love Jesus all the days of our life.

SECTION III.

St. Joseph.

After the most sacred, and most adorable name of Jesus; after the sweet and holy name of Mary, the Mother of Jesus; the next dearest and most loving name, on the lips of the pious Christian, is that of St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, and the chaste spouse of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

If the Prophet Jeremias was sanctified, as he was in his mother's womb, because he was destined to announce to the world the mysteries and revelations of the Almighty; if St. John the Baptist, whose eminent sanctity we have from the Divine lips of Jesus Himself, when He announced that none greater was born of woman, was sanctified, as St. John was, before he was born, because his mission was to baptise the Saviour, to point out the Redeemer in person, to say, "Behold, the Lamb of God;" surely, it is just

and reasonable to believe, that signal favours, special privileges, and unique graces must have been showered, in the plenitude of their abundance by the Almighty upon St. Joseph, whose mission was of a far higher order than that of the Prophet Jeremias, or of St. John the Baptist; and whose privilege it was to approach nearer to Jesus than any other person, except the Blessed Virgin.

The heavenly appointed mission of St. Joseph was twofold. First, he was chosen by the Almighty from among the sons of men to be the spouse and guardian of the purest of virgins, the Immaculate Mother of God. "O sublime elevation," exclaims a pious author, "O admirable dignity of Joseph! whom the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven, deemed worthy to call her spouse." "The Evangelists," writes St. Leonard of Port-Maurice, "say but very little of the life and virtues of St. Joseph; but when they call him the spouse of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, they give him the most glorious title possible; for he was nearest to Mary, the purest creature ever made by God Almighty." Secondly, St. Joseph was chosen by God to be the guardian and protector of Jesus, as well as of Mary; by the labour of his hands to minister to

their wants and comforts, and to be the Head of the Holy Family.

St. Joseph—first after Mary—heard from an Angel sent from heaven by the Almighty the secret of the mystery of the Incarnation. St. Joseph—by God's special order—was the Protector of Mary, and of Jesus before He was born; St. Joseph—first after Mary—adored and reverentially kissed the Infant Saviour in the crib at Bethlehem; St. Joseph watched over and protected the Divine Infancy of the Redeemer, and, at the bidding of an Angel, fled with Jesus and Mary into Egypt, to escape the hands of the cruel Herod. By the labour of the hands of St. Joseph, our Blessed Saviour received for years His daily bread; and, finally, St. Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Enter a cathedral, a church, or a little country chapel by the mountain side, or shut in the bog—the high Altar is dedicated to God Almighty, or the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the Altar or statue at the Gospel side is sure to be under the invocation of Mary the Mother of God; the next in dignity and order is an altar or statue at the Epistle side in honour of St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary, and the reputed father and guardian of Jesus, our Blessed Saviour. Here we see the in-

stinct of Catholic faith ; we have the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

God knows the wants of His Church ; He knows “ the times and the seasons ; ” in her days of trial and need He raises up in her defence new friends and new protectors ; hence, special systematic devotion to St. Joseph, like that to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has, under the inspiration of God, grown up, and borne abundant fruit, in the Church of the nineteenth century.

To explain—especially to the poor and uneducated—in the most simple manner, the nature of this solid and holy devotion to St. Joseph, and by God’s grace to make our great Saint better known, and hence better loved, for God’s greater glory, in honour of His Incarnate Son, who deigned to be reputed the son of Joseph ; and to obtain for ourselves the grace of a happy death, through the intercession of St. Joseph, who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, and hence the patron of a happy death, will form the subject of the following pages.

All the beauty of the most exquisite statue ever chiseled, all the perfections of the painting on the canvass, are reflected on the genius of the artist ; so all the sanctity of the saints emanates from God alone, and proclaim His

wisdom, power, and glory. "Wonderful is God in his saints" (Ps. lxxvii. 36). "Blessed be God in his angels and saints."

PIOUS REFLECTION.

My soul! how dear and sweet the holy names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Jesus is thy God, thy Blessed Saviour and dear Redeemer. Jesus will be thy Judge, and hereafter may Jesus be thy reward in paradise. Mary is the Mother of God, the Mother of Jesus, and thy Mother and advocate. St. Joseph is the reputed father of Jesus, the chaste spouse of Mary, and the patron of a happy death.

RESOLUTION.

O Jesus! my God, my love, and my all. O Jesus! my Saviour, my Redeemer, my Judge. "Too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee." O Mary! my mother, my advocate, my friend; and, after Jesus, the love of my heart. O St. Joseph! so near and dear to Jesus and Mary. When tempted to offend God in any respect, I resolve to cry for help; to invoke the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; to say: "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me."

PRAYERS.

Litany of the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the World, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Ghost, *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God, *Have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, worthy objects
of our reverence and love,

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, by the voice
of all ages called the Holy Family,

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, names for ever
blessed of the Father, the Mother, and
the Child, who compose the Holy
Family,

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, image on earth
of the august Trinity,

Have pity on us.

Holy Family, tried by the greatest contradictions,
 Holy Family, afflicted in your journey to Bethlehem,
 Holy Family, rejected by all, and obliged to take refuge in a stable,
 Holy Family, saluted by the concerts of Angels,
 Holy Family, visited by the poor Shepherds,
 Holy Family, venerated by the Wise Men,
 Holy Family, persecuted and exiled in a strange country,
 Holy Family, hidden and unknown at Nazareth,
 Holy Family, model of Christian families,
 Holy Family, living in peace and charity,
 Holy Family, whose head is a model of paternal vigilance,
 Holy Family, whose spouse is a model of paternal care,
 Holy Family, whose Child is a model of obedience and filial piety,
 Holy Family, who led a poor, laborious and penitent life,
 Holy Family, poor in the goods of the world, but rich in the goods of heaven,

Have pity on us.

Holy Family, despised by the world,
but great before God,
Holy Family, our hope in life, our support
in death,
Holy Family, patrons and protectors of
our Confraternity,
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

} *Have pity on us.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
the world, *Hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
the world, *Have mercy on us.*

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.

O God of goodness and merey, grant that
we may always honour and imitate Jesus,
Mary, and Joseph; so that pleasing them
on earth, we may enjoy their presence in
heaven. Through the same Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION I.

The Doctrine of the Catholic Church on the Invocation of Saints, and on that of St. Joseph.

BEFORE we begin to explain sweet and unctuous devotion to our holy patron, St. Joseph, a clear and simple exposition of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the Invocation of Saints, cannot fail to edify all, and, perhaps, enlighten some, of our pious readers. "Thy testimonies," cries out the Royal Prophet, "are wonderful . . . The declaration of thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones." (Ps. cxiii.)

The stamp or seal of the Church upon any Devotion carries with it absolute certainty. The seal of the ruling prince upon the current ore certifies to his subjects that the glittering coin is not *gilt*, but *genuine* gold; in like manner, the seal or approbation of the Church upon any Devotion is an absolute

guarantee to the faithful that the Devotion is solid, in accordance with sound doctrine, and conducive to life everlasting. The intelligent Catholic ought to go farther; he ought to be able to give an account of the faith that is in him, and to refute and conquer, with the arms the Church puts into his hands, the impious heretic and unbeliever.

In this evil age, when bold and defiant infidelity stalks abroad, and attacks and scoffs at every sacred truth of our holy faith; when the most powerful governments of the world, and men in the highest station, as well as men of talents and learning, have leagued with the powers of darkness to rob the people of their faith, and destroy the Church of Jesus Christ, every Catholic should not only glory in his holy religion, and defend it, even, if necessary, to the shedding of his heart's blood; but should also be instructed and prepared to defend the faith, practices, and devotions of his holy Church.

Nothing, even the most sacred, has escaped the lash and insults of wicked men. "The fool," says the sacred Text, "said in his heart: there is no God. They are corrupted, and become abominable in iniquities: There is none that doth good. God looked down from heaven on the children of men,

to see if there were any that did understand or did seek God. All have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together" (Ps. lii. 1-4). If there be wicked men—and they are a legion—who blaspheme God, as they do, no wonder that they should insult God's Saints. If impious men, in the pride of their intellect and heart, deny, as they do, the Divinity of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, what wonder, then, that they should ridicule the Mother and the reputed Father of the Redeemer, Mary and St. Joseph. And what is more to be deplored, these men calling themselves Christians, are so blinded by foul and damning heresy, that they think they honour God by insulting His Saints, and that they please Jesus by blaspheming His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. May God open their eyes to see the truth, and move their hearts to embrace it.

One of the most sublime and noble occupation of the genius of man is to "vindicate the ways of God to man," and to defend the Doctrines of God's holy Church.

Though simple devotion, not controversy, is our aim, yet we deem it a great privilege, yea, a labour of love, to defend, feebly, indeed, yet as best we can, the prerogatives of God's great Servants, and especially to

trumpet the glories of Mary, the Mother of Jesus ; and the sanctity and privileges of St. Joseph, the reputed Father of our Blessed Redeemer.

Before we touch on the arguments in favour of the Invocation of Saints, it is well to lay down clearly and distinctly the doctrine of the Catholic Church on this article of faith. For this we have only to refer to the Decrees of the Infallible Council of Trent.

“The holy Synod,” declare the Fathers, “enjoins upon all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that agreeably to the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion ; and agreeably to the consent of the holy Fathers, and to the Decrees of sacred Councils ; they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the Intercession and Invocation of Saints . . . teaching them that the Saints who reign with Christ offer up their own prayers to God for men ; that it is good and useful, suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help, for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is our sole Redeemer and Saviour ; but that they think impiously who deny that the

Saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the Invocation of them to pray for each of us in particular is idolatry, or that it is repugnant to the word of God, and is opposed to the honour of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or that it is foolish to supplicate vocally or mentally those who reign in heaven" (Sess. xxv.).

From this Decree, the teaching of the Catholic Church is, first, that the invocation of the Saints is, not *absolutely necessary* for each one's salvation, but is "*good*" and "*useful*;" secondly, that the aids and helps come to us, not directly from the Saints themselves, but from God, through their intercession and prayers; thirdly, that Jesus Christ is the *sole* and *only Mediator* between God and men, and that the intercession and prayers of the Saints derive all their efficacy and power from Him alone; and hence that the Intercession of the Saints is not injurious to the merits of Christ. "It is good and useful," says the Council, as we have seen, "suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and helps, for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our sole

Redeemer and Saviour . . . *one Mediator of God and men.*"

SECTION II.

Communion of Saints.

How divine, and hence consoling, are the doctrines of the Catholic Church? The Catholic Church alone satisfies the reason of the intellect, as well as the feelings and the aspirations of the heart. The Divine Author of our faith is the same God who stamped His own image on the soul of man, and breathed into his heart pure and warm love. The great Creator has lighted up the heart of man with ardent, tender love for family and friends. To-day the family chain is broken; there is a missing link, a loved and loving one is gone to her everlasting account; here we are consoled by the doctrine of purgatory. Separation from this vale of tears only purifies and intensifies our affections for the dear departed. How happy the children feel that they can kneel and pray over the graves of their fond parents, and help them to the enjoyment of eternal bliss! But more heartless and cruel than the tyrant death, and colder than the grave, is the Pro-

testant Creed, that snaps all connection between the living and the dead, and sternly forbids the loving daughter to whisper a prayer for a fond mother or sister in pain beyond the grave.

Consoling and holy, because divine, in like manner is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. Every Christian says in the "APOSTLES' CREED," "I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS." Singular enough, Protestants retain the same Creed, make the same profession of faith; yet few appear to understand it, none to believe or practise it.

The Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints soars up, so to speak, to the highest and most purified affections and aspirations of the human heart, and strikingly illustrates the tender mercy of God.

A loved and loving member of the family circle departs this life, and wings her flight to paradise. The soul now lost, so to speak, in the blissful glory of God, vividly sees what it is to lose or win heaven. From St. Paul we know that faith and hope have ceased in heaven, that charity, the queen of virtues, reigns supreme; in fact, love is the essence of eternal bliss. What, therefore, is more natural than the belief that the child pos-

sessing the glory of God, looks down to those she loved on earth; looks, with a purer, holier, and more intensified love, to her fond parents, sisters, and brothers; watches over them, prays for them, never forsakes them, till with herself they reign with God in glory.

Nobody denies that friends on earth can pray for and help each other. What is more natural than to believe that this friendship is continued and intensified beyond the grave, and that the friendly soul, seeing the thousand temptations, dangers, and fearful risks to which her friend is exposed; and knowing the infinite and everlasting joys he can so easily obtain by a few years strife and fidelity, with unspeakably more energy and efficacy helps her friends to paradise.

There is another, and, perhaps, a greater consolation in the "COMMUNION OF SAINTS." THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS means, the mutual interchange of good offices between the *Church militant* and the *Church triumphant*; between us on earth and all the Saints of God in glory. We honour, respect, love them, and thank, and praise God for their glory and happiness; the Saints, on their part, take the deepest interest in our spiritual welfare, watch over us, and continually pray

and intercede with the Almighty for the salvation of our immortal souls.

It is encouraging, to know, therefore, that we, in our exile, in this vale of tears, exposed to countless temptations day and night, giving battle to three powerful and relentless enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—the road of salvation beset with innumerable pitfalls, dangers, and risks; it is, we repeat, encouraging to look up to heaven, and to be assured that we have in heaven a mighty army, countless millions of Angels and Saints, who look down upon us with sympathy, take a deep interest in, and help us, in our struggles, and intercede with God for our eternal salvation.

Each country has her natural heroes, men renowned for deeds of greatness, sacrifice, and courage. These heroes are immortalized by the brush and the chisel, by prose and song, and are kept before the eyes of each rising generation as models of imitation and emulation. The Church, too, has had, in every age, her heroes, men renowned for deeds of sacrifice and greatness; she has had her Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins; men who conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil; men who in human flesh have led the lives of Angels in heaven,

and the lustre of whose virtues shine brighter as age succeeds age. These are the models the Church holds up to the youth of every age to admire, imitate, or emulate.

SECTION III.

The Old Testament on the Invocation of Saints.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church, that the Angels and Saints pray for us, that God hears their prayers for us, and that "it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help, for obtaining benefits from God, through his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is our sole Redeemer and Saviour," is clearly proved from the Old and New Testament, and from the tradition of the Church.

In the Old Law, Angels prayed, and God heard their prayers for His rebellious people. An Angel thus prayed for the city of Jerusalem: "And the Angel of the Lord answered, and said: O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Juda, with which thou hast been angry? this is now the seventieth year. And the Lord answered the Angel that spoke in me good words, comfortable

words . . . Therefore, thus saith the Lord : I will return to Jerusalem in mercies ; My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and the building line shall be stretched forth from Jerusalem . . . My cities shall yet flow with good things, and the Lord will yet comfort Sion, and he will yet choose Jerusalem" (Zac. i. 12-17). Here the prayers of the Angel obtained mercy for Jerusalem and the cities of Juda.

The Angel Raphael said to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayers to the Lord" (Tob. xii. 12). Thus an Angel offered to God the prayers of His faithful servant, Tobias.

Jacob thus prayed: "And Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, and said: God, in whose sight my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, God that feedeth me from my youth until this day, the Angel that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys" (Gen. xlviii. 15). Here in the same sentence, and in the same prayer, he begs of "God" and the "Angel" to bless his boys.

Angels not only pray for and help individuals, but even nations and kingdoms have

their protecting spirit, as is clear from the Book of Daniel "The prince of the kingdoms of the Persians visited me one-and-twenty days: and behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there by the king of the Persians" (Dan. x. 13). In the Book of Machabees, the same doctrine, in even clearer terms, is taught and confirmed. The brave Judas Machabeus, animated with soul-stirring words his gallant army to fight and die for the Laws of God and their native hills. "So he armed every one of them, not with defence of shield and spear, but with very good speeches and exhortations, and told them a dream worthy to be believed, whereby he rejoiced them all."

"Now, this vision was in this manner: Onias, who had been high priest, a good and virtuous man . . . holding up his hands, prayed for all the people of the Jews. After this there appeared also another man, admirable for age and glory, and environed with great beauty and majesty. Then Onias answering, said: This is a lover of his brethren and of the people of Israel; this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the holy city, Jeremias, the Prophet of God. Whereupon Jeremias stretched

forth his right hand, and gave to Judas a sword of gold, saying : Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel . . . And in his prayer he said after this manner : Thou, O Lord, who didst send Thy Angel in the time of Ezechias, king of Judah, and didst kill a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the army of Sennacherib, send now, also, O Lord of heaven, Thy good Angel before us" (2 Mac. xv. 12-23).

Here we see, in the first place, that two Saints, Onias and Jeremias, long since dead, prayed for, and promised victory to the gallant army of Judas ; and, secondly, Judas prayed the Almighty to send down his "good Angel" to protect them on the battle field.

The Old Testament abounds with many other texts to the same purpose ; but those already cited clearly prove the belief of the Jewish Church in the Invocation and Intercession of the Angels and Saints in paradise.

SECTION IV.

The New Testament on the Invocation of Saints.

This holy doctrine, this belief in the Intercession and Invocation of the Angels and

Saints, is continued and confirmed in the the New Testament.

We shall content ourselves with a few passages. In the Apocalypse, St. John writes: "And I saw seven Angels standing in the presence of God: and there were given to them seven trumpets. And another Angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the Angel" (chap. viii. 2-4). And again: "When he had opened the book, the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of Saints" (Apoc. v. 8).

In the Old Testament, as we have seen; an Angel offered to God the prayers of Tobias. This doctrine is confirmed in the New Testament; for in the text just cited, we find "the prayers of Saints" offered to God by the hands of Angels in "golden censers" and "golden vials."

The same Evangelist prays thus: "John,

to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from Him that is, and that was, and that is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (chap. i. 4). Here St. John, in the same breath, and in the same terms, prays for "*grace*" and "*peace*" from "*God*," from the "*seven spirits*," and from "*Jesus Christ*;" just as the Catholic says, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, help me;" "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony."

No Protestant can deny that it is lawful to ask the prayers of the living, of God's Servants on earth, and that the living can intercede for, and help each other by their prayers; nay, more, that the prayers of the just on earth often obtain pardon and mercy for the sinner. St. Paul clearly proves this doctrine. He says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God" (Rom. xv. 30). Again, "By all prayer and supplication,

praying at all times in the spirit ; and in the same, watching with all instance and supplication for all the Saints" (Eph. vi. 18): Writing to the Thessalonians, the Saint says: "Brethren, pray for me" (1 Thes. v. 25). One text more. St. Paul to the Philippians says: "For I know that this shall fall out unto my salvation through your prayers" (Phil. i. 19). Here St. Paul, in the clearest terms, craves, covets, and values the prayers of his brethren. Now, if God's Servants on earth, surrounded, as they are, with all the frailties to which flesh is heir to, can help and aid us, as St. Paul teaches us that they can, by their prayers, how much more the Saints who reign with God in glory.

That God shows mercy to sinners, through the prayers of His Servants on earth, is clearly proved from the following passage from holy Job: 'God said to Job's friends: My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because you have not spoken the thing that is right before me, as my servant Job hath. Take unto you therefore seven oxen and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust: and my servant Job shall pray for you: his face I will accept, that folly be not imputed to you: for you have not spoken right things

before me, as my servant Job hath. So Eliphaz, the Themanite and Baldad the Suhite, and Sophar the Naamathite went, and did as the Lord had spoken to them, and the Lord accepted the face of Job. The Lord also was turned at the penance of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job, xlii. 7-10).

We might quote many other texts to show how often the prayers of the Patriarchs and Prophets, and especially those of the prayers of Moses, obtained mercy and pardon from God for their faithless and sinful people.

Now, if it be lawful and profitable, and the word of God clearly proves it to be so, to ask the prayers of God's Servants on earth, how much more so must it be to desire and to obtain the prayers of those who reign with God in glory? If mortal man, who on earth "falls seven times," can pray for, and help his fellow-creature, how much more the soul that, in the Beatific Vision, sees God "face to face." If the soul of man, confined within the prison of the body, fettered and chained down by the corrupt frailties of human nature; and, moreover, sullied in the sight of God by so many lesser stains and sins, which no man during this life can avoid, yet can nevertheless pray for and help the

sinful, is it not just and reasonable to believe that that soul when released from the prison of the body, freed from all human frailty, clothed with immortality, illumined by the glory of Paradise, absorbed, so to speak, in the infinite ocean of God's sanctity and loveliness, and thus become pure and holier in the eyes of God, has far more power to help those she prays for on earth?

But Protestants will say, that to ask the prayers of the Saints is injurious to the merits of Christ as our *sole* Mediator. Now, they must admit that it is lawful to ask the prayers of the living; and if the prayers of the Servants of God on earth detract not from the merits of the Redeemer, how can the Intercession of the Saints in heaven be injurious to Christ as our sole Mediator? Did St. John sin against the merits of Christ when he prayed for "grace" and "peace" "from the seven spirits" that stand before the throne of God? Did St. Paul detract from the merits of Christ when he so often asked the prayers of his brethren? On the contrary, it redounds to the merits of Christ; for the prayers of the Saints derive all their efficacy from the merits of Jesus Christ alone, as our *sole* Mediator.

Protestants yet reply, and say, the Angels

and Saints cannot and do not know what is passing on earth, and have no concern with the affairs of men.

It requires no very heavy artillery to storm this last fortress. Our Blessed Saviour tells us, "there shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (Luke, xv. 10). Now, penance or conversion is an interior act of the soul; how could the Angels rejoice at the conversion of sinners unless they knew what passes in the hearts of men? St. John says, "Another Angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense that he should offer up the prayers of all the Saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God" (Apoc. viii. 3). Prayer is an act of the soul; how could the Angel "offer up the prayers of all the Saints," if he did not know them? Hence it is clear that the Angels know what passes in the souls of men.

We shall cite only one text more out of the many. The rich glutton in hell said to Abraham, "Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brethren. That he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And

Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them" (Luke, xvi. 27).

From this it is clear that Abraham, though dead several hundred years, knew all about Moses, the Prophets, their writings; and hence all that was passing on earth. Therefore, from the inspired word of God, we must conclude that the Saints and Angels take an interest in the affairs of men, and know our secret thoughts and acts.

'Angels, Archangels,' sings Holy Church, "Thrones and Dominations, Principalities and Powers, Virtues, Cherubim and Seraphim, Patriarchs and Prophets, holy Doctors of the law, Apostles, all ye Martyrs of Christ, holy Confessors, Virgins of the Lord, Anchorites, and all Saints, intercede for us" (Brev.).

SECTION V.

Tradition on the Invocation of Saints.

The Tradition of the Church, from the earliest ages, proves to demonstration the Catholic doctrine of the Invocation and Intercession of the Saints. We have before us such abundance of material, what the

French so happily call, *embarras de richesses*, that we regret that the object our little book, "Devotion to St. Joseph," compels us to confine ourselves to a few passages.

THE CATACOMBS OF ROME.

Every student of history knows that, in the first ages of Christianity, the bodies of the Saints and Martyrs were deposited in the Catacombs. The emblems and inscriptions on the walls of those venerable cemeteries, fresh to this day, attest the belief of those who cheerfully shed their blood for Jesus Christ. On the tomb of the martyr Sabbatius was found, in the year 1694, the following inscription:—

*"Sabbatius, sweet soul, pray and entreat for thy brethren and comrades."**

We read on another tomb:—

"Atticus, thy spirit is in bliss, pray for thy parents."†

On the tomb of Priscilla was found the following invocation:—

"Anatolinus made this monument to his well-deserving son, who lived seven years. May thy spirit rest well in God, and thou pray for thy sister."

* "Sabbati . Dulcis . Anima . Pete . Et . Roga . Pro . Fratres . Et . Sodales."

† "Attice . Spiritus . Tuus . In Bona . Ora . Pro . Parentibus." Perrone, c. iii. de Sanct. Invoc.

On another:—

“ Pray for us, because we know thou art in Christ.”

We shall give only one more inscription lately found in the Catacomb of St. Agnes:

*“ Young and innocent Dionysius, sleeps here with the Saints, remember us all in your holy prayers, especially the sculptor and the writer.”**

Now, no Protestants can deny or doubt that the faith was pure and undefiled in those early ages. Those early Christians received the faith from the Apostles themselves, or from their immediate successors. And what do we find? The Christians of that time, as we Catholics to-day, invoked the aid of the Saints of God in Paradise. They then carried their lives in their hands, and were prepared to meet, and did meet, death in its fiercest shape with courage and fortitude; yet they, who sealed their faith with their blood, loved Jesus not less because they loved His Saints; and did no injury to the merits of Christ, as sole Mediator, by invoking, as we Catholics do to-day, the

* *“ Dionysius infans innocens hic dormit cum sanctis recordamini autem etiam nostrum in sanctis vestrum orationibus et sculpentis et scribentis. Per-rone, c. iii., de Sanct. Invoc. Wiseman, Lect. XIII., p. 106.*

Intercession of the Saints who reign in eternal bliss.

The blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity; persecution, the wicked powers of earth and hell leagued together, could not destroy the Church built upon the rock. God was pleased with the fidelity of His people; liberty dawned upon the Church; the Christians issued from their hiding-places, and by voice and pen propagated and defended the Gospel of Redemption. Hence, in the writings of the earliest Fathers, we find passages that clearly prove the doctrine of the Catholic Church on the Invocation of Saints.

We shall quote only a few Fathers from the Greek and Latin Churches.

SECTION VI.

Early Greek Fathers on the Invocation of Saints.

Origen, who was born in the year 185, and died in the year 253, writes thus: "And of all the holy men who have quitted this life, retaining their charity towards those they have left behind, we may be allowed to say that they are anxious for their salvation, and that they assist them by their prayers and their mediation with God." On the La-

mentations he writes: "I will fall down on my knees, and not presuming, on account of my crimes, to present my prayers to God, *I will invoke all the Saints to my assistance.* O ye Saints of heaven, I beseech you, with sorrow, full of sighs and tears, to fall at the feet of the Lord of mercies for me, a miserable sinner." St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who wrote in the fourth century, says: "We must commemorate those who are gone before us—the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs—begging that, through their prayers, God would receive our supplication. We then pray for the holy fathers and bishops that are dead; and for all the faithful departed, believing that their souls receive very great relief by the prayers that are offered for them while this holy and tremendous victim lies upon the altar." This passage clearly proves the Catholic doctrine on Purgatory as well as on the Invocation of Saints.

Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the fourth century, and died in the year 338, writes: "May we be found worthy by the prayers and Intercession of the Saints."

St. Ephrem, the glory of the Syrian Church, in the fourth century, prays to the Saints thus: "I entreat you, holy Martyrs,

who have suffered so much for the Lord, that you would intercede for us with Him, that He bestow His grace on us." In another place the Saint prays: "We fly to thy patronage, Holy Mother of God; protect and guard us under the wings of thy mercy and kindness. Most merciful God, *through the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Angels and Saints*, show pity to thy creature."* These words, written more than 1,500 years ago, clearly prove that Christians then believed and prayed as we Catholics do to-day.

We might quote passages from St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, and other Fathers, &c., but we shall content ourselves with one more Greek Father, St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, who was the glory of the Church in the fourth century, and died in the year 379. St. Basil, in his panegyric on the forty martyrs, says: "These are they who, having taken possession of our country, stand as towers against the incursions of the enemy. Here is a ready aid to Christians. Often you have endeavoured, often you have toiled, to gain one intercessor. You have now forty,

* Perrone, cap. iii. De Sanct. Invoc. Wiseman' Lect. XIII., p. 109.

all emitting one common prayer. Whoever is oppressed by care has recourse to their aid, as he has that prospers: the first, to seek deliverance; the second, that his good fortune may continue. The pious mother is found praying for her children, and the wife for the return and health of her husband. O ye common guardians of the human race, co-operators in our prayers, most powerful messengers, stars of the world and flowers of churches, let us join our prayers with yours."

From the above passages it is as clear as the light of day, that in the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries, the Greek Fathers of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Syria, Cæsarea, and Constantinople, believed and prayed, as we Catholics do to-day in the nineteenth century. The faith of the Catholic Church is as immutable as God Himself, "yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

SECTION VII.

The early Latin Fathers on the Invocation of Saints.

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who flourished in the third century, and sealed his faith with his blood in the year 258, writes

“Let us be mindful of one another in our prayers; with one mind and with one heart, in this world and in the next, let us always pray, with mutual charity, relieving our sufferings and afflictions. And may the charity of him, who, by the Divine favour, shall first depart hence, still persevere before the Lord; may his prayer for our brethren and sisters not cease.” Therefore, according to St. Cyprian, after death, as in life, we are to pray for one another.

St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, who wrote in the fourth century, and died in the year 397, writes: “‘Peter and Andrew interceded for the widow’ (Luke, iv. 38). It were well if we could obtain so speedy an intercessor; but, surely, they who implored the Lord for their relative can do the same for us. You see that she who was a sinner was little fitting to pray for herself, or at least to obtain what she asked. Other intercessors to the Physician were, therefore, necessary. The Angels, who are appointed to be our guardians, must be invoked; and the Martyrs likewise, whose bodies seemed to be a pledge for their patronage. They who, in their blood, washed away every stain of sin, can implore forgiveness for us: they are our guides, and see our lives and

actions ; to them, therefore, we should not blush to have recourse."

We shall quote but one more Latin Father, the great St. Augustin, who was born at Tagastum, in Africa, in the year 354, one of the greatest lights and Doctors of the Church of God. "The Christian people," writes the Saint, "celebrate the memories of the martyrs with a religious solemnity, in order that they may learn to imitate them, and may be associated to their merits, and be aided by their prayers." In another place he writes: "It is a proof of kind regard towards the dead when their bodies are deposited near the monuments of Saints. But in what are they thus aided, unless in this, that recollecting the place where they lie, we be induced to recommend them to the patronage of those Saints for their prayers to God. Calling, therefore, to mind the grave of a departed friend, and the near monument of the venerable martyr, we naturally commend the soul to his prayers. And that the souls of those will be thereby benefited who so lived as to deserve it, there can be no doubt."*

We might cite passages from other Latin

* Perrone. De Sanct. Invocat. Wiseman, Lect. XIII. p. 113.

Fathers, but the above quotations clearly prove that St. Augustin preached the Invocation of Saints at Hippo, St. Cyprian at Carthage, and St. Ambrose at Milan, and that in the third and fourth centuries.

SECTION VIII.

The Irish Fathers on the Invocation of Saints.

A celebrated French writer, Count Montalembert, says, "The history of the Catholic Church of the seventh century belongs to Ireland." In the seventh, and we may add in the sixth and eighth centuries, Ireland was the light of the Church of God. Not only did faith, piety, and the love of God flourish at home; not only did the hymn of praise from virgin lips, from hill and dale, ascend to heaven; not only was Erin the Island of Saints and the Island of scholars, at home, but abroad her apostolic Missionaries evangelized many countries in Europe; her scholars taught in the most famous schools on the Continent, and her martyrs fertilized with their blood the garden of the Church.

In the seventh century hordes of barbarians swept over Europe, not leaving behind them a vestige of religion, science, or civilization. Erin was then in peace and

happy ; her sons were engaged in prayer and study ; and whilst on the Continent the lamp of science hardly flickered in its socket, in Ireland, the sun, not only of science and learning, but also of religion, shone forth in all the brilliancy of its meridian splendour.

The day of bitter trial came. The foe, the stranger, the heretic, desolated the happy homes of Erin. The schools, with their priceless treasures of manuscripts, were reduced to ashes ; the monasteries, on hill and dale, from which prayer and sacrifice for man's salvation ascended, like sweet incense, before the Almighty, were razed to the ground ; and holy monks and priests were put to the sword or exiled to a foreign land. The ivy-mantled ruins, in countless numbers through the land, speak more eloquently than words of the past glories of our Church, and of the ruthless barbarities of the stranger and the heretic. Yet from amid this universal destruction of seats of learning, of famous monasteries, of libraries containing books and manuscripts, most precious and priceless, masterpieces of men of genius, of learning, and of world-wide fame, enough remains to attest the glories of our ancient Irish Church, and to make the Irishman glory in the faith of his fathers. Yes, there is a sacred bril-

liant halo round the ruins of our dear old land: they silently, but eloquently, tell of the glories of the past; they have transmitted from sire to son the traditions of the past; they are the unwritten books of history. No wonder, then, the Irishman, whether on his native hills or a forced or willing exile on the prairies of a foreign land, glories in St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, in St. Brigid, so beautifully styled the "Mary of Erin," in SS. Columbanus, Virgilius, Canice, Kieran, Ailby, Coleman, Finbar, Columba, Columbkill, and in the ten thousand other Saints of his dear Erin.

The learning and researches of modern writers, both at home and abroad, have brought to light what had been for centuries "sealed books." They have found and translated old manuscripts, priceless treasures of literature, which for ages were unknown and neglected in the libraries at home, and still more so, especially on the Continent. As might be expected, and to the great confusion of the heretics, these venerated relics of antiquity bear splendid testimony to the faith of our forefathers, and, with a golden chain, link in perfect harmony the faith and practices of the Church of the seventh and eighth centuries with those of the nineteenth.

In the old manuscripts are found many passages which prove to demonstration the doctrine of the Catholic Church on the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, the Primacy of St. Peter, Devotion to Our Blessed Lady, Mary the Mother of God, and on our present subject, the Invocation of Saints.

We have before us such abundance of material on the Invocation of Saints, that we find it difficult to select passages; and space also obliges us to compress, not to swell, our little volume beyond its intended bulk.

The Blessed Virgin is the "Queen of Angels," and the "Queen of All Saints." The first proof, which we shall produce from ancient Irish literature, is a famous Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which consists of fifty-nine Invocations of Our Blessed Lady. This Litany has been translated from the "Leabhar Breac," "the oldest and best manuscript," says Dr. Petrie, "relating to Church history, now preserved in Ireland, or which the Irish ever possessed."* Of this Litany Eugene O'Curry, the celebrated Irish scholar, says, "I believe it to be as old, at least, as the middle of the eighth century."†

* "History and Antiquity of Tara," &c., p. 74.

† "Lectures," p. 380.

THE ANCIENT IRISH LITANY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY.

" O great Mary,
 O Mary, the greatest of Marys,
 O greatest of women,
 O Queen of the Angels,
 O Mistress of the Heavens,
 O woman full and replete with the grace
 of the Holy Spirit,
 O Blessed and most Blessed,
 O Mother of Eternal Glory,
 O Mother of the Heavenly and Earthly
 Church,
 O Mother of Love and Indulgence,
 O Mother of the Golden Heights,
 O Honour of the Sky,
 O Sign of Tranquillity,
 O Gate of Heaven,
 O Golden Casket,
 O Couch of Love and Mercy,
 O Temple of the Divinity,
 O Beauty of Virgins,
 O Mistress of the Tribes,
 O Fountain of the Parterres,
 O Cleansing of Sins,
 O Washing of Souls,
 O Mother of the Orphans,
 O Breast of the Infants,
 O Solace of the Wretched,
 O Star of the Sea,

Pray for us.

- O Handmaid of God,
O Mother of Christ,
O Resort of the Lord,
O Graceful like the Dove,
O Serene like the Moon,
O Resplendent like the Sun,
O Destruction of Eve's Disgrace,
O Regeneration of Life,
O Beauty of Women,
O Chief of the Virgins,
O Enclosed Fountain,
O Mother of God,
O Perpetual Virgin,
O Prudent Virgin,
O Serene Virgin,
O Chaste Virgin,
O Temple of the Living God,
O Royal Throne of the Eternal King,
O Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit,
O Virgin of the Root of Jesse,
O Cedar of Mount Libanon,
O Cypress of Mount Sion,
O Crimson Rose of the Land of Jacob,
O Blooming like the Olive Tree,
O Glorious Son-bearer,
O Light of Nazareth,
O Glory of Jerusalem,
O Beauty of the World,
O Noblest-born of the Christian Flock,
O Queen of Life,

Pray for us.

“O Ladder of heaven, hear the petitions of the poor, spurn not the wounds and the groans of the miserable.

“Let our devotions and our sighs be carried through thee to the presence of the Creator; for we are not ourselves worthy of being heard, because of our evil deserts.

“O powerful Mistress of heaven and earth, dissolve our trespasses and our sins; destroy our wickedness and our corruptions; raise the fallen and debilitated, and the fettered; loose the condemned; repair through thyself the transgressions of our immoralities and our vices; bestow upon us through thyself the blossoms and the ornaments of good actions and virtues; appease for us the Judge by thy voice and thy supplications; allow us not to be carried off from thee among the spoils of our enemies; allow not our souls to be condemned, but take us to thyself for ever under thy protection.

“We beseech and pray thee further, O Holy Mary, through thy great supplication from thy only Son, that is Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, that God may defend us from all straits and temptations; and obtain for us from the God of Creation, that we may all obtain from Him the forgiveness and remission of all our sins and trespasses; and that

we may obtain from Him further, through thy supplications, the perpetual occupation of the heavenly kingdom, through the eternity of life, in the presence of the Saints, and the saintly virgins of the world, which may we deserve, may we occupy for all eternity. Amen."*

We have before us exquisite passages on the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Saints and Angels, from St. Cuchumneus, St. Columbanus, St. Colgu, St. Ængus, and the celebrated Irish poet, Sedulius, and many others; but the above Litany tells, with all the vividness of Celtic, let us add, of Oriental imagery, that the children of Erin of the eighth century invoked the intercession of Our Blessed Lady, as we her children of the nineteenth do to-day.

To insert the many passages on the Invocation of Saints, translated from the old Irish manuscripts, would, as we have already said, swell our volume beyond its intended dimensions; we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to one catalogue—the famous *Feliré*, or *Festology*, written by St. Ængus, Ceilé Dé, or Culdée; which, in the opinion of Ussher, O'Curry, Petrie, O'Donovan, and other

* Dr. Moran: "Essays," p. 224.

learned Irish scholars, dates back to the seventh century.

The Invocation of this precious Feliré is thus literally translated by Eugene O'Curry :—

“ Sanctify, O Christ, my words :—
 O Lord of the seven heavens !
 Grant me the gift of wisdom,
 O Sovereign of the bright sun,
 O bright sun, who dost illuminate
 The heavens with all Thy holiness ;
 O King, who governest the angels,
 O Lord of all the people,
 O Lord of the people,
 O King, all righteous and good,
 May I receive the full benefit
 Of praising Thy royal hosts.
 Thy royal hosts I praise ;
 Because Thou art my Sovereign.
 I have disposed my mind
 To be constantly beseeching Thee ;
 I beseech a favour of Thee,
 That I be purified from my sins,
 Through the peaceful, bright-shining
 flock,
 The royal host whom I celebrate.”

Our great Apostle, St. Patrick, is invoked

on the 17th of March in the following stanza :—

“ The blaze of a splendid sun,
The apostle of stainless Erinn,
Patrick, with his countless thousands,
May he shelter our wretchedness.”

On the 13th April, St. Tassach, who was favourite companion of St. Patrick, and a who attended the Apostle on his death-bed, is thus commemorated :—

“ Kingly Bishop Tassach,
Who administered on his arrival
The Body of Christ, the truly powerful
King,
And the Communion to St. Patrick.”

Of this famous Festology, written by the great Irish poet, St. Æengus, and containing the Invocation of several thousand Saints, O'Curry, who first translated it says :—“ I almost think no other country in Europe possesses a national document of so important a character.”*

St. Colgu, Professor of Classics in the famous school of Clonmacnoise, who died

* “ Lectures,” p. 370.

died in the year 789, thus invokes the four Evangelists :—

“ I beseech the intercession with Thee, O Holy Jesus, of Thy four Evangelists, who wrote Thy Gospel, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

In the famous Litany of St. *Ængus*, Ceilé Dé, or Culdée, composed, according to O'Curry, “about the year 798,” several thousand saints, and among them foreigners from every country, who lived and died in Erin, are invoked. This Litany begins thus :—

“ The three times fifty Roman pilgrims who settled in Ui Melé, I invoke unto my aid, through Jesus Christ.

“ The three thousand Father Confessors, who congregated in Munster to consider one question, under Bishop Ibar, I invoke unto my aid, through Jesus Christ.

“ The other thrice fifty pilgrims of the men of Rome and Latium, who went into Scotland, I invoke unto my aid, through Jesus Christ.”

St. *Ængus* invokes “the Prophets under Isaias, the Patriarchs under Abraham, the Apostles and Disciples under Peter, the wise and learned men under Paul, the Martyrs under Stephen, the Virgins of the world under

the Blessed Virgin Mary, the holy Bishops of Rome under Peter . . . the noble Saints of Erinn under St. Patrick, the saintly Virgins of Erinn under the holy St. Brigid of Kildare.

“The sacred bard continues these eloquent strains to beseech the mercy of the Saviour for himself and all mankind, through the merits and sufferings of the Saints whom he had named and enumerated, through the merits of their dismembered bodies, their bodies pierced with lances, their wounds, their groans, their blanched countenances, their bitter tears . . . He beseeches Jesus, through the intercession of His Mother, to save him, as Jacob was saved from the hands of his brother, as John (Paul) was saved from the venom of the viper.”*

In one part of this Litany, St. Ængus invokes no fewer than nine hundred and eighty-seven Irish Bishops.

“And thus does Ængus,” writes Eugene O’Curry, “go on to invoke groups of men and women, who came into Erinn from all parts of the world, and joined themselves to various religious persons and communities throughout the land, to benefit by their

* O’Curry, M., p. 369. Also Dr. Kelly *Dissertations on Irish History*, p. 217.

purity of morals and exalted piety ; as well as the countless groups of men, lay and ecclesiastical, who left Erin on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, under SS. Ailbhé, Brendan, &c. ; and others, who went out to plant and propagate their Christian knowledge and piety in remote and unfrequented countries, which had not yet been brought within the range of the Lord's vineyard, or in which the seeds of Christianity, formerly sown, had either run to extravagant wildness or totally failed " (Lect. p. 382).

We here barely mention another famous Catalogue of Irish Saints, first published by Ussher, and referred by all Irish scholars to the seventh century. In this well-known Catalogue no fewer than seven hundred and fifty Irish Saints are invoked.

We love to linger over the glories of our ancient Irish Church ; we feel a holy pride in the faith and fidelity of our sainted forefathers ; but as devotion, not controversy, is our aim, we have already been too diffuse in our quotations, hence reluctantly we omit many other splendid testimonies on the Invocation of Saints ; but the above passages prove to demonstration that our forefathers in the 8th, 7th, and 6th centuries, and back to the days of St Patrick, invoked the Saints

and Angels, and Mary their Queen, as we, their children, do to-day, in the nineteenth.

Erin had her GOLDEN AGE, the age of Saints and Scholars; but the day of trial came, and came with a vengeance. The foe, the stranger, and the heretic desolated the land; the quiet and happy homes of prayer and learning were razed to the ground, might conquered right, and nothing was left but ruins to record the glories of the past, and the histories of the dead. Under the heel of the stranger all was lost—property, country, life; faith alone, like the shamrock, indigenous to the soil, could not be rooted out. Nor was the storm a passing one; for centuries it raged and swept over the land with unabated fury. Day after day, as in Rome of old, under a Nero, or a Domitian, the tender virgin, the grey-haired father, the dauntless youth, the monk and friar, the priest and bishop, met death in its fiercest shape with equal courage and constancy. All the power, wealth, talent, and perfidious ingenuity of a mighty empire, were wielded to stamp out the faith of St. Patrick.

Before the throne of God knelt in supplication a mighty “army,” countless thousands of Irish Saints, with St. Patrick, their

Apostle, and St. Brigid, the "Mary of Erin," at their head, and at the head of all, Mary, our Mother, and the Mother of God, begging fidelity, constancy, and courage for the persecuted, exiled, imprisoned, and dying sons and daughters of Erin. The prayer of the "heavenly host" was heard; the faith, like the shamrock, indigenous to the soil, could not be rooted out; persecution only intensified her love for the faith of St. Patrick. Our dear holy Church of Erin has seen the snows of fifteen hundred winters; having passed through centuries of unparalleled trials and sufferings, she stands out to-day, in the Church of God, an impregnable citadel, with the banners of the Cross, and green flag- emblems of faith and fatherland proudly floating from her battlements; and her virgin brow, fair and lovely, without spot or wrinkle, wreathed with the laurels of ten thousand victories.

The Irishman at home or abroad will kneel and say:—*Infinite praise and thanksgiving from all creatures, and at every moment of their existence, for all eternity, be to God Almighty, to the most Adorable Trinity, and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; millions of praises and thanksgivings also be to Mary, our dear Mother, to St. Patrick, our glorious*

Apostle, to St. Brigid, "the Mary of Erin," and to the countless hosts of Irish Saints; that we to-day profess the same faith, which St. Patrick, nigh fifteen hundred years ago, preached to the kings at Tara; we profess the faith as pure and holy as it fell from the Divine lips of Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour.

Thus Tradition, from the earliest ages, proves our doctrine of the Invocation of Saints. The Christians in the Catacombs, carrying their lives in their hands, invoked the prayers and aid of the martyrs who shed their blood for Jesus.

The Ephrems, the Cyrils, the Chrysostoms, the Basils, &c., bear splendid testimony from the Greek Church; whilst the passages cited from the Cyprians, the Ambroses, the Augustins of the Latin Church are not less clear in proving the Catholic doctrine on the Invocation of Saints.

The Irish Fathers, in eloquent strains, bear convincing proof that the Saints of old, as well as the Saints of dear Erin, were as fervently and earnestly invoked on the banks of the Liffey and Lee, the Suir and Shannon, the Bann and Blackwater, as on the Seine, the Euphrates, the Bosphorus, the Tiber, or Jordan.

PIOUS REFLECTIONS.

My soul reflect on the unspeakable privileges and glories of being a child of the Catholic Church. Meditate on the bountiful providence of God in thy regard. To-day there are millions of pagans "who sit in darkness and the shades of death," who know not God, and who pay supreme homage to the lifeless creature, instead of to the great Creator; to-day there are millions who turn to Mecca, and pay homage to the false prophet Mahomet, and who never heard of the sweet name of Jesus; to-day the Jews, as of old, blaspheme the Redeemer, and look out for another Messiah; to-day there are millions of heretics who are outside the pale of salvation, and who imagine they honour God by insulting His Saints. My soul! That thou art not a Pagan, a Turk, a Mahometan, a Jew, or a heretic, thou hast to thank the Providence of God alone.

In the Catholic Church thou hast "the clean oblation," the adorable sacrifice of the Mass, daily offered to God on countless altars, and the grace of the Sacraments; in the Catholic Church thou hast faith as true and immutable as God Himself, "yesterday,

and to day and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

Besides these, and countless other spiritual favours and privileges in the Catholic Church, my soul, thou hast in heaven Mary for thy mother and advocate, and hosts of legions of Saints and Angels as thy friends and intercessors.

RESOLUTIONS.

My God, during my life, little have I appreciated the priceless privileges of being a Catholic, and few have been my acts of thanks to Divine Providence. God of mercy and compassion, pardon my past ingratitude. For the future I resolve, first, to thank God frequently, nay, daily, for the grace of being a member of the Holy Catholic Church; secondly, on all occasions I resolve to glory in, and defend, even at the cost of my life, the doctrine of the Church of God; lastly, I resolve to manifest before men the greatest respect and reverence for the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ; for bishops, priests, religious, churches, altars, ceremonies, and approved devotions. God Almighty help me, a poor sinner, to keep my resolutions.

PRAYERS.

Prayer of St. Ignatius.

Receive, O Lord, my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will. Take me and all I possess and am. Thou hast given them all; behold I restore all to Thee, to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace. These are sufficient for me; with them I shall be happy, and shall have no more to ask.

ASPIRATION OF ST. IGNATIUS.

“May the most just, the most high, and the most holy will of God be accomplished in all things. May it be adored, praised, and glorified by all creatures now and for ever. Amen.”

THE PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD TO THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

“Remember, O most glorious Virgin Mary, that it was never known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy aid, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother, to thee I come before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy clemency hear and answer me. Amen."

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH.

"Remember, most pure spouse of Mary, ever virgin, my loving Protector, Joseph, that never hath it been heard that anyone invoked thy protection, or asked aid of thee, who has not been consoled. In this confidence I come before thee. I fervently recommend myself to thee. Despise not my prayer, reputed Father of the Saviour of men, but do thou in thy pity receive it. Amen."

THE INVOCATION OF ALL THE BLESSED SPIRITS,
ANGELS AND SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

"Angels, Archangels, Thrones and Dominations, Principalities and Virtues, Cherubim and Seraphim, Patriarchs and Prophets, Holy Doctors of the law, Apostles, all the Martyrs of Christ, Holy Confessors, Virgins of the Lord, Anchorites; all saints intercede for us."—(Brev.)

CHAPTER III.

THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH.

The Genealogy, Birth-place, and Avocation or Trade of St. Joseph.

LITTLE is said in the Gospels about Our Blessed Lady; yet, that little is so pregnant with meaning, so significant, that bulky volumes have been written on her Life and virtues by learned and holy men. The one title—MOTHER OF GOD—is the foundation, width, height, and summit of this mighty edifice of dignity and sanctity. So it is, but in a far lesser degree, with St. Joseph. On his Life little is said in the Gospel, and not much by the early Fathers. The great duty of the early Fathers was to prove the Divinity of the Redeemer; for in these ages, not only the virtues, but the very countenances of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were, by tradition, familiar to the people; yet, the pregnant fact, that he was the “husband of Mary,” and the foster-father of Jesus, is the heavenly ray that lights up every page of the many large and edifying books written in his honour. That we may hasten on to explain practical Devotion in honour of our great

Patriarch, St. Joseph, we shall confine ourselves to reflections on the Gospel narrative.

SECTION I.

The Genealogy, or Family, of St. Joseph.

St. Joseph, though poor, was noble; the purest and best blood of Israel flowed in his veins. He was descended from the royal house and family of David. The Gospel says: "And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David" (Luke, i. 26).

The Genealogy of St. Joseph is given by two of the Evangelists, SS. Matthew and Luke. St. Matthew gives the natural Genealogy, and traces the descent of St. Joseph down from Abraham. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. i. 1-16).

St. Luke gives the legal Genealogy, and traces the line of St. Joseph up to Adam. "And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being (as it was sup-

posed) the Son of Joseph, who was of Heli, who was of Mathan, who was of Levi, . . . who was of Adam, who was of God" (Luke, iii. 23-38).

Here we see that St. Matthew calls St. Joseph the son of Jacob, and St. Luke styles him the son of Heli. Now, without entering into any long or apparently learned dissertation, we may briefly state, that most of the Fathers, with St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Justin Martyr, St. John Damascenus, Venerable Bede, &c., and the most learned Commentators, explain the discrepancy as follows: Jacob and Heli were half brothers, sons of the same mother, Hesta, who was wife, first of Mathan, the father of Jacob, and on his death or divorce married Matthat, the father of Heli. Heli died without heir; and by the Law of Moses, his brother Jacob was obliged to marry the widow. "When brethren dwell together," says the Law, "and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another; but his brother shall take her, and raise up seed for his brother. And the first son he shall have of her he shall call by his name, that his name may not be abolished out of Israel" (Deut. xxv. 5). St. Joseph, who was the real son of Jacob, according to

the above Law, was also styled the son of Heli, and hence was of the royal house and family of David. We may also here remark that learned Commentators teach, that St. Joseph was related to the Blessed Virgin in the second degree of consanguinity, or first cousins, and hence to our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, in the second and third degree, or first and second cousins. The learned Cornelius A. Lapide says: "It is most probable that at the time of Christ it was perfectly known that Mathan was the grandfather of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin; that Jacob, Joseph's father, and Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin were brothers" (Luke, iii. 27).

Thus, the Precious Blood of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was taken by the Holy Ghost from the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was noble and royal; yet it was not from the Blessed Virgin, but from the head of the family, according to the Law of Moses, "the husband of Mary," the legal, and before the eyes of the world, the putative father of Jesus, that our Blessed Lord had a right to the throne and kingdom of David.

If the Blessed Virgin gave, as she did, to the Incarnate Son of God the royal blood of the Tribe of Judah, and of the house of David,

St. Joseph alone transmitted to the Messiah the rights to the sceptre and throne of Israel. Here we see the important part St. Joseph had before the eyes of the Almighty in the scheme of Redemption, and the claims he had upon our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Redeemer of the world.

For the greater glory of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who were of the same blood, not only did St. Joseph belong to the famous Tribe of Judah, and to the royal house of David, King and Prophet, through Solomon, the wisest and greatest of monarchs, but he could count among his illustrious ancestors ten Judges, thirteen Patriarchs, and twenty-two Sovereigns.

SECTION II.

The Birthplace and Avocation or Trade of St. Joseph.

Whether St. Joseph was sanctified before his birth, like St. John the Baptist, and the Prophet Jeremias, we shall discuss when we come to speak of the sanctity of our Saint; here we have to treat only of the place of his birth.

Nations and cities glory, and justly pride

themselves in having given birth to heroes, men of renown, men famous in arts or arms. Singular enough, the birthplaces of the greatest men the world has ever seen, like Homer, the prince of poets, have to this day, and likely shall be for ever, a subject of dispute among the learned. So it is with, unspeakably the greatest and most holy of men, our great Patriarch St. Joseph. Two cities, Bethlehem and Nazareth, claim the honour and glory of having given birth to the foster-father of Jesus and "husband of Mary." The learned are divided in opinion. We shall not enter into the dispute, which has little to do with our subject, which is popular devotion to our great Saint. Suffice it to say that St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers, as well as modern critics, hold that not only was our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem, as we know from the Gospel, but that also it was the birthplace of Mary his holy Mother, and of St. Joseph his reputed father. The Saint thus writes: "Joseph and Mary, citizens of Bethlehem, leaving their *native place*, took up their abode at Nazareth, and there resided" (*Life of St. Joseph Vallejo*, p.48).

O glorious and holy Bethlehem! the home and rest of the wearied pilgrim; no wonder

that since the dawn of Christianity, countless millions, in every age and every clime throughout Christendom, would turn to thee, and with reverence salute thee, the birth-place of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

The Avocation or Trade of St. Joseph.

Of the trade of St. Joseph, all we know for certain from the Gospel is that he was son of an artisan. Speaking of our blessed Lord, St. Matthew says: "And coming into his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, so that they wondered, and said: How came this man by this wisdom and miracles. Is not this the carpenter's son (artisan's son)?" (xiii. 54). From the Latin words, *fabri filius*, all Commentators agree that St. Joseph was an artisan, or tradesman; but to what particular trade he belonged, they differ in opinion, and, as Maldonatus says: "It is a question of very little importance." Cardinal Hugo, with others, are of opinion that St. Joseph was a gold and silversmith. St. Isidore, from the word "faber" concludes that he worked in iron, or was a blacksmith. St. Ambrose assigns to our Saint the profession of an architect. Notwithstanding the above authorities, popular, constant, and universal tradition

assigns to our Saint the employment or trade of a carpenter. St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Thomas of Aquin, Suarez, are of opinion that St. Joseph and our Blessed Lord Himself worked together at the carpenters' trade.*

Nor was this employment unworthy of the noble and royal lineage of St. Joseph; for in days of primitive simplicity the Hebrew Patriarchs and kings worked at trades, nay, fed their flocks and herds. In the palmiest days of the Roman Empire, the greatest generals, in times of peace, used to cultivate with their own hands their gardens; and history tells us how often the voice of the nation called from the plough Dictators and Consuls to lead the Roman legions to victory.

After the primeval fall, labour, by the decree of God, is the lot of man. God said of Adam: "With labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. . . . In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. iii. 17). The Almighty has therefore given to the world an example in the person of St. Joseph, how the most exalted sanctity can be combined with toil and manual labour.

* A. Lapide in Matt. xiii. 55. Suarez, Tom. ii., Ques. xxix., Dis. viii.

No doubt, whilst his hands were employed in labour, St. Joseph's heart and soul were adoring, praising, and glorifying God.

O God! May we imitate the example of St. Joseph. May we do all things to please Thee alone. O God! Holy the hands that were privileged to work and to minister to the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary. O God, in imitation of St. Joseph, grant us the grace, that whilst our hands labour, our hearts and souls may be employed in praising, blessing, and glorifying God Almighty. Amen.

SECTION III.

The Espousals of St. Joseph with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

That the marriage of St. Joseph with the Blessed Virgin Mary was a true and valid one is proved from the Sacred Scriptures, and by the constant tradition of the Church. The Gospel of St. Matthew says, "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. . . . When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her hus-

band being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on those things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take with thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. . . . And Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife." (Matt. i. 16-24).

In the above passage St. Joseph is twice styled the "husband" of Mary, and Mary is also twice called the "wife" of St. Joseph.

The Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, lived at Nazareth; and in the eyes of men our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ was regarded as the son of Joseph and Mary, and is so styled in the Gospel. "And his parents," says St. Luke, "went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch And seeing him they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," (ii. 41-48). Again, in the next Chapter, the same Evangelist writes: "And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being (as it was supposed)

the son of Joseph" (iii. 23). We read the same in the Gospel of St. John. "The Jews therefore murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said: Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (vi. 42).

The earliest Fathers, such as St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, the constant Tradition of the Church in every age, confirm the same doctrine. Hence it is absolutely certain, and many learned theologians, with Suarez at their head, hold it to be *of faith*, that the marriage of St. Joseph with the Blessed Virgin Mary was a true and valid one.

The Blessed Virgin, when only three years of age, was presented in the Temple to God by her pious parents, SS Joachim and Anne; and there lived in silence and prayer, absorbed in holy contemplation, communing with her God. Eight years after her Presentation in the Temple, her pious parents were called to their reward, and the holy child was committed to the care and guardianship of the priests of the sanctuary. Having reached the age of fourteen, the Jewish maidens, according to the Hebrew rite, were obliged to leave the Temple; and hence the priests, who were the guardians of

the Blessed Virgin in the place of her deceased father, decided on Mary's future state of life.* When she attained the age of fourteen, according to the Law of Moses, an heiress was obliged to marry one of her own tribe and family, that the property and inheritance may be retained in the same family, and not pass to strange hands. "And all women," says the Law, "shall take husbands of the same tribe, that the inheritance may remain in the families (Num. xxxvi. 8). The Blessed Virgin being an heiress, conformed of course to the above Law, and the choice fell upon St. Joseph of the same house and tribe of David, her kinsman in the second degree of consanguinity or first cousin. The Bollandists tell us that the ring which St. Joseph presented to the Blessed Virgin at

* "Communis tamen probabilior sententia est Virginem fuisse nuptam paulo post inchoatum decimum quartum annum, undecim enim fere annis in templo mansit, et tunc tradita fuit Josepho, et post quatuor menses Angelicum nuncium habuit, agens vero decimum quintum annum filium peperit" (Suarez Tom. ii., Ques. xxix, Dis. vii., See. iii.) "It is the most probable and received opinion, that the Blessed Virgin, having spent eleven years in the temple, was married to St. Joseph on entering her fourteenth year; the Incarnation took place four months after her marriage; and hence in the fifteenth year of her age she gave birth to the Redeemer of the world."

her marriage, is to this day preserved and venerated in Perugia.

The following narrative of the espousals of the Blessed Virgin is translated from the learned and pious Suarez : "The priests held a consultation about the future state of the Blessed Virgin At last, by divine inspiration and instinct, they resolved to give her in marriage to some man worthy and proper to preserve her virginity; the choice fell upon Joseph of the same family and tribe. Thus write St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Damascenus, and other writers."*

The Blessed Virgin, long before her Espousals had made a vow of perpetual chastity, had consecrated to God the purity of her body and soul, and as she lived in the Temple it is most probable that the priests were aware of her vow, and hence by divine inspiration selected St. Joseph as the

* "Sacerdotes vero inisse concilium quid de sacro illo corpore statuerent, quia nec decebat nec usitatum erat, ut mulier jam adulta in templo versaretur, aliunde timebant alicui viro jus et potestatem in corpus illud facere. Tandem vero divina inspiratione et instinctu decrevisse eam tradere nomine dispensationis cuidam viro ad custodiendam ejus Virginitatem idoneo qualis Joseph ex eadem familia et tribu inventus existimatus est. Ita Gregorius Nyssenus, Damascenus et alii auctores " (Suarez Tom. ii., Pt. iii., Disp. vii).

guardian and protector of the Virgin's purity. The Blessed Virgin, assured and enlightened by a clear revelation from the Almighty, that her vow of chastity would be respected, obeyed the counsels of the priests, and consented to the holy alliance with St. Joseph.

This holy alliance had been celebrated on the 8th day of September,* that is, over six months before the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; St. Joseph is said, like his holy spouse, to have made a vow of perpetual chastity at the age of twelve years. We may here draw attention to a point, which further on we shall discuss at considerable length. This time the whole Jewish nation were alive looking out for the coming Messiah. The prophecies regarding the time of the Birth of the Redeemer were fulfilled. From the holy text it was well known to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and to the priests, that the Saviour of the world was to be born of a virgin of the house and family of David. Taking the above into account, and considering the unique virtues of the Blessed Virgin, her perpetual vow of Chastity, her singular marriage with St.

* In the Roman Missal the Feast is celebrated on the 23rd of January.

Joseph of eminent sanctity, it appears not unreasonable to believe, that from "Divine Revelation," as Suarez says, that the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the priests had, if not a clear, at least, a hazy knowledge that Mary was the virgin chosen by God to be the future Mother of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

A Servant of God writes thus on the Espousals of St. Joseph.

"Let us pause to express our joy on witnessing the fortunate destiny of the most happy of mortals—St. Joseph. Whence comes to thee, O man of God, so eminent a benediction, that among all the children of Adam, it can be said of thee alone that God has been so entirely thine, that He was taken for thy son? The eternal Father gives thee His daughter, the Son gives thee charge of His Mother, the Holy Ghost confides to thee His spouse, and places thee in His stead; and the Holy Trinity gives thee His elect, His only one, for thy lawful spouse. Great Saint, dost thou then comprehend all thy dignity? dost thou fathom all thy greatness? Dost thou know that she whom thou hast received as thy spouse is Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth. Behold, O man of God, the precious treasure thou hast,

and know that if thou dost not render the Angels and Seraphim envious, thy happiness, and the awful mystery of thy Espousals, excite their wondering admiration. For such joys and favours receive congratulations in the name of the whole human race. Be mindful of our poverty and wretchedness, and of me miserable worm of the earth, for I desire to be thy faithful servant, and to be enriched and favoured by thy powerful protection" (Venerable Mary of Jesus Agreda, *Cité Mystique de Dieu*).

SECTION IV.

The age of St. Joseph at his Espousals with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The age of our holy Patriarch, at the time of his holy Espousal with Mary Immaculate, is disputed among the early Fathers, as well as among modern critics. St. Epiphanius, with many others of his time, hold that St. Joseph at the time of his marriage was an octogenarian. "A man of over eighty took the Virgin, selected by Divine Providence to guard her."

This opinion is generally rejected, and its origin is ascribed to apocryphal books, as

well as to the fancy of painters, who in ancient times, to gain more veneration for our Saints, depicted St. Joseph as a venerable old Patriarch, with a long white flowing beard. The celebrated Gerson writes: "St. Joseph is sometimes painted as an old man on account of his chastity of mind and body, as the wise man says, a spotless life is old age; or he was painted an old man in the origin of the Church, when Mary's perpetual virginity had not as now become deeply rooted in the hearts of the faithful." (Serm. de Nat. B.V.M.)

In the physical, as well as in the moral and supernatural order, the Infinite Wisdom of God suits the means to the end. The high and noble destiny of St. Joseph was to be the guardian of the Blessed Virgin; to be her help and companion in the long and fatiguing journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, before the Birth of our Blessed Saviour; to be the support of Mary and the Divine Infant in the flight into Egypt; and more still, for years in Egypt a strange land, without a friend, as well as at home in Nazareth, to maintain by the labour of his hands the Mother and the Child. Such being the heavenly appointed mission of St. Joseph, we may well conclude that his age and

strength were suited to the duties of his mission, thus verifying the prophesy of Isaias, "A young man shall dwell with a virgin."

A man of eighty years could not well take care of, or support himself, much less discharge the above important and onerous duties. In one word we may say, that it is the received opinion, and this opinion is founded upon reason and authority, that St. Joseph at the time of his Espousals, if not in the prime of life, as some hold, was at least young, strong, and robust.

The learned Father Suarez thus concludes: "Joseph was not, as St. Epiphanius has said, of an advanced age when he married the Blessed Virgin, for four reasons, which are—1st, because it was proper that there should be in that marriage the relative proportion of age usually observed; 2nd, because it was also seeming that Joseph should be of an age suited for progeny, otherwise he would not save intact the name and honour of the Blessed Virgin; 3rd, because Joseph needed to be a robust man to undertake his journey into Egypt, and to support the family by the labour of his hands; 4th, because the Holy Scriptures, in a manner declare his manly age, since, in the first

Chapter of St. Luke, we read that the Blessed Virgin was espoused to a man, not an old man. Hence, Isaias speaking of the coming of Christ, says: "A young man shall dwell with a virgin," a prophesy applied by Lyra and the ordinary gloss to this mystery. It seems certain, then, that Joseph was not eighty years of age, and it is most probable that he was not old. Whether he was thirty or forty we cannot precisely say, nor can we affirm whether he was young, or in the prime of life, as historians do not tell us."*

The venerable Maria of Jesus of Agreda thus describes the above event: "St Joseph was then thirty-three years of age, well-made, and possessed of an agreeable countenance, which expressed an incomparable modesty. He was, indeed, as chaste in his thoughts and deeds as in his inclinations; and having made a vow of chastity when but twelve years of age, his life was pure and holy before God and man" (*Cité Mystique de Dieu*).

* "Primo quia decuit, ut in matrimonio illo servaretur ea proportio inter virum et uxorem, quo communi usu et consuetudine servari solet. Certum ergo videtur, Joseph non fuisse octogenarium; qua vero ætate fuerit, juvenis ne an vir, Tringenta quadraginta annorum definiri non potest cum ex historiis nihil habeamus" (Suarez Tom. ii., Pt. iii., Dis. v. iii).

SECTION V.

St. Joseph accompanies the Blessed Virgin in her visit to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, from Nazareth to Hebron, and from Hebron back to Nazareth.

From the Gospel narrative it is clear that the Incarnation of the Eternal Word took place, not in the Temple, but in the Holy House at Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph lived after their Espousals. "And in the sixth month," writes the Evangelist, "the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke, i. 26). How soon after the Espousals did the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord take place we know not for certain, as the Gospel and ancient writers are silent. According to Venerable Maria of Jesus of Agreda, the Espousals, as we have already said, took place on the 8th of September, that is, six months and seventeen days before the Incarnation, and when the Blessed Virgin was fourteen years, six months, and seventeen days of age, and her holy spouse St. Joseph thirty-three (*Cité Mystique de Dieu*). As we have already said, Suarez holds that the In-

carnation took place four months after the Espousals. Immediately after the Conception the Blessed Virgin left Nazareth to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth. "And Mary," continues the Evangelist, "rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judah. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth" (Luke, i. 39).

The distance from Nazareth to Hebron, where St. Elizabeth lived, was about 100 miles, and the road rough, lonely, and in some parts desert; as St. Joseph was the heavenly-appointed guardian of the Blessed Virgin, nothing is more reasonable and becoming than to believe that he accompanied his holy spouse in this journey of at least six days, though the Gospel is silent on the matter. Father Suarez says: "Immediately after the Incarnation, and perhaps on the same day, as St. Luke the Evangelist hints, the Blessed Virgin, accompanied by St. Joseph, as was most fit and becoming in the opinion of all, set out for the hill country."* "St. Joseph prepared provisions for the journey—some bread, fruit, and a few small fishes, which he purchased. He had also a beast of burden, which was lent him to carry his

* Tom. ii., Part iii, Dis. xiii, in princ.

provisions, and his Spouse, the Queen of all creation " (*Cité Mystique de Dieu*).

We can well imagine the devout conversation, the communing with God, of these two holy souls during the journey from Nazareth to Hebron. Many ancient writers are of opinion that the Blessed Virgin, during the journey, unfolded to her chaste spouse the whole mysteries of the Incarnation which had just taken place, and of which he had a hazy knowledge at their marriage " Mary," writes the celebrated Gerson, "knew this mystery of the Incarnation hidden for ages. Joseph knew it too admonished in dreams, and, as I think, previously familiarly made aware of it by Mary."

That St. Joseph stayed in the house of Zachary during the Blessed Virgin's visit to her cousin there can be little doubt ; and then accompanied and protected our Blessed Lady back on her journey to Nazareth. "And Mary abode with her about three months ; and she returned to her own house " (Luke, i. 56).

"Trombelli," writes a devoted client of St. Joseph, "believes that St. Joseph remained for three months at the house of Zachary ; because the holy Patriarch was not so poor that he could not leave his village for a time, more especially as he must have stayed

at the house of Zachary, a priest equally rich and noble, and in a kingdom where liberality and munificence were proverbial" (Vallejo, p. 104).

SECTION VI.

St. Joseph perceives the great Mystery of the Incarnation, through reverence resolves to leave privately the Blessed Virgin, but never for an instant doubts her fidelity.

We shall give the Gospel narrative — "Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Behold a virgin shall

be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us. And Joseph, rising from sleep, did as the angel commanded, and took unto him his wife” (Matt. i. 18-24).

We confess that the above narrative, at first sight, conveys to the mind the impression that St. Joseph doubted the fidelity of his holy spouse and that seeing her pregnant he was thinking of putting her away privately, that she might not be stoned to death, which was the usual punishment for an adulteress among the Jews. Let us also here candidly state that the great St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and many other Fathers, as well as learned Commentators, are cited in favour of the above opinion. Hence, it is clear that every body is free to adopt and believe, if he so chooses, this interpretation.

After careful study, we ourselves hold, and fully believe the opinion, which we hope to prove to be at least reasonable, and not inadmissible, that St. Joseph never for a moment doubted the fidelity of Mary the Immaculate Mother of God. This opinion, we are convinced, is borne out by the sacred texts, by the unique events connected with

the lives of Mary and Joseph, and by the authority of many Fathers and learned critics.

As we have already said, the opinion is a free one, and to some it may appear new and strange ; yet when we find it based upon solid arguments intrinsic and extrinsic, we cheerfully adopt it, because we think it redounds to the greater honour and glory of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

In the first place we can easily believe that St. Joseph, who was of the royal house and family of David, from which the Messiah was to spring, knew well from the Prophets and from the history and traditions of his nation, that the Redeemer of the human race was to be born of a virgin ; and that the time announced by the Prophets was at hand. The whole Jewish nation was at this time anxiously looking out for the birth of the long-expected Saviour. Secondly, the extraordinary circumstances regarding his marriage with the Blessed Virgin, the secret inspirations and revelations doubtless communicated to himself, to Mary, and to the priests, regarding this mysterious union, must have, at least, dimly foreshadowed to him the dignity of his bride, that she was the Virgin whom the Prophets foretold, would conceive and bring forth a Son. And

lastly, it is reasonable to think and believe that Mary herself after the Incarnation, and especially during the journey to Hebron and back, gave St. Joseph at least some intimation that the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among men."

But it may be asked, if St. Joseph did not doubt the fidelity of our Blessed Lady, how explain the text which tells us that he was thinking of putting her away privately, and that God even sent down an Angel from heaven to dissuade him from his purpose? The text is well explained as follows, and the reply appears satisfactory, if not convincing.

Take first the case of the Apostles. They had been in the sacred company of Jesus, so to speak, for years; they had seen with their eyes the stupendous miracles wrought by the Saviour of the world; they had heard Divine Wisdom issuing from the sacred lips, as well as divine intelligence beaming in sacred eyes. At the Crucifixion they saw the sun darkened, they heard the earth quake, and saw the dead rise from their graves. Yet during the Life of our Blessed Saviour, at His Death, and after His Resurrection, they were ever hesitating, wavering in faith, and needed the coming of the Holy Ghost:

to believe fully and to realise the magnitude of the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Death of the Redeemer of the world. In like manner, though St. Joseph had learned and knew much about the coming of the long-expected Messiah from the Prophets and traditions of his nation, from the unique circumstances attending his Espousal with the Virgin-daughter of Sion, as well as from Mary herself; yet it was only when he saw with his eyes the great fact of the Incarnation, that his mind fully realised the stupendous Mystery, and awe-stricken, so to speak, by the presence of the majesty of God, he deemed himself unfit to live in such close intimacy with Jesus and Mary; and hence he was meditating on the private separation mentioned in the Gospel narrative. The Centurion said: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof;" and St. Peter cried out: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." In the same spirit St. Joseph recognised the infinite sanctity of God Incarnate and the unspeakable sacredness of the Virgin-Mother, and hence his humility required, and received from God the command of an Angel to live and breathe in the presence of Jesus his God and Mary the Mother of God.

We shall briefly quote the testimonies of

a few of the many Fathers in favour of our opinion—an opinion which, we believe, redounds to the honour and glory of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. For who could entertain the very shadow of a thought that anyone, and last of all, the sanctified and heavenly-appointed St. Joseph, could ever doubt the fidelity of the Immaculate Mother of the Incarnate Son of God. A learned Commentator says: “That Joseph was convinced that it was more possible for Mary to conceive without man’s concurrence than for her to commit sin.”*

St. Jerome puts the following words into the mouth of St. Joseph: “What am I thinking of that I do not withdraw from her who is now the Mother of God? To leave so loved a treasure is painful and afflicting; but as I am unworthy to be in her society, and incapable of serving her according to her dignity, I will withdraw from her without her knowing that I leave her. If I absent myself publicly, giving men my reasons for the step, this miracle of sanctity will be made infamous; for as they are an unbelieving race, instead of adoring the fulfilment and truth of the sacred prophecies,

* Author of the Imperfect Work on St. Matthew, i. 18.

they will ridicule my credulity, and insult her honour."

"Such," declares St. Bernard, "is the opinion of the Holy Fathers. Why did Joseph wish to leave her? Hearken not to my opinion, but to that of the Holy Fathers. Joseph wished to depart from her for the same reason that Peter kept off our Lord from him, saying: 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinner;' for the same reason that the Centurion kept Him from his house, when he said: 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.' But why privately, and not publicly? Lest the cause of the divorce should be asked. For what answer would that just man make to that stiff-necked people? If he should say what he knew to be true, that he had every proof of her purity, would not the incredulous Jews ridicule him and stone her?'"*

The Blessed Virgin, in her revelations to St. Bridget, says: "Joseph seeing my form expand, through the power of the Holy Ghost, was filled with astonishment and admiration; not entertaining any undue suspicion of me, but remembering the words of the Prophets, foretelling that the Son of God should be born of a virgin, he thought

*"Accipe et in hoc non meam sed Patrum sententiam," etc. Hom. ii. super Missus est, num. 14

himself unworthy to serve such a mother, until the Angel in a dream bade him not to fear, but minister to me in charity.”*

The learned Gerson holds the same opinion. “When,” he writes, “St. Joseph saw his spouse with child, he became thoughtful and wished to leave her; he was not troubled, but the very greatness of the mystery which he now saw with his eyes surprised him, but without any idea of infidelity on the part of the Immaculate Virgin. It seemed to Joseph a wonder worthy of the greatest admiration, that new spectacle thus about to verify the prophecies which announced the Redeemer; he saw that the Son of God, conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, visibly grew in the most pure womb of his spouse, and this seemed to him new and wondrous. The agitation was no suspicion of infidelity, it was a kind of overpowering awe; and as Mary and Joseph equally shared that fear or doubt, which went no further than awe, the angel did not reprove them as faithless or incredulous; nor did the Lord chastise them, as He did Zachary, when the priest asked the envoy of God for a proof of the fruitfulness of St. Elizabeth which he announced; he only told them by

* Revel. Lil. vii. c 52.

the voice of the Archangel not to fear. 'Fear not Mary! Joseph, son of David, fear not.' . . . I cannot believe that the Blessed Virgin would have concealed from her holy spouse the apparition of the Angel, and the object of his coming. If I must express my opinion, I will affirm that I cannot doubt, that the Blessed Virgin, before leaving Nazareth for the hill country to visit St. Elizabeth, informed St. Joseph, that she had already given her consent that, without detriment to her virginity which she had vowed to God, the Eternal Word would take flesh in her womb; and that she had already conceived Him in her womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost. If this is well examined, it seems more probable that Joseph was informed of this mystery before Elizabeth; as well by the confidence due to him on account of his marriage, as for his eminent virtue, which raised him above all the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and all the Saints. If St. Elizabeth was favoured with a knowledge of this mystery, that she might understand, that she had in her house the Mother of her Lord; with far greater reason should St. Joseph be enlightened, for he was the spouse, companion, and guardian of the Blessed Virgin, and the reputed father of the Man God. At the words of the Blessed Virgin's

salutation the Divine Spirit declared to St. Elizabeth the happy mystery which had taken place at Nazareth; and shall we believe that that Spirit would conceal what It had operated on his spouse from Joseph, a man enlightened, and chosen for the execution of the Divine Decrees, and as St. Bernard says: 'filled with a most lofty spirit, to penetrate and share in the most sublime mysteries.' **

Any comment upon the above would only weaken the solid and convincing reasoning of the learned author.

An eloquent Italian author writes thus: "Few are the authors who say that St. Joseph doubted the Blessed Virgin, and wished to leave her in consequence. God forgive me for thinking so great a Saint guilty of such a fault. The Doctors commonly affirm that St Joseph had no doubt or suspicion however slight; but he was filled with confusion and wonder, because it had not yet been revealed to him how his spouse was to conceive in her womb the only Begotten of the Father. Beholding then with his eyes that fulfilled which he had not wholly understood; full of confusion at the thought of his own unworthiness to be in

*See "Life of St. Joseph," Vallejo, p. 129.

the company of a being, served by the highest monarchs, he resolved in his humble breast to leave her, but with such prudence that her honour should not be exposed to the words of the people." (Sinicalchi).

A devout Client of St. Joseph thus writes: "Well versed in the oracles of Isaias, and the traditions of his nation, Joseph, like the mass of the Jews, expected that the promised Messias would be born of a virgin of the tribe of Judah, and descendant of David; but before the Angel had revealed the mystery to him in dreams, it did not appear to him by any authentic and solemn testimony of Heaven, that his illustrious Spouse was the virgin to conceive, and to give to the world the glorious Liberator. At most he might know it privately from the lips of his Spouse; or it might be suggested by reflections convincing him that the time of the mercies of the Lord was already accomplished; so his Espousals with a daughter of Judah, and descendant of David, consecrated by a vow of perpetual virginity, were as the first dawning above the horizon of the long-expected day of the Jews, certain signs that the coming of the Saviour was at hand. The ancient prophecy of Jacob, wherein he announced to his son the head of the tribe of

Judah, the birth of the Expectation of the Gentiles, now seemed vividly verified; for the sceptre of Judah was now broken, and natives deprived of all public authority. Herod of Ascalon, surnamed the Great, was King of the Jews. He was an Idumean on his father's side, an Arab in his manners, a foreigner, too, on his mother's side, a usurper of the crown of Judea by the protection and overwhelming influence of the Romans. This stripping Judah of the power and sceptre; this wresting of both from the famous Tribe, and from the royal line of David, were the signs of the coming of the Messias; and by them, joined to the circumstances of the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin, every one must feel that Joseph had ground to augur the lot of his Spouse, and deem her selection probable (Vallejo," p. 122).

We might cite other authorities; but from the arguments and quotations already produced, we believe that the opinion is at least probable, and can be safely held and believed that St. Joseph, at the time of his Espousal, learned by "divine inspiration" that Mary his chaste spouse was destined to be the future Mother of the Redeemer. Secondly, that the Blessed Virgin herself, at the time of the Incarnation, or very soon

after, confided to St. Joseph the secret of the great Mystery. Thirdly, that God sent His Angel from heaven, not to remove any doubt or suspicion about the fidelity of the Immaculate Mother of God; but to confirm, by *authentic* and *divine* testimony, what St. Joseph had already privately known, that the WORD WAS MADE FLESH; also to stay with Mary as her guardian and protector; and finally, as reputed father, to give the name Jesus to the newly born Redeemer. "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins" (Math. i. 20).

SECTION VII.

St Joseph, and the Journey of the Blessed Virgin from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

We shall give the Gospel narrative: "And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus; that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the Governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one in his own city. And

Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the City of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David. To be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife who was with child" (Luke, ii. i-5).

St. Joseph having got from God's Angel the *authentic*, solemn, and divine testimony, that Mary had conceived of the Holy Ghost, and was the Mother of God, changed his resolution of leaving her, and watched over her and ministered to her with the greatest reverence and affection. The prophets not only foretold the coming of the Redeemer, but pointed out the very place of his birth. "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata," said Micheas, "art a little one among the thousands of Judah; out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler of Israel" (v. 2.) God, by His over-ruling Providence, fulfilled the above prophecy. At this time the Emperor Cæsar Augustus had raised the Roman Empire to the zenith of its glory; and to ascertain the strength and wealth of his realm, ordered a census to be taken of all his subjects, and hence issued a decree that all persons should be registered in their own provinces and cities.

Up to this time the Blessed Virgin and

St. Joseph lived at Nazareth ; but being of the royal house and family of David, they were ordered to be registered in Bethlehem, which was called the City of David. This long journey, of about eighty miles, over a mountainous country, was travelled, it is believed, by Mary and Joseph in about five days. We can well imagine with what tender care, reverence, and love, St. Joseph ministered to the Mother of Jesus during this long and fatiguing journey. The shades of evening were falling thick and fast on Bethlehem, enveloping the little village in its sombre mantle, when the holy travellers, Mary and Joseph arrived at their destination: needless to say that the holy Virgin was fatigued and exhausted, yet resigned and joyous. For centuries past the Patriarchs and Prophets had been supplicating heaven, with sighs and tears, for the coming of the Messias. "Send forth, O Lord," they cried, "the lamb, the Ruler of the earth" (Isai. xvi.1.) "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down, the mountains would melt away at thy presence" (Isai. lxiv.1.) Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour: and let justice spring up together (xlv. 8.)

Not less fervent was the prayer of the Royal Psalmist: "Lord, bow down the heavens and descend" (Ps. cxliii. 5). "O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy servants? How long wilt thou feed us with the bread of tears, and give us for our drink tears in measure? O God of Hosts, convert us; and show thy face, and we shall be saved. Stir up thy might and come to save us." (lxxix.) "Now, therefore, O Lord," cries out another Prophet, "hear the supplication of thy servant and his prayers; and show thy face upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate, for thy own sake. Incline, O my God, thy ear and hear; open Thy eyes and see our desolation, and the city upon which thy name is called. . . . O Lord, hear, O Lord, be appeased; hearken and do; delay not for Thy own sake, O my God, for thy name is marked upon the city, and upon thy people" (ix. 16-19). The Prophet Jeremias prayed thus: "Remember, O Lord what is come upon us: consider and behold our reproach. . . . We are become orphans without a father: our mothers are as widows. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. . . . The joy of our heart is ceased; our dancing is turned into mourn-

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ing. The crown is fallen from our head : woe to us, because we have sinned. Therefore is our heart sorrowful ; therefore are our eyes become dim . . . But Thou, O Lord, shalt remain for ever, Thy throne is from generation to generation. Why wilt Thou forget us for ever ? why wilt Thou forsake us for a long time ? ” (Lam. v. 1-20.)

The prayers are heard ; the Word is made Flesh ; the Messiah has descended ; and is come to be born, as the Prophets foretold, in the City of David. One might expect that not only the Bethlehemites, but all the people of Judea, would be ranked in solemn procession to welcome and salute the Mother of their Redeemer. One might expect that a gorgeous palace, decorated with all that genius could design, and wealth enrich, would be placed at the disposal of Mary, for the birth of the “Just One,” “the desired of the eternal hills,” the long-expected Messiah. But far from it. “He was in the world, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John i. 10). At Bethlehem nobody recognised Mary or Joseph. No inn or lodging-house would open its door to shelter Mary from the winter’s blast. Not even one kind hand was found to offer

the smallest refreshment to the holy travellers worn out from the fatigues of the long journey. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay his head" (Luke, ix. 58). After passing from inn to inn, and door to door; after repeated refusals, quite wearied out and exhausted from the fatigues of the long journey, Mary and Joseph, in calm, serene, and joyous resignation to God's Divine will, left the inhospitable city; and retired into a cave in a rock to seek shelter from the winter's blast, and to seek repose for their wearied limbs. In this cave or stable, which served to shelter the brute creation, the ass and the ox, the Eternal Son of God, the long-expected Messiah, the Redeemer of the world was born!

In these trying circumstances, in these privations on whom did Mary lean for help? On St. Joseph. Who liberally supplied all her wants? St. Joseph. Whose hands prepared the royal cradle of state, the rude manger, for the birth of the Redeemer? St. Joseph's. Who, first after Mary, with reverential love, looked into the Divine countenance of the Saviour of the world, and adored Him? St. Joseph. Here in the crib at Bethlehem, the glories and privileges

of St. Joseph expand before the soul! Not only does the Mother of God look to him for every help and comfort, but the Son of God Himself, to Whom thousands of thousands minister, and to Whom ten thousand times a hundred thousand pay homage, needs and accepts the services of St. Joseph.

SECTION VIII.

St. Joseph and the Nativity of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The next fact in the life of St. Joseph, according to the Gospel narrative, is connected with the Nativity of Our Blessed Saviour:

“And it came to pass,” says the Gospel, “that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping night-watches over their flocks. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a

great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger" (Luke, xi, 6-16).

Oh, thrice happy the lot of St. Joseph! The poverty and humiliations of the King of heaven in the manger only intensified his faith and love in the Incarnate Son of God. The shepherds heard the Angels, "the heavenly army," praising God. For of these heavenly spirits, "thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him"

(Dan. vii. 10). Yet of all mankind then living only two were chosen by God to welcome, thank, adore, and love the long-expected **Messias!** Who were the favourites of heaven? Who were those thus chosen by heaven? **Mary and Joseph.** The shepherds "found **Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger.**" We join **Mary and Joseph;** and with them, we welcome, adore, thank, and love the **Divine Infant Jesus,** our **Blessed Saviour.**

SECTION IX.

St. Joseph and the Circumcision. By God's command St. Joseph calls the Divine Infant Jesus.

By God's order every male descendant of Abraham was to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth: first, to distinguish the people of God from all the nations of the earth; and, secondly, as a covenant between God and His chosen people. "God said to Abraham: And thou shalt therefore keep my covenant, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which you shall observe between me and you, and thy seed after thee. All the male

kind of you shall be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin that it may be a sign of the covenant between me and you. An infant eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations. . . . And my covenant shall be in your flesh for a perpetual covenant" (Gen. xvii. 9-13).

We have the authority of St. Ephrem for stating that this painful operation was performed by the hands of St. Joseph. But on this fact the Gospel is silent.

According to the Hebrew custom, each child received from his parents his name on the day of circumcision; thus on that day our Divine Redeemer received the holy and sweet name of Jesus. In calling the Saviour of the world by the adorable name of Jesus, Mary and Joseph had no choice; they were but obeying the orders of the Almighty God's ambassador; the Archangel Gabriel had said to the Blessed Virgin: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke, i. 30). Of St. Joseph the Gospel says, "Behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived

in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 20).

The name Jesus signifies Saviour; and is the most holy, the most sacred, and the sweetest name that can be pronounced by the tongues of men or Angels. "God," says St. Paul, "hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9). The holy name of Jesus is all-powerful. "In my name," says Jesus to His disciples, "they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark, xvi. 17). St. Peter said to the man lame from his mother's womb: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk. . . . And he leaping up stood, and walked, and went in with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God" (Acts, iii. 6). The same St. Peter

said to the Jews: "Neither is salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts, iv. 12). "The name of Jesus," says St. Bernard, "is honey in my mouth, music in my ear, joy and jubilation in my heart." O happy St. Joseph, who was chosen by God to confer the all-holy, and the all-powerful name of Jesus upon the Redeemer of the world.

SECTION X.

St. Joseph and the Flight into Egypt.

As we have seen in a preceding section, St. Joseph was chosen by the Almighty to help and protect the Blessed Virgin in the long fatiguing journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem; and to supply the wants of Jesus and Mary at the Nativity. Far higher, holier, and more important now is the mission of St. Joseph. He is chosen by God to save the life of the Infant Saviour. This is the next fact narrated in the Gospel in the Life of our great Saint. "When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For

we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him. And King Herod hearing this was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet. And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod privately calling the wise men learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them. And sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go and diligently inquire after the child, and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him. Who having heard the king, went their way, and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house they found the child with Mary, his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer

in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country. And after they were departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying : Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt ; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy Him. Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt : and he was there until the death of Herod. That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying : Out of Egypt have I called my Son. Then Herod perceiving that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceeding angry ; and sending killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying : A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning. Rachel bewailing her children, and they would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying : Arise,

and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child. Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophet: that He shall be called a Nazarite." (Matt, xi).

The first converts to Christianity were the shepherds; promptly they obeyed the voice of God's Angel announcing to them "tidings of great joy;" they went "with haste" to Bethlehem, and adored "the Infant lying in the manger." The next converts were "the wise men from the East." It is not our intention, nor is it within our scope, as St. Joseph alone is our theme, to dilate on their willing sacrifice to leave family, home, and country, to obey the call of God; their courage in seeking for the New-born Saviour in the city, nay, at the gates of the palace of the jealous and cruel tyrant Herod; their faith and confidence in God, when the star disappeared; their rich presents of "gold, frankincense, and myrrh;" and not shocked

at the humility and poverty of "the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger;" but with firm faith and transports of joy "falling down," says the Gospel, "they adored Him."

Though the Gospel is silent on the matter, yet, with St. John Chrysostom, and other Fathers, we have no doubt but St. Joseph was present on this occasion, and was edified and consoled by the faith and piety of the Wise Men of the East.

Herod, deluded by the Wise Men, and fearing that the new-born King would be a rival for his throne, ordered his soldiers to murder all the male children of two years of age and under, in and around Bethlehem, thus making sure of the death of the new-born King. Quickly and cruelly the work of death was done; the shrieks of the mothers, whose babes were butchered in their arms, rent the air, and copious were the streams of tears round Bethlehem, "Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted because they are not." The cruel tyrant has done his work, and now feels satisfied that there exists no rival to his throne.

How vain and foolish for man to think to frustrate the designs of the Almighty! "The

kings of the earth stood up," says the sacred text, "and the princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ . . . He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them" (Ps. ii. 1). So it was with the Almighty, and King Herod. Whom did God make use of to save the life of the new-born Babe? St. Joseph. To whom did God send His heavenly messenger? To St. Joseph. "An Angel of the Lord," says the Gospel, "appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy him. Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod" (Matt. ii. 14). Jesus as God could protect Himself, and by His very breath wither His foes. His heavenly Father might have sent His Angel to slay the tyrant and his armed host, or to protect the Divine Babe with his outstretched wings; but no. Angels and heavenly Spirits were passed over. The adorable Trinity fixed upon our Saint for the holy work. O thrice happy Joseph! selected by the Almighty to be the instrument of saving the life of the Saviour of the world.

Prompt and quick was the obedience of St. Joseph; reverentially and lovingly did Mary fold the Divine Infant in her warmest mantle, press Him to her chaste bosom; and the Holy Family set out on their journey. St. Joseph's assiduous care lightened the fatigues of the way. "The holy Virgin and St. Joseph asked a benediction of the Divine Infant, which He gave in a manner not to be mistaken. Then gathering their humble garments, they departed without further delay, a little after midnight; making use of the same beast of burden, which they had brought from Nazareth to Bethlehem" (*Cité Mystique*). O happy the hands privileged to minister to the wants of Jesus and Mary!

The length of the journey from Bethlehem to Heliopolis is computed at four hundred miles. Of this distance only some sixty miles were inhabited, the rest of the way being a perfect wilderness. The still solitude that reigned round the Holy Family during this long journey was only broken, now and again, by the roaring of the wild beasts that roamed through the desert. The Holy Family had nothing to fear from the wild beasts. We can easily conceive how the lions, the lords of the forests, and other savage animals,

recognised the God of nature and crouched to lick the feet of the Infant Saviour. We can also conceive how the trees lowered their branches, and St. Joseph plucked wild fruit to refresh Jesus and Mary. On their way through the desert the Holy Family stopped and rested at Matarea. Here, according to an ancient popular tradition, a large tree bowed to the ground rendering homage to the Infant God as He passed by.*

Great no doubt must have been the privations and sufferings of the Divine Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother during this long and fatiguing journey. St. Joseph was chosen by God to be their protector, and to lighten as best he could the burdens of the way.

The sorrows and joys of the journey are described as follows by a celebrated Contemplative:—"In traversing the desert it was absolutely necessary that they should pass the nights in the open air, and without shelter, as it was in the winter. The first night, which overtook them obliged them to stop at the foot of a hill. The Queen of

* . . . "ubi miraculum quoddam refert de arbore, quo in civitate Hermipoli ad Christi ingressum sese ad terram ut reverenter inflexit, ut ipsum adoraret" (Suarez, Tom. ij, Art. iv. Dis. xvii. Sec. 1).

Heaven seated herself on the sand, with her Son in her arms: and they supped on what they had brought from Gaza. St. Joseph raised a sort of tent with his mantle and some sticks, so that the Incarnate Word with His holy Mother should not be exposed to the night air. St. Joseph slept upon the ground, his head supported by a little box of clothes and their other poor apparel. The following day they continued their route, and then their provision of bread and fruit failed them, so that the Mistress of the universe and her holy spouse, feeling the pressure of hunger, found themselves in the direst distress. They passed one of their first days of their journey till nine in the evening without nourishment. Our Blessed Lady thus addressed the Most High; 'Eternal and Almighty God! I offer Thee thanks, and I bless Thee. How, being only a poor useless creature, how shall I dare ask anything for myself? But have regard to Thine only Son, and grant the means to sustain His natural life, and to preserve that of my spouse.'

"The Queen of creatures commanded the elements not to offend their Creator, and to reserve for her their rude attacks. The Infant Jesus, to recompense this loving care, gave command to His Angels, and they formed a

luminous globe impenetrable to the weather, which enclosed their God-made man, the Blessed Virgin, and her spouse. This protection was bestowed on other occasions also while crossing the desert. When food was wanting the Lord helped them by the ministry of Angels, who furnished them with bread and excellent fruit, and brought them besides a beverage of delicious flavour. Upon this they sang canticles of praise to the Lord who feeds all flesh at a convenient season The Most High, not only took care to nourish our pilgrims, but He also offered them sensible recreations to soothe the weariness of the way. It often happened that the Blessed Mother, passing with the Infant God, was speedily surrounded by large numbers of birds. The Blessed Queen received them, and commanded them to praise their Creator; the birds obeyed, and the devoted Mother recreated the Infant Jesus in the sweetest canticles. The holy Angels joined their voices to that of our lovely Lady. None of the miracles wrought in favour of the Jewish people are worthy to be compared with those which the Lord wrought during this journey for His Son made man, the august Mother and St. Joseph, to preserve the natural life on which depended the sal-

vation of the human race." (Venerable Maria of Jesus of Agreda, *Cité Mystique de Dieu*).

In what City, and How Long did St. Joseph stay in Egypt ?

Egypt at this time was studded with great and populous cities; but in what city or town the Holy Family took up their residence we know not for certain, as the Gospel is silent, and ancient writers differ in opinion. Some are in favour of Hermopolis; others give the honour to Alexandria, but St. Thomas, St. Anselm, and Suarez, who cite in their favour the traditions of the East, are of opinion that the Holy Family took up their abode in Heliopolis, a populous city, seven miles distant from the famous Memphis. Many Jews lived in this city, where they were treated kindly by King Ptolemy and the Egyptians; here also they possessed a magnificent temple, built by Onias, at which they worshipped the God of Israel.

How long the Holy Family resided in Egypt we know not. One thing is certain that our Blessed Lord left it before He attained His twelfth year; for at that age we find the "Child Jesus" in the temple dis-

puting with the doctors. Some writers put down St. Joseph's stay in Egypt at less than a year; others fourteen months; St. Thomas makes it seven years,* and the celebrated Baronius undertakes to prove that our Divine Saviour returned home as He was entering on His ninth year. Suarez adopts this opinion as most probable.†

During the stay in Egypt, whether of few or many years, St. Joseph supported Jesus and Mary by the labour of his hands.

We could never for a moment believe, with some writers, that abject poverty, at least in any degrading form, was the lot of the Holy Family in the strange land of Egypt; such a state would not be suited to the descendants of the royal House of David. Some are of opinion that St. Joseph reserved some part of the gifts offered by the Wise Men of the East, to pay the expenses of the journey, and to support the Holy Family in the strange land of Egypt. Others imagine that the rich Jews their in Heliopolis were only too glad to share fortunes with the distinguished strangers. But in any case, St. Joseph by his avoca-

*"Dicitur quod septem annis fuit ibi, et habitavit in civitate Heliopolis" (St. Thomas, in Matt. ii).

† (Tom. ii. Dip. xvii, Sec. ii).

tion was well able, not only to meet the pressing wants, but even to supply the suitable comforts to Jesus and Mary. During the journey and stay in Egypt, the presence of the Infant Jesus put the demons to flight; and in many places cast to the ground the false idols; thus fulfilling the words of the Prophet: "Behold the Lord will enter into Egypt and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence" (Isai. xix. 1).

SECTION XI.

The Return of the Holy Family from Egypt.

With what anxious care did Heaven look down upon the holy Exiles in a strange land. The hour of their delivery was fast approaching; Herod, the monster of cruelty, was on his death-bed; the flesh rotting off his bones; the tongue that gave the order for the massacre of the Holy Innocent, and for the murder of the Infant Saviour, was being devoured with the most loathsome worms; and so intolerable was the filthy stench, that no one could approach the room of the dying tyrant. The records of history, either ancient or modern, narrate no parallel of the death with which it pleased the Eternal

Father to visit this enemy of His Divine Son.

Herod is gone to his account, and quickly a heavenly messenger is despatched by God to convey the news to the Holy Family. To St. Joseph alone the important information was communicated. "But," says the Gospel, "when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child. Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither, and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: That he shall be called a Nazarite" (Matt. ii. 19-23).

Though gladdening and welcome was the news of returning to their fond country and home to the hearts of exiles, yet far more happy was the Holy Family in hearing and obeying the will of the Almighty. Nothing daunted, by the well-known length of the

journey, and its fatigues now known to them by experience, joyously and happily Jesus, Mary and Joseph set out on their way, anxious to breathe again the air of their native hills. Adopting the opinion of St. Thomas that Our Blessed Lord at this time was seven years old, or that of Cardinal Baronius that He was nine, we can well conceive how holy and divine was the conversation of the Holy Family, beguiling the fatigues of the day, and how often in their secret souls Mary and Joseph adored and loved the Saviour of the world. We can well conceive that, now and again, during the journey through the desert, sweet exquisite fruit ripened on the wild trees, which, recognising the Lord of nature, bowed down in homage, that Jesus might pluck and eat. We can imagine how the wild beasts, roaming through the desert in all the native freedom of unbridled liberty, the terror of all travellers, acknowledged the Lord of creation, and bowed before and licked the feet of the Child Jesus.

Most probably the Holy Family returned to Judea by the easiest and shortest route; and most likely intended to settle in Jerusalem, or in its vicinity, in order to be near the Temple, as well as to have opportunity of holy conversation with the great servants of God, Zachary and St. Elizabeth.

Some writers think it more probable that the Holy Family set out straight for their home at Nazareth, by the road that led through Judea, as being more convenient, and more frequented by travellers. On reaching Judea St. Joseph was startled by a new danger. Herod was dead; but his son, Archelaus, who inherited much of the cruelty and jealousy of his father, reigned in his place. St. Joseph was puzzled, hesitated, and feared to proceed further, lest he should expose to risk or danger the safety of the Child Jesus. In his doubts, Heaven, as usual, came to his relief; God's Angel appeared to him in sleep, and told him to retire into Galilee, which was governed by a kind, humane prince, Herod Antipas. Promptly, as usual, did St. Joseph obey the voice of the Almighty, and with his precious charge "retired to the quarters of Galilee."

Home at all times has a sweet sound; and after long absence, and after the fatigues and privations of a long journey, the cherished name sounds dearer and sweeter still; hence we can well imagine with what gladdened hearts the Holy Family took possession of their old and fond home "*The Holy House*" at Nazareth. "And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it

might be fulfilled which was said by the Prophets: That he shall be called a Nazarite."

An Act of Consecration to St. Joseph.

O glorious Patriarch and Patron of the Catholic Church! O Virgin Spouse of the Virgin Mother of God. O Guardian and foster-father of the Word Incarnate! In the presence of Jesus and Mary I choose thee this day to be my guardian, my patron, and my protector.

O thou, whom God has made the head of the Holy Family, accept me, I beseech thee, though utterly unworthy, to be a poor little servant in thy "*Holy House.*" Present me to thy Immaculate Spouse; ask her also to adopt me as her child. With her, pray that I may constantly think of Jesus, and serve Him faithfully to the end of my life.

O my tender and holy Father, I hereby consecrate myself to thee. O thou head of the Holy Family on earth, in faithful imitation of Jesus and Mary, I place myself and all my concerns under thy care and protection. To thee, after Jesus and Mary, I consecrate my body and soul, with all their senses and faculties, my spiritual progress,

my home, and all my affairs and undertakings. Forsake me not, but adopt me as a servant and child of the Holy Family. Watch over me at all times, but especially at the last awful hour of my life. Then visit, console and strengthen me with the presence of Jesus and Mary; that with them and thee, I may praise, and enjoy the Adorable Trinity in paradise for all eternity. Amen.

SECTION XII.

The Presentation by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph of our Divine Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple.

Not to break the thread of the Gospel narrative according to St. Matthew, who makes no mention of the Presentation in the Temple, we reserved on purpose to the present that important event in the life of Our Blessed Lord. As we write chiefly for the instruction and edification of the poor and uneducated, we shall pass over in silence the controversy among the learned as to the exact time of the Presentation in the Temple. According to the common and received opinion, the Presentation took place after the adoration of the Wise Men, before the flight into Egypt, and when our Divine

Lord Jesus Christ was about forty days old.

In the Presentation of the Child Jesus, what infinite homage, praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and love, did the Incarnate Son of God render to His Eternal Father! O thrice blessed St. Joseph, whose arms were privileged to bear to the Temple this supreme offering.

The Gospel of St. Luke thus narrates it:—"And after the days of her Purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord. Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do as for Him according to the custom of

the law. He also took him into his arms, and blessed God and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel. And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke, ii. 22-35).

The distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem is about six miles; this was the first journey of the Holy Family, and was performed before the Child Jesus was forty days old. Lovingly and tenderly did Mary fold in her warmest mantle the Divine Babe; and every now and again St. Joseph, to help the delicate Mother, carried in his arms the Infant Saviour of the world. The love and care of St. Joseph lightened for Jesus and Mary the fatigues of the journey. They arrive at Jerusalem, and the gates of the

Temple open wide to receive the Lord of Glory. The words of the royal Prophet describing the future Glorious Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven may here be applied to the Presentation in the Temple. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of hosts is the King of Glory" (Ps. xxiii. 7-10).

All Heaven was looking down in reverential awe, as St. Joseph took Jesus in his arms and presented Him to His Eternal Father. The Father accepts the infinite praise, homage, adoration, and love rendered to Him, in behalf of all mankind, by His "well-beloved Son." Holy Simeon, who had received a promise from God, that his eyes, before being closed in death, would see the Saviour of the world, "came by the spirit into the Temple," by revelation recognised the Redeemer of the world, took into his arms, out of the hands of St. Joseph, the Child Jesus, and then, in an ecstasy of supreme happiness, raised his eyes to heaven,

“blessed God,” and prayed Him to take away his soul, for his eyes had seen the Saviour of the world. Having discharged his duty to the Eternal Father and His Incarnate Son, holy Simeon turned to the “father and mother” of Jesus, and with uplifted hands “blessed them,” and congratulated them, on being chosen by God, to be the holy parents and guardians of the Redeemer of the world.

Let us frequently during the day offer to the Eternal Father our souls with their faculties, our hearts with their affections, our bodies with their senses, in union with the Presentation in the Temple of Jesus by His parents, Mary and Joseph; in union with the Most Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass daily offered up on countless altars; and in union with the infinite praise, adoration, homage, and love offered by the same Jesus from all the tabernacles in Christendom.

Simeon was holy and happy when he received into his arms the Saviour of the world; holier and happier ought we to be, when we receive, not into our arms, but into our very breasts, the same Saviour in the Holy Communion. Would that each of us could say with Simeon, after holy Communion: “Now thou dost dismiss thy

servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen thy salvation;" or with St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21).

On this occasion, Mary, though an Immaculate Virgin, after, as well as before, the birth of her Divine Son, to fulfil all justice, to conceal her exalted dignity and unique privileges, as well as to give an example of profound humility, made the usual sin-offering and burnt-offering of a "pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons."

At the Presentation in the Temple it was the happy privilege of St. Joseph also to redeem the Infant Jesus. This was prescribed by the Law of Moses: "And every first-born of men thou shalt redeem with a price" (Exod. xiii. 13); "for a male shall be given five sicles: for a female three" (Lev. xxviii. 6). A sicle is valued at 2s. 7½*d.*; thus for 13s. 1½*d.* did St. Joseph redeem the Infant Saviour. The above fact though not mentioned by any of the Evangelists, no doubt took place, in order to fulfil the Law of Moses.

On the occasion of the Presentation in the Temple, the Blessed Virgin and St.

Joseph were consoled, at the signal revelations made to Anna the Prophetess. She too, like holy Simeon, was led by the spirit into the Temple, and by divine inspiration recognised and adored the Saviour of the world. We shall give the unctuous Gospel narrative. "And there was one Anna, prophetess, daughter of Phamiel, of the tribe Aser; she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until four-score and four years: who departed not from the temple, by fasting and prayers, serving night and day. Now she at the same hour coming in confessed to the Lord, and spoke of him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel" (Luke ii. 36).

After the Presentation in the Temple, and having fulfilled to the letter the Law of Moses, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth. "And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their city Nazareth. And the child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in him" (Luke ii. 39).

No surprise that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph "wondered" at these heavenly manifestations and inspirations; month after

month, year after year, each event more striking and signal than the preceding, intensified the love of St. Joseph for the Saviour of the world. We can well conceive, then, the care, reverence, and awe with which St. Joseph ministered to the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary in their journey homeward.

A prayer of St. Alphonsus Liguori to St. Joseph.

“ O holy Patriarch, I rejoice with thee at thy exalted dignity, by which thou wert deemed worthy to act as father to Jesus, to give Him orders, and to be obeyed by Him, whom heaven and earth obey. O great Saint! as thou wert served by a God, I too wish to be taken into thy service. I choose thee after Mary, to be my chief advocate and protector. I promise to honour thee every day by some special act of devotion, and by placing myself daily under thy protection. By that sweet company, which Jesus and Mary gave thee in thy lifetime, protect me all the days of my life, so that I may never separate from my God by losing His grace. My dear St. Joseph pray to Jesus for me. Certainly He can never refuse thee any thing as He obeyed all thy orders on earth.

Tell Him to forgive me all the sins by which I have offended Him. Tell Him to detach me from all creatures, and from myself, to inflame me with His holy love, and then to do with me what He pleases. And by the assistance which Jesus and Mary gave thee at thy death, I beg of thee to protect me in a special manner at the hour of my death, so that dying, assisted by thee, in the company of Jesus and Mary, I may go to thank thee in paradise, and in thy company to praise my God for all eternity. Amen."

SECTION XIII.

The hidden Life of St. Joseph. The losing and finding of the Child Jesus in Jerusalem by "his parents," Mary and Joseph.

As our readers have most probably remarked long before now, we have kept most strictly to the Gospel narrative in sketching the Life of our great Saint. After the return from Egypt, few are the facts recorded in the sacred text about our holy Patriarch. The Gospel of St. Luke says of our Lord: "And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the pasch. And when he was twelve years old, they were going up

into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. And having fulfilled the days when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem and his parents knew it not. And thinking he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding him they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing him they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said to them: How is it that thou sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business. And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart" (Luke, ii. 41-51).

The above is the last word in the Gospel narrative on the life of our great Saint. The hidden life of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph,—is a subject of deep

reflection and useful meditation for the devout soul. The pious soul can meditate for ever on the wonders of the Hidden Life of our Blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. At the Incarnation, Mary alone paid homage to the WORD MADE FLESH. St. Joseph, St. Elizabeth, and the unborn Baptist next recognised and adored "the desired of the eternal hills." "The heavenly army" announced the "good tidings of great joy" to the shepherds, who worshipped "the infant lying in the manger." The Wise Men laid their gifts of "gold, frankincense, and myrrh" at the feet of the Divine Babe. At the Presentation in the Temple, holy Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, by divine inspiration, recognised and adored the Saviour of the world; and for eighteen years, that is, from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, not even one word is mentioned in the Gospel on the Life of our Divine Redeemer. Well might the prophet say: "Verily, thou art a hidden God" (Isai, xlv. 15). The Evangelist writes: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 10). The Blessed Virgin, by her secret, hidden and exalted virtues, imitated Jesus, her Divine Son and Model.

With such shining lights before his eyes; with such models as Jesus and Mary ever in his presence, no wonder that the Life of St. Joseph was "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); no wonder that few facts and fewer virtues of our Saint are recorded by the Evangelists; nor are we then to be surprised that, after the losing and finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple by his "parents," a single word is not said in the Gospels on the life and death of our holy Patriarch. With the examples of Jesus, Mary and Joseph before our eyes, let us love to be hidden and unknown; let us do all our acts solely and purely for the greater glory of God, to please God alone; let us shun the esteem and praise of the world; let us keep before our mind the sublime doctrine which our Divine Saviour preached and practised, viz.: "Take heed," said our Blessed Redeemer, "that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before . . . let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth and thy father who seeth in secret will repay thee when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in

secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee" (Matt. vi. 1-6).

O most loving Jesus! grant us the grace to love to be hidden and unknown, and to do all our actions purely to please Thee. O Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, obtain for us the grace to live and die for Jesus' sake.

Three times in the year the men of Israel were bound by the Law of God to present themselves before the Almighty, and to worship Him in the Temple. "Three times in the year all the males shall appear in the sight of the Almighty Lord, the God of Israel" (Exod. xxxiv. 23). The three times are specified in Deuteronomy. "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of the leavened bread, in the feast of the weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles" (Deut. xvi. 16).

We shall not here enter into the dispute among the learned whether St. Joseph went to worship in the Temple at the three appointed times according to the Law of Moses, or only once in the year. The Gospel of St. Luke, as we have seen, mentions only one visit. Children who had not attained the age of twelve years were not bound by this Law; hence, arises another controversy

among commentators, whether the Child Jesus, before He attained the age of twelve, accompanied his parents to adore in the Temple. As males only came under the Law, theologians are divided in opinion whether the Blessed Virgin accompanied her holy Spouse to Jerusalem, or stayed at home at Nazareth with the Child Jesus.

What appears most reasonable, and in accordance with the habits of the Holy Family to "fulfil all justice" is, that St. Joseph observed the Law of Moses to the letter, and that the Blessed Virgin, through piety and devotion, as well as to give holy example to the Jewish women, accompanied St. Joseph, and that at each visit they took with them the Child Jesus; for we could not think for a moment that they would leave behind them at Nazareth, to another's care, a treasure they loved a thousand times dearer than their lives. Be all this as it may, as the Gospel is silent, we are only certain that when our Divine Lord had attained the age of twelve years, the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, offered supreme homage to the Lord God of Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem. The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem is about a hundred miles. Here again the world envies

St. Joseph, and pronounces him thrice happy in being appointed and privileged by heaven to minister to the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary, during a long journey of at least five days.

When the solemn feast and devotions of the Pasch were over, Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem for their home at Nazareth, believing at the same time that the Child Jesus, in whose wisdom and prudence they had full confidence, was in the company of his relatives and townsmen. On the evening of the first day's journey the parents thought it time to look after the comforts of their Divine Son, and hence sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances; but to their unutterable grief could not find Him. In bitter anguish and sorrow they sought the object of their love among the pilgrims from Nazareth, and not finding Him, they retraced their steps to Jerusalem. For the first time in her life Mary felt the point of that sword of sorrow, which Simeon long before had prophesied, would pierce her soul. Inn after inn, house after house at Jerusalem was searched for the missing one; the hearts of Mary and Joseph were rent with the most bitter anguish, sorrow, and anxiety. Though the absence of Jesus made each moment seem

an age, yet it was God's divine will, in order that Mary might taste the first drops of the bitter chalice, which she was to drink to the last drop at the foot of the Cross on Mount Calvary, that only after three days of sorrow and search, did Mary and Joseph find the object of their love in the Temple "in the midst of the doctors." The first loving look of Jesus inundated, so to speak, the hearts and souls of Mary and Joseph with supreme joy and delight. They have found their Son, their God, their Lord, their Love, and their All.

The Child Jesus, having done His "Father's business," returned to Mary and Joseph, and "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

May we never lose Jesus by mortal sin; and if that greatest of all misfortunes, in an evil hour befalls us, which God in His mercy forbid, may we at once seek Jesus "sorrowing;" may we at once find Him, and recover the love and friendship of God our Saviour. Mary and Joseph, pray for us.

SECTION. XIV.

The Death of St. Joseph.

Where, and at what age, the holy soul of St. Joseph winged its flight to the bosom of Abraham, we know not for certain, as the Gospel is silent. After the memorable occasion of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, the Gospel, as we have seen, says, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth; and the last word about St. Joseph is—Jesus “was subject to them;” that is, Jesus, after having completed His twelfth year, lived under the authority and guardianship of His reputed father St. Joseph, and His holy Mother the Blessed Virgin.

At this distance of time and place we can contemplate and meditate on the Holy Family at Nazareth. We can see St. Joseph, forgetful of himself, busily engaged to maintain in comfort and happiness the Mother and the Child. We can see the Child Jesus, from time to time even, helping with His Divine Hands, St. Joseph in his workshop. We can contemplate the Blessed Mother, assiduous in keeping her house neat and clean, and every way in her power, making happy the Son and the Husband. Now and again,

Mary and Joseph would kneel, and with reverential awe, look into the Divine countenance of the Saviour of the world, and adore, love, and render supreme homage to the Incarnate and Eternal Son of God. The eyes of all heaven were riveted on the "Holy House," when Jesus, Mary, and Joseph knelt, prayed, and adored the Eternal Father. At the Transfiguration, Our Blessed Lord condescended to console Peter, James, and John, who were afterwards to witness His Agony in the Garden; and one faint ray of the Divinity rapt them into an ecstasy of delight. So we can well imagine that our Blessed Lord, in the Holy House at Nazareth, allowed from time to time the Divinity to shine forth through the Humanity, and, as the Eternal Son of God, manifested Himself in all His heavenly glory to Mary and Joseph. At the Nativity, a "multitude of the heavenly army" appeared to the shepherds, singing, "Glory to God in the highest." So we can well imagine, that at intervals this heavenly music broke upon the ears of Mary and Joseph; and that their eyes beheld countless millions of Angels, nay, the nine choirs of celestial Spirits, paying homage to their Lord.

How long this paradise on earth lasted, how long St. Joseph enjoyed this foretaste of

heaven, before he was permitted to drink of the "torrents of God's pleasure," as we remarked before, we know not for certain.

As to the precise time of the death of St. Joseph, the ancient Fathers differ in opinion. Some are of opinion that he lived to a very old age, and that he witnessed the Passion, Death, and the Ascension of Our Blessed Lord. This opinion does not appear to accord with reason; for if St. Joseph witnessed the Passion and Death of Jesus, his name would most probably be mentioned by the Evangelists; and, secondly, Our Blessed Lord, at dying, would leave His holy Mother in the charge of her faithful husband, and hence would not have confided her, as He did, to St. John the Evangelist.

The common opinion therefore, which the Bollandists say is "little less than certain," and which is supported by reason, as well as by the great majority of the Fathers, is, that St. Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, a little before the public Ministry, or preaching of Our Blessed Lord. That is, the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived together at Nazareth for eighteen years after the Finding in the Temple; and that St. Joseph died when Jesus was about thirty years of age. This opinion is conformable to

reason; for during the Sacred Infancy, and up to the time of His public Ministry, the name of St. Joseph is mentioned by the Evangelists in connection with all the great events of Our Blessed Lord's Life; yet, after the public Ministry, the name of St. Joseph, does not even once occur in any of the Gospels; thereby clearly indicating that he was no longer alive. Besides, it would not appear fitting, that the Jews could point to the reputed father of the Saviour, when the preaching, and stupendous miracles of Jesus went to prove Him the Son of God, and that His Father was in heaven.

This opinion also is supported by the great majority of ancient and modern writers.

The Bollandists say: "How many years Joseph survived the Finding of Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve, and His return to Nazareth, cannot be precisely said with even probable conjecture; except that it is almost certain, and considered by many as beyond all doubt, that he died before Jesus began to manifest Himself to the world, inasmuch as the Evangelists make no further mention of him, . . . Nor indeed did it seem fit, that He, who by His stupendous miracles, was to prove Himself the Son of God, should have in the eyes of all, one who was nominally and legally His father." 10*

“It is believed,” says another critic, “and with great probability, that Joseph died before Christ began to preach the Gospel; and before the marriage of Cana; where Jesus was invited with His Mother and Disciples. On that occasion Joseph is not mentioned; nor is he in the whole history of Our Lord’s public Ministry. At His death, Jesus commended His Mother to St. John, which shows that St. Joseph was no longer alive, for Christ is not the author of division or divorce.” (Tillemont).

The learned Suarez, after reviewing the reasons and authorities on both sides, concludes: “I think that St. Joseph did not die immediately after Christ’s twelfth year; because St. Luke, when he says that the Child returned to Nazareth with His parents, and was there subject to their orders, shows that He lived for some time with them. And it is credible that St. Joseph survived to maintain Jesus to His thirtieth year, when He was to begin the preaching of the Gospel.”*

Some are of opinion that our great Saint

* “Existimo Josephum statim post duodecimum annum non obiisse. . . . Credibile vixisse Joseph, fere usque ad annos prædicationis Christi ut illum simul cum Virgine suis laboribus sustentaret,” etc. etc. (Tom. ii., Disp. vii., Sec. i.)

died where he had lived, in the "Holy House" at Nazareth. Others, with the Bollandists, Venerable Bede, and St. Adamnan, hold that he died in Jerusalem, where he had gone on the solemn feast of the Pasch to worship in the Temple; and almost all agree that he was buried in the valley of Josaphat in the tomb of his ancestors.

Although the age of St. Joseph, at his death, is not known for certain; yet it can be told with a fair approach to accuracy. In a preceding section we have seen, that St. Joseph, at his Espousals with the Blessed Virgin, was a young man. Venerable Marie of Jesus, of Agreda, says thirty-three; let us add to this, thirty, the age of our Blessed Lord at the time of His public Ministry, when St. Joseph died, and we have a fairly accurate estimate of the age of our great Patriarch at the time of his death.

At death we covet the prayers of holy souls to help us on the passage to eternity; happy the death of St Joseph, who was helped and comforted by the hands and prayers of the Blessed Virgin herself. At death, we covet the presence of God's minister, that the departing soul may get the last blessing, the last absolution; happy the death of St. Joseph, whose departing soul was absolved

and blessed by Jesus Christ Himself. The presence and the attentions of a dear and holy friend sweeten the pains of death ; sweet, peaceful, and happy, the death of St. Joseph, who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. In the hour of trial the faithful friend proves his gratitude and love ; so at the death of St. Joseph, his holy spouse, the Blessed Virgin, endeavoured to reward him, for his loving and reverential attentions and kindness to her, during the long period of thirty years. If Jesus rewards, as He does, a cup of cold water given in His name ; what choicest heavenly graces and blessings, did He not shower upon His dying reputed father St. Joseph, who assisted Him before He was born ; who first after Mary, adored Him in the manger at Bethlehem ; who saved His life from the cruelty of Herod ; who carried Him in his arms through the wild desert, and over the burning sands of Egypt ; who, by the labour of his hands, supplied the wants and comforts of Jesus ; in one word, who lived for Jesus, who is now dying of love for Jesus—how Jesus rewarded our dying Saint, the mind cannot conceive, nor the tongue express.

The pious reader will excuse us for inserting a few passages, out of the many we have

before us, from the devout Clients of St. Joseph. Father Binet writes, "St. Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary; a happiness which excites feelings of the deepest devotion. His passage to the other world was more a triumph than a death. He finally breathed his last sigh which Jesus and Mary received. On that occasion all the court of heaven descended to venerate that body, in which had dwelt so great and holy a soul, adorned with those riches of virtue which the Gospel sums up in the one word, 'just'".

"Oh! how at that moment, the last of his life, must Jesus have rewarded, with a torrent of confidence, him, who, as a father, had borne a father's fears and toils. 'Go,' must the Angels have said; 'go, O new Precursor, and bear to the holy Patriarchs the tidings of their coming liberation, which now appears as the dawn of the Sun of Justice above the horizon, foretokening happiness; meanwhile we weave thee this crown of roses, and lilies, and this starry robe which thy purity deserves and thy dignity of father of Jesus, a title never bestowed on Angels. Already is thy throne prepared at the right hand of that which awaits thy spouse. Thou shalt be the great counsellor in the court of heaven, the treasurer of the riches and graces, which the

Almighty Father dispenses ; thou shalt be the Protector of the future Church, and the advocate of its children in all necessities and cares.' The Mother of God, speaking with the sweet eloquence of her eyes, more than with the tender harmony of her voice, thanked him for his care in ministering to her with such signs of gratitude as kindled new flames of divine love in the noble heart of St. Joseph. In these colloquies that splendid light gave its last gleams, like the sun when near its setting."*

Pious souls can write with touching sweetness on St. Joseph, but the Saints alone can conceive, and express thoughts worthy of so noble a theme. "Let us consider this blessed Patriarch," writes St. Leonard of Port Maurice, "in the arms of Jesus and Mary, at the moment of giving up his soul to his Creator. See him stretched on his poor bed, Jesus on one side, and Mary on the other, surrounded by a multitude of Angels, Archangels, and Seraphim, who, with a respectful attention, are waiting to receive this holy soul. O God, who shall tell us with what feelings, at this supreme moment, Joseph took a last leave of Jesus and Mary." What acts of thankfulness, of supplication,

* Patrignani. Vallejo, p. 218.

of humility, on the part of this holy old man ! His eyes and his heart speak, alone his tongue is silent. But how much there is in his silence ! He looks at Mary, and Mary at him ; and with what love and veneration ! Then he turns his dying eyes on Jesus, and Jesus returns the look, but with what tenderness ! He takes the hand of Jesus, and presses it to his heart : and covers it with kisses, and bedews it with his tears, and says to Him, from time to time, less with his lips than in his heart. “ My Son, my much loved Son, I recommend my soul to Thee ! ” And then, placing that hand on his heart, he falls into a swoon of love. Ah ! Joseph ! if you could but keep fast hold of that hand, which is Life, you would not die ! Oh, how sweet it would be to die, holding the hand of Jesus !

“ The soul is on the point of leaving the body ; it has already half taken flight, but at the sight of Jesus and Mary it pauses : it cannot break its chain. I repeat, Joseph, if you do not cease to look upon Him who is your life, you cannot die. Tender and Divine Redeemer, Jesus, holy Mary, Joseph cannot quit this land of exile, if you will not give him leave ! Jesus lifts His hand. He blesses and embraces His much-loved father, and Joseph expires in the arms of Jesus.”

The honeyed pen of St. Francis of Sales writes: "A Saint, who had so loved in life, could only die of love; for his soul could not love Jesus enough amidst the distractions of this life; and having fulfilled the duty required of him in tending the childhood of his Lord, what remained but that he should say to the Eternal Father, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do' (St. John, xvii. 4): and to the Son: 'My Child, as your heavenly Father intrusted your body into my hands on the day that you came into the world, so on this day of my departure from this world, I remit my spirit into yours.' Such, I imagine, was the death of this great Patriarch, the most noble death of all, due to the most noble life which any creature had ever led—a death which Angels themselves would covet if they were capable of dying."

The following extracts, on the death of St. Joseph, are taken from the famous work, "*Cité Mystique de Dieu*," by the Venerable Marie of Jesus, of Agreda:—*

"This most holy Lady, knowing, through her infused knowledge, that the last hour of her

* By inserting quotations from the "*Cité Mystique de Dieu*," we by no means intend to express any approbation of the work; we simply put the passages before our pious readers for what they are worth.

chaste spouse in this place of exile was very near, went to her adorable Son, and said to Him: ‘My Lord and my God, the time for the death of Thy servant Joseph, which Thou hast determined by an eternal will approaches. I beseech Thee, Lord, by Thy infinite goodness to assist him in this hour, so that his death may be as precious to Thee as his life has been agreeable. Remember, my Son, the love and humility of Thy servant—his merits—his virtues, and the pains he has taken to preserve Thy life and mine.’

“Our Saviour replied to her: ‘My Mother, your requests are pleasing to Me, and the merits of Joseph are in My thoughts. I will now assist him, and I will give him so eminent a place among the princes of My people, that it will be a subject of admiration for the Angels, and a motive for praises to them and to men. I will do not for any nation that which I will do for your Spouse.’ Our august Lady returned thanks to her most sweet Son for this promise.

“The most humble Joseph, wishing to close his life by the seal of humility, asked pardon of his holy Spouse for the faults he might have committed in her service as a feeble man of earthly mould. He entreated her to assist him in this last hour, and to intercede for

him. He testified, above all, his gratitude to our Adorable Saviour, for the benefits that he had received from His most liberal hand during all his life, and particularly in his sickness. Then taking leave of his blessed Spouse, he said to her: 'Thou art blessed among all women and chosen above all creatures. Let Angels and men praise thee. Let all nations know and exalt thy dignity. Let the name of the Most High through thee be known, adored, and glorified in all future ages, and eternally praised by all the blessed Spirits, for having created thee so pleasing in His eyes. I trust to meet thee in the heavenly land.'"

"After this, the man of God addressed our Lord Jesus Christ, and wishing to speak to His Majesty with profound respect, he made every effort to kneel on the ground. But the sweet Jesus approaching received him in His arms, and the Saint supporting his head upon His bosom, said: 'My Lord and my God, Son of the Eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the world, give Thy eternal benediction to Thy servant, who is the work of Thy hands. Pardon the faults I have committed in Thy service and in Thy presence. I confess Thee, I glorify Thee, I render to Thee, with a con-

trite and humble heart, eternal thanks for having chosen me, by Thy ineffable goodness, from among men, to be the spouse of Thine Own Mother. Grant, Lord, that Thy own glory may be the theme of my gratitude through all eternity.'

"The Redeemer of the world gave him His benediction. 'Rest in peace,' He said; 'the grace of My Heavenly Father and Mine be with thee. Proclaim the good tidings to My Prophets and Saints, who await thee, and tell them that their redemption is nigh.' As our beloved Redeemer pronounced these words, the most happy Joseph expired in His arms, and His Divine Majesty closed his eyes. The angels chanted the sweetest hymns of praise, and, by order of the supreme King, they conducted this most holy soul into the company of the Saints, who recognised him as the reputed father of the Redeemer of the world, and His greatly-beloved one, who merited singular veneration. He imparted a new joy to this innumerable assembly by announcing to them, according to the commandment of the Lord, that their redemption would not long be delayed.'

"We must not omit to mention that, although the precious death of St. Joseph was

preceded by so long a sickness, and such severe sufferings, these were not the chief causes of it. He might have lived longer, notwithstanding these maladies, if the effects of the ardent love that burned in his chaste bosom had not been superadded ; for this happy death was rather a triumph of love than the penalty of sin. The Lord suspended the supernatural aid by which He had preserved the strength of His servant, and hindered the violence of his love from destroying him ; and this help failing, nature was vanquished. This victory sundered the ties that detained his holy soul in the prison of the body, in which consists our death. Thus, love was the last of his maladies, and it was also the greatest and most glorious, since by it death is the sleep of the body, and the principle of life."

At the death of Our Blessed Lord, we know from the Gospel that many of the Saints arose from their graves, and appeared in the streets of Jerusalem. St. Matthew says : " And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent : And the graves were opened, and the bodies of the saints that had slept arose. And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection came into the holy city and appeared to many

(Matt. xxvii. 51). That the bodies of these Saints never again returned to their former dust, but ascended to heaven with their Redeemer, is held by St. Thomas and other great authorities. The Angelic Doctor writes: "It may be asked what became of those who rose with our Lord? For we must believe that they returned to life to be witnesses of Christ's Resurrection. Some think they died again, relapsing into their former dust, like Lazarus and others, whom Our Lord raised up. But these authorities are unworthy of credit; for it would be a greater torture for these Saints to die a second time, than not to have been raised to life. We must then believe, that the Saints, who rose with Jesus, ascended with Him to heaven" (Matt. xxvii.)*

That St. Joseph arose from the dead with the "bodies of the Saints," and ascended to heaven with Our Blessed Lord, is a pious and well-grounded belief. St. Bernardine of Sienna says: "We cannot affirm as certain, but we may piously believe, that Jesus Christ the Son of God, conceded to His foster father the same privilege as to His Mother, that from the day of His glorious Resurrection, St. Joseph might be body and

* A. Lapide, Matt. xxvii. 52.

soul with Christ, as His holy spouse, the Blessed Virgin, was ere long to be; and also that the Holy Family, composed of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, who lived in the same toils and same union of charity on earth, might live body and soul in glory in heaven."

The above opinion is confirmed from the fact that no relic of the body of St. Joseph has ever been found in any part of the world. It is easy to believe, that Divine Providence would not have hidden from the veneration of the faithful, so precious a treasure as the relics of St. Joseph, did they exist.

In heaven then, as in the Holy House at Nazareth, is the Holy Family, with their glorified bodies, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

PIOUS REFLECTIONS.

My soul! what a multitude of holy and edifying thoughts the life of St. Joseph suggests to the Christian mind. We see St. Joseph, though of the royal house and family of David, occupied at the humble business of an artisan. St. Joseph was sanctified and chosen by the Almighty to be the spouse and guardian of the Immaculate Mother of God. After Mary, St. Joseph first knew, adored, and loved the Incarnate Son of God.

St. Joseph is the reputed father of Jesus, and saved His life from the cruelty of Herod. St. Joseph is in constant and intimate communication with Heaven, through the medium of Angels. On all occasions prompt and docile was the obedience of St. Joseph to the calls of God. Countless times lovingly and reverentially did St. Joseph carry in his arms the Infant Jesus over the hills of Judea, and through the deserts, and over the sands of Egypt. With a cheerful, joyous heart, for about thirty years, did St. Joseph toil and labour to supply the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary. And finally, having fulfilled his mission, sweetly and calmly did St. Joseph breathe forth his holy soul to God in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

RESOLUTIONS.

In imitation of St. Joseph, I resolve, by the aid of Divine grace, first, to obey promptly all the calls and secret inspirations of Almighty God. Secondly, in order to sanctify my daily occupations, I resolve to offer to God's greater glory each and every act of the day, in union with the life and death of Jesus; in union with all the Masses daily offered up to Heaven throughout Christen-

dom; and in union with Jesus in all the tabernacles in the Catholic Church. Thirdly, I resolve every day to beg of God the grace of a happy death; like St. Joseph, to die in the peace and love of Jesus and Mary. O merciful God, through the name, love, and merits of Jesus, grant me the grace to keep these resolutions. St. Joseph, obtain for me the grace to lead a holy life and die a happy death.

PRAYERS.

A Prayer to obtain the grace of a Happy Death.

“O Lord Jesus Christ, by the bitterness Thou wast pleased to suffer on the Cross for love of me, especially when Thy sacred soul departed from Thy body, have mercy upon my poor soul, now and at the hour of my death, that I may be admitted to the immediate vision and possession of Thee for all eternity. Amen.”

A Prayer to St. Joseph to obtain the grace of a Holy Life and Happy Death.

O great St. Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus the grace to keep all God's commandments, and to promptly obey the secret calls and inspirations of Heaven. St. Joseph,

obtain for me the grace to do all my actions to please God alone. O St. Joseph, ask of Jesus, for me, the grace never to commit a mortal sin. O my dear St. Joseph, watch over me during life, be with me at death, and obtain for me Paradise. St. Joseph, spouse of Mary, beg of the Blessed Virgin to obtain for me, from Jesus her Son, the grace to lead a holy life and die a happy death. Amen.

A Prayer to St. Joseph for the grace of a Happy Death.

O glorious St. Joseph, the model, the patron, and the comforter of the dying, I now beg thy protection at the last moment of my life; obtain, I beseech thee, that I may die the death of the just.

Part II.



**THE DIGNITY, THE SANCTITY, AND
THE HEROIC VIRTUES OF
ST. JOSEPH.**

CHAPTER IV.

The Dignity and heroic Virtues of St. Joseph.

SECTION I.

The dignity of St. Joseph. St. Joseph is exalted above all God's Saints; and ranks next to the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

THE dignity of a Saint may be estimated from the designs of God in his regard; from his relations with the Almighty, and from the place destined for him to fulfil in the scheme of Redemption. Thus in the Old Law, Abraham is elevated on a high pinnacle of sanctity because he was destined to be the father of God's people; Moses is regarded as a great Saint, because he was chosen by God to give the Divine Law to the Jews; Melchisedech is honoured, because his sacrifice was a figure of the great sacrifice of the New Law; King David, the model of the repentant sinner, is singled out for special honours, because God inspired him to sing His praises in hymns and canticles.

In the New Law, the twelve Apostles are held up to the admiration and veneration of the world ; and why ? Because of the dignity of the Apostolate ; because they were chosen by God to be the preachers of His Word, and the foundation stones of His Church. St. Peter is raised pre-eminently above the other Apostles ; because Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ chose him to be the rock on which He built His Church ; because he was the divinely appointed head of the Sacred College ; and because on him and his lawful successor, the Saviour of the world conferred the unique privilege of Infallibility in teaching the Universal Church. St. John the Baptist is held in special honour by the Church, and was sanctified in his mother's womb, because his mission was to point out to the world the long-expected Messiah—“ Behold the Lamb of God.” The dignity, and hence the sanctity of the Blessed Virgin, were unspeakably exalted beyond that of all the Saints and Angels put together, as the learned Suarez teaches ; because her relations with God were of a higher order, and because she entered more fully and intimately into the scheme of man's Redemption. No relationship is nearer to a son than that of mother. Jesus Christ is the Son of Mary ;

the Sacred Body of Jesus, the Precious Blood by which mankind was redeemed, had their source in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. To use the words of St. Augustine, "The flesh of Christ is the flesh of Mary; and although it was raised to greater glory in His Resurrection; yet it still remained the same that was taken from her."*

The essence of the dignity of the Blessed Virgin consists in her intimate relation with the Saviour of the world, in the one title, *Mother of God*. "It is this awful title," writes Cardinal Newman, "which both illustrates and connects together the two prerogatives of Mary—her sanctity and her greatness. It is the issue of her sanctity; it is the source of her greatness. What dignity can be too great to attribute to her who is so closely bound up, as intimately with the Eternal Word, as a mother is with her son? What outfit of sanctity, what fulness and redundance of grace, what exuberance of merit, must have been hers, on the supposition that the Fathers justify, that her Maker regarded them at all, and took them into account when He condescended not

* "Caro Christi est Mariæ, et quamvis gloria Resurrectionis fuerit magnificata, eadem tamen mansit quo assumpta est de Maria." (Serm. de Assum., c, v.)

to abhor the Virgin's womb. . . . Is it surprising, then, that on the one hand she should be Immaculate in her Conception; or on the other, that she should be exalted as a queen with a crown of twelve stars? Men sometimes wonder that we call her 'Mother of life,' 'of mercy,' 'of salvation;' what are all these titles compared to that one name, '*Mother of God.*'" (Letter to Dr. Pusey on Eirenicon, p 67.)

We now come to examine what was the dignity of St. Joseph. With the above fundamental principles before our mind we hesitate not in asserting that St. Joseph was exalted in dignity above any Saint of the Old or New Testament: of course the Blessed Virgin alone excepted. And why? Because his heavenly appointed mission was of a higher order; because his relation with the Redeemer of the world was more close and intimate; and, finally, because he played a more important part than other Saints in the scheme of man's Redemption.

Let us first try to conceive, and to realise the exalted dignity of St. Joseph from his relation to the Blessed Virgin, that is, "Husband of Mary." The Blessed Virgin, by the title of Mother of God, is exalted unspeakably above all beings created, or

that ever will be created, by the Almighty ; St. Joseph, by the inspiration of heaven, was chosen to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin ; and therefore in a certain sense he shares in all her glories and dignity. Mary, as real wife, was the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bone ; and, as the husband is head of the wife, so St. Joseph in that sense was the head of the Blessed Virgin.

A few passages from Saints, and other celebrated writers, will tell more eloquently the dignity of St. Joseph, as Spouse of Mary, than our cold words.

St. Leonard of Port-Maurice writes : “ The Evangelists say very little of the virtues and life of St. Joseph ; but when they call him the Spouse of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, they give him the most glorious title possible ; for he was nearest in every way to Mary, the purest creature ever made by God Almighty.”

St. John Damascene says : “ Husband of Mary ! ineffable expression, which leaves nought to say.” “ Husband of Mary,” writes the learned Suarez ; “ this, therefore, was his first great prerogative.”*

One passage more from the celebrated Gerson, the panegyrist of St. Joseph, who

* Quæst. xxix. Disp. viii. Sec i. “ Vir Mariæ ! ho ergo fuit prima ejus prærogativa.”

thus spoke of our Saint at the Council of Constance: "Let me here exclaim, O Joseph, how wonderful thy sublimity! O incomparable dignity that the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of the world, should not disdain, O great St. Joseph, to call thee lord. Truly, I know not, O orthodox Fathers, which is most admirable here—the humility of Mary, or the dignity of Joseph."

Though the dignity of St. Joseph, as husband of Mary, guardian of the purest and holiest creature that ever came from the hands of the Almighty Creator, is great and exalted; yet far greater still, and transcendently more exalted is the dignity of our Saint, from his intimate relation with Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

As we have seen in a preceding chapter, the two Evangelists trace the genealogy of Our Blessed Lord, not from the Blessed Virgin, but through St. Joseph, as head of the house and family. "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. i. 16). "And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being (as was supposed) the Son of Joseph" (Luke, iii. 23). Thus the two Evangelists begin their Gospel, by elevating St. Joseph on a high pinnacle of dignity and

glory. But the most instructive measure of the dignity of St. Joseph, is the fact that he was styled, and passed among men, as the Father of Jesus the Saviour of the world? "And Jesus Himself," says the Gospel, "was beginning about the age of thirty years being (as was supposed) the Son of Joseph" (Luke iii. 23). Again, "his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning them. . . . And his parents went every year to Jerusalem . . . behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (Luke, ii.) The dignity of being the real husband of Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God is high indeed ; but unspeakably higher still is the dignity of being the reputed father of Jesus Christ.

St. Bernard puts it thus : "The nature and dignities of St. Joseph are summed up in the title wherewith God honoured him, in such a way that all styled him and believed him to be the father of Jesus."

The dignity of St. Joseph ascends higher and higher still, and becomes, so to speak, lost to our view, the more we meditate on his mission, and on his relation with Our Blessed Saviour. St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb, because his mission was to point out to mankind the

Saviour ; but St. Joseph was appointed by God to be the guardian and protector of the Infant Redeemer. After the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was the first on earth that adored and paid homage to the Incarnate Son of God. St. Joseph ministered to the wants of Jesus even before He was born, by his care and attention to His Blessed Mother. During the Divine Infancy, the hands of St. Joseph were privileged to supply the want and comforts of Jesus and Mary. When danger and death hovered round the cradle of the Infant Saviour St. Joseph was chosen by God to be His guardian and deliverer. Countless times did St. Joseph carry in his arms, and press to his bosom, the Divine Babe. From the Nativity of Jesus, to the day of St. Joseph's death, our Saint moved and lived in the Divine presence of the Incarnate Son of God. These privileges were granted to no other Saint. Nay more, the Gospel says, that Jesus obeyed and was subject to St. Joseph. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph composed the Holy Family ; and St. Joseph was head of the Holy Family. After Mary, no relation could be more intimate with Jesus than that of St. Joseph ; and hence, after the Immaculate Mother of God, the dignity of St. Joseph is higher and more exalted than that of any other Saint of the Old or New Testament.

A devout Client of St. Joseph writes thus :
“ It is commonly said that the first-born, and the first in any order—for example, the first man, the first martyr, the first Apostle, the first Angel—enjoys certain advantages in glory over others who have not the priority. St. Joseph was the first man who knew and adored Jesus Christ ; the first who spoke to Him ; the first who suffered hardship and exile for Jesus ; the first Apostle who manifested the Saviour to the world, and announced Him in Egypt ; the first who made a vow or profession of virginity ; the first Christian ; the first by whom Jesus was offered to His Eternal Father in the Temple ; the first to whom was manifestly revealed the Mystery of the Incarnation, hidden for centuries. St. Joseph was the first-born of the Church, and for this reason the first in gifts, and the greatest in authority and power, like Ruben, to whom his father Jacob left at his death the greatest part of his inheritance. All these advantages of having been the first, give St. Joseph so many degrees of pre-eminence among the Saints, and all but render his grandeur infinite. Combined with that of his most holy spouse, they form an order and a hierarchy exceeding all the blessed. Finally St. Joseph was the first

defender of the virginal purity of the Mother of God." (Vallejo, p. 251.)

Some may object to us the sublime eulogium paid to St. John the Baptist by Our Blessed Saviour Himself. "Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist." (Matt. ii. 11). Now, in the first place, if this text were taken in its strictest sense, it would prove that St. John was as great and holy as the Blessed Virgin, nay, as our Divine Lord Himself; for both were born of women. Therefore the sense of necessity must be limited, and hence we assert the text does not include the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

We may here remark that St. Jerome and many other Fathers hold that the comparison was between St. John and the Saints of the Old Law only. The Saviour exalted the Baptist above the Prophets: his office was of a higher order: the Prophets foretold the coming of the Messias; the Baptist pointed Him out to men saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."*

The mission of St. Joseph, as we have already said, transcended that of the great

* Suarez, Quæst. xxviii., Disp. lxxiv., Sect. 111.

Baptist, as well as that of the Prophets and Apostles. St. Joseph was the reputed father of Jesus ; he saved the very life of the Saviour of the world ; he watched over His Sacred infancy ; countless times he carried Jesus in his arms, and pressed the Redemer to his bosom ; and during his life by the labour of his hands he supplied the wants and comforts of the Holy Family.

True also that in the Litany of the Saints, which forms a part of the Liturgy of the Catholic Church, St. John the Baptist is invoked before St. Joseph ; but precedency in the order of the Litany does not imply greater excellence or merit. For instance, the Patriarchs and Prophets are invoked before St. Peter ; yet who will deny that St. Peter the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Prince of the Apostles, the Head of the Church, was a greater Saint, and had a higher mission than the Patriarchs and Prophets. In like manner, greater, higher, and holier was the Mission of St. Joseph, and unspeakably more intimate his union with Jesus Christ than that of St. John the Baptist.

SECTION II.

The Sanctity of St. Joseph. St. Joseph, in Sanctity, as in Dignity, excels all God's Saints, and is next to the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

In the supernatural, as in the moral and physical order, the infinite wisdom and power of God suit the means to the end. God gives grace and sanctity to His Saints to fulfil the office and rank for which His Divine Providence has destined them.* The nearer a soul is destined to approach God, and the more intimately and largely she enters into the scheme of Redemption, the greater is her dignity, and in proportion is her sanctity. In the above principles we have the origin and the source of the sanctity, privileges, and choicest graces, showered, in all the plenitude of their abundance, upon the soul of St. Joseph by the Almighty. In the Old Law the Prophets and Patriarchs were holy; because they were, in a sense, the Ambassadors between God, and His people; and the channels of His revelations and messages to mankind. Thus the Prophet Jeremias writes, "And the world of the Lord came

* Deus gratiam et sanctitatem muneri accommodatam.—Suarez, Disp. xxiv., Sect. 111.

to me, saying: Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto nations" (Jer. i. 5). The Prophet was sanctified; because his mission was to announce to nations the mysteries and revelations of God Almighty. St. John the Baptist "leaped for joy in his mother's womb," and was sanctified before his eyes saw the light of day; because he was destined to be the Precursor of the Messiah; to baptise, in the waters of the Jordan, the Saviour of the world; and to point Him out in person to mankind saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."

The Blessed Virgin approached unspeakably nearer to God, and far greater and higher was her mission and part in the scheme of man's Redemption. To dilate upon these points would be to write the life of the Blessed Virgin; suffice it to say that no relation could be more intimate than that of the *son* and *mother*; no dignity greater than *Mother of God*. "In one respect," writes Cardinal Newman, "the Blessed Virgin surpasses all, even possible creatures, viz., that she is the Mother of her Creator. What dignity can be too great to attribute to her, who is so closely bound up, as intimately one

with the Eternal Word, as a mother with her son?"* And what is the consequence? We find that her sanctity, her privileges, and special graces are exactly in proportion to her dignity, and to her relation with Jesus, her Son and Saviour. As the Blessed Virgin approached nearer to God than any other creature, so her sanctity soars aloft beyond the region of our conception, and excels that of any Saint or Angel; nay, that of all the blessed Spirits put together. Here we have the key-note to the sanctity of St. Joseph.

The Blessed Virgin was the holiest of all creatures; because she approached nearer to Jesus; because her relation to Jesus was closer, more intimate than that of any other creature. Now what was the relation between St. Joseph, and our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ? How close did he approach to Jesus? What was his mission with regard to Jesus?

In the first place, we see the heavenly appointed mission of St. Joseph with regard to the Blessed Virgin, the Immaculate Mother of Jesus. "When we speak of Mary, we speak of Jesus; speaking of her grandeur, we speak of God's own grandeur. After God, nothing in heaven or on earth is greater than Mary," writes the devout Cardinal de Berulle.

* Letter to Dr. Pusey, Eirenicon, p. 67.

Nothing that the infinite power, wisdom, and love of God could do, in a sense, were wanting to sanctify, purify, and beautify the soul of Mary in honour of the Incarnation; hence perfect sinlessness, perfect purity, perfect immaculateness, perfect union with and love of God, were her unique privileges at her Conception and during her whole life. The Almighty was pleased, if we may so speak, with the work of His hands, and no doubt, watched over Mary with a jealous care.

To whose care was this heavenly jewel, this Lily of Israel, committed? To St. Joseph's. To whose guardianship was the Immaculate Virgin entrusted? To St. Joseph's. From the highest heavens God surveyed the earth from pole to pole to find one worthy of Mary; and whom did He find? St. Joseph. Long before the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, God had created a soul for a high and holy mission; and for that mission God showered upon the soul the choicest dewdrops of heavenly graces. Who was he? St. Joseph. Who, among the sons of men, was found, worthy to receive at the altar the hand of the Virgin Mother of God in consecrated wedlock? St. Joseph. Who was the angel, in human flesh, that a jealous God appointed to guard, in marriage,

the perpetual vow of chastity that Mary had made from her cradle? St. Joseph. Under whose roof did the Eternal Word become Incarnate? St. Joseph's. Whose faith never wavered, never doubted the fidelity of his spouse? St. Joseph's. Whose hands were privileged to earn daily bread for the support of the Mother of the God of the universe? St. Joseph's. On whose arm did Mary, in her delicate state, lean for support from Nazareth to Bethlehem? St. Joseph's. Who watched over Mary at the crib at Bethlehem? St. Joseph. Who helped Mary on the Flight into Egypt? Who died in the arms of the Mother of God? St. Joseph. Here we have one reason, one cause, one source, of the dignity; and hence of the sanctity, and special virtues, and privileges of St. Joseph. The relation of a spouse, a guardian, a protector for the Virgin Mother of God, the Immaculate Queen of heaven, speaks more eloquently than words for the holiness of our great St. Joseph.

We know that God loved Mary so tenderly, and in honour of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, watched over, with such jealous care, her unique privileges, that He would give her for her protector no other

than the purest, the most immaculate, and the most holy of the sons of men.

But we have a still greater reason, a more profound source, for the holiness of St. Joseph, and that is, his relation, his heavenly mission, his intimate connection with Jesus Christ, our Blessed Saviour.

Sacred and sublime was the heavenly appointed mission of St. Joseph regarding our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt that, after the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was the first on earth to whom the glad tidings of the mystery of Redemption were conveyed, and who was the first to adore the Incarnate Son of God. Long before the birth of the Redeemer of the World, the Gospel tells us "the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 20, 21).

St. Joseph learned the mystery of the Incarnation first from the lips of the Blessed Virgin herself. Here God confirms that secret information by a solemn, authentic testimony from heaven. After this, with

what care, love, and reverential awe did St. Joseph watch over the mother and the unborn Divine Babe ?

After Mary, the Mother of Jesus, no saint approached so near to the divine person of Jesus, no saint had a mission so intimately connected with our Blessed Saviour as St. Joseph. Who watched over the Mother and the Child from Nazareth to Bethlehem ? St. Joseph. Who, forgetful of his own fatigues, went from door to door at Bethlehem, seeking a shelter for the exhausted Mother of Jesus ? St. Joseph. Who, first after Mary, adored, loved, and worshipped the Divine Infant in the crib at Bethlehem ? St. Joseph. Who, first after Mary, took in his arms, and pressed to his bosom, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and kissed the Sacred Feet of the Redeemer of the world ? St. Joseph. To whom did the Eternal Father send down an Angel to give instruction how to protect the Infant Jesus from the cruelty of the tyrant Herod ? To St. Joseph. Who guarded and protected, as well as adored and loved, the Divine Babe in the Flight into Egypt ? St. Joseph. Who laboured with his hand for the support of the Mother and the Child in a strange land ? St. Joseph. After the death of Herod, to whom did the Almighty send

another messenger from heaven, to "take the child and his mother" "into the land of Israel?" To St. Joseph. Who "every year went to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Pasch" with Jesus and Mary? St. Joseph. Who was privileged to earn by the labour of his hands daily bread for Jesus and Mary? St. Joseph. Who constantly walked and talked with Jesus, and lived in the most familiar intimacy and presence of Jesus? who, hour by hour, looked into his heavenly countenance, and saw infinite intelligence and wisdom beaming in his divine eye? St. Joseph. Who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary? St. Joseph. Who, in a word, was chosen by God to be called the Father of Jesus, and to be reputed among men as the father of Jesus? St. Joseph.

Here, as we before remarked, is the keynote, the source and reason of the dignity, sanctity, and special privileges and virtues of St. Joseph.

Jesus, infinite sanctity, would never allow any man to be the spouse of his Immaculate Mother, to be his own guardian and protector, to be a member, nay, head, of the Holy Family, to be even called and deemed his father, but the purest, the most holy, the most perfect that God ever created or ever

will create. Such is the sanctity of our great Patriarch St. Joseph.*

We may conclude this section with the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori and of Father Segneri. "We cannot doubt," says the saint, "that whilst St. Joseph lived with Jesus, he received such superabundance of grace, that he surpasses in sanctity and merit all other saints." The holy and eloquent Father Segneri writes: "St. Joseph was ennobled and singularly privileged with the honour of spouse of the Mother of God, a dignity which is a solid principle; from which it follows, with every mark of probability, that St. Joseph was not only sanctified, as we maintain, in his Mother's womb, but that he was afterwards confirmed in grace, and exempt from evil; so that no man—we boldly affirm, no man—on this earth was ever holier than Joseph."

Glorious Patriarch, greatest of Saints, St. Joseph, pray for us, and obtain for us the grace of a holy life and happy death.

SECTION III.

St. Joseph was Sanctified in his Mother's Womb.

Upon the truth of the above proposition or

* Suarez, Tom. ii., Disp. viii., Sect. 2.

opinion, we say, at the start, the Gospels and early Fathers are silent. In the early ages the Sacred Humanity was so vividly before the minds of the people, that the great duty of the Christian Apologists in those times was to prove to an unbelieving race the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence we find in their writings not much on the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour, little upon the Blessed Virgin, and still less upon St. Joseph. We may also remark that God, who knows "the times and the seasons," reserved Devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to St. Joseph in a special manner, for this nineteenth century. Let us here state that everyone is at perfect liberty to hold and believe the opposite opinion, *vis.*, that sanctification before birth, after the Blessed Virgin, was the special grace of St. John the Baptist and the Prophet Jeremias alone, and not the privilege of our great Patriarch St. Joseph. We only wish to show that the opinion at the head of this section is tenable, and that everyone can safely hold and believe it, as we ourselves do, on sound theological principles.

The Prophet Jeremias was sanctified in his mother's womb. "And the word of the Lord," writes the Prophet, "came to me

saying : Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee : and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. i. 4, 5.) St. John the Baptist was sanctified before his birth. The Gospel says : " And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass : that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice and said : Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me. For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears the infant in my womb leaped for joy " (Luke, i. 39-44).

The Blessed Virgin was sanctified in her conception. Sin, whether original or actual, never sullied her immaculate soul.

Now, we have seen elsewhere that God gives graces and special privileges suited and in proportion to the dignity and mission of

His Saints. We have also seen that our great Patriarch, St. Joseph, was elevated by God in dignity beyond any Saint of the Old or New Testament; and that he ranks next to the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. If, therefore, the Almighty sanctified, as He did, the Prophet Jeremias, before he was born, because his mission was to proclaim His eternal truths; if God sanctified, as He did, the Baptist in his mother's womb, because he was to baptise and to point out the Lamb of God; is it not just and reasonable to believe that the same special privilege of sanctification before birth was bestowed by God upon St. Joseph, whose dignity was greater, whose mission was of a higher order, and whose relations with the Saviour of the world were more intimate than those of the Prophet Jeremias, of the great Baptist, or of any other saint?

We shall not dwell longer on the intrinsic arguments in favour of the above privilege, but shall content ourselves to cite a few of the many authorities before us, holding the opinion we have adopted.

The learned Cornelius à Lapide writes: "Truly, if God gives this privilege of sanctification before birth to any other saint

besides the Blessed Virgin, He would not deny it to St. Joseph, her spouse.”*

The celebrated and pious Gerson defended the same opinion at the Council of Constance. “This dissimilitude,” said the Chancellor of the famous University of Paris, “may be noted between Mary and Joseph, that Joseph, after contracting original sin, was sanctified in the womb by the baptism of the Spirit. So it is declared in the Jerusalem Office, composed for St. Joseph.”

Father Segneri, justly esteemed for piety, eloquence, and solid learning, writes: “St. Joseph was ennobled and singularly privileged with the honour of being the spouse of the Mother of God: a dignity which is a solid principle, from which it follows, with every mark of probability, that St. Joseph was not only sanctified, as we maintain, in his mother’s womb, but that he was afterwards confirmed in grace, and exempt from all evil, so that no man—we say it boldly—no man on this earth ever was holier than Joseph.”†

The Venerable Maria of Jesus of Agreda

* Sane si post B. Virginem illud alicui alteri dedit, S. Josepho ejus sponso id ipsum non negasse videtur. (Matt. c. 1, p. 49.)

† Vallejo, p. 21.

holds the same opinion. She writes: "St. Joseph was the greatest Saint of God on earth. . . . He ought to have been, as he was in reality, a prodigy of holiness, and by the special providence of God he was sanctified before his birth. . . . Although he had not the use of reason in his first sanctification, in which he was justified only from original sin, his mother was sensible of a new joy in the Holy Spirit; and without fully penetrating the mystery, she performed great acts of virtue, and believed that her child would become great before God and man." (*Cité Mystique de Dieu*).

The learned Trombelli writes: "Theologians have not been wanting, who have maintained that St. Joseph was sanctified in his mother's womb. Gerson, a name of great authority in theology, confirms this grace by the Breviary of Jerusalem, in which, he says, he read it. He is followed by Isodore Isolano, who, by many arguments, seeks to show the greater probability of this opinion. Among moderns, Father Reiss adorns it and establishes it with many proofs, averring that this opinion has not a few defenders, such as Carthagena, Diego de Valencia, Theophilus, and St. Chrysostom, cited by Isolano, and finally Cornelius à Lapide."

We shall cite but one more author, Father Vallejo, the devout Client of St. Joseph.

“The privilege of sanctification in his mother’s womb,” he writes, “was bestowed on the Baptist, who was born as the glorious Precursor of the Man-God. And whoever will consider the profound dignity of St. Joseph, who was born the chosen spouse of the Virgin Mary, and the putative father of Jesus, cannot but deem him entitled to this grace of presanctification, which adds a new degree of splendour to his sanctity.” (Life of St. Joseph, p. 19.)

From the above arguments and authorities we conclude that the opinion that the glorious St. Joseph was sanctified in his mother’s womb is tenable, and can be safely held and believed. The devout Client of St. Joseph will gladly adopt it, because it redounds to the greater glory of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

SECTION IV.

St. Joseph, by a special Privilege from God, was Confirmed in Grace.

A celebrated writer, describing the glories of St. Peter’s in Rome, says: “The mind expands” and grows “colossal” contemplating

the beauty, the majesty, and sublimity of this greatest of temples in the Church of God.* The same may be said, in different order, of the heroic virtues of our great St. Joseph. When, after long reading and thinking, we come close to see and examine the eminent virtues of our great Patriarch, the mind must "expand" and grow "colossal" to take in and comprehend the height, the width, and sublime beauty of this mighty spiritual edifice, not the work of the genius and wealth of man, but designed and constructed by the hands of the Omnipotent Himself.

That St. Joseph was confirmed in grace is

* " But thou of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee,
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.
Since Zion's desolation, when that He
Forsook His former city, what could be,
Of earthly structures, in His honour piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, glory, strength, and beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

" Enter: Its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
And why? It is not lessened; but thy mind
Expanded by the glories of the spot,
Has grown colossal, and can only find
A fit abode wherein appeared enshrined
Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
See thy God face to face, as thou dost now
His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by His brow."

BYRON.

a tenable and well-grounded opinion. The writers who hold that St. Joseph was sanctified before his birth, maintain the above opinion also, and with the same arguments. This special privilege was conferred upon our Saint by the Almighty on account of his relations with Jesus and Mary. Suarez says it is certain that St. John the Baptist and the Apostles were confirmed in grace.* Cornelius à Lapide, from this, argues and concludes, that Almighty God would not and could not refuse to confer upon St. Joseph, His reputed father, and the chaste Spouse of the Immaculate Mother of God, any grace or privilege granted to any other Saint after the Blessed Virgin.† In one word, St. Joseph was confirmed in grace by the Almighty, on account of his dignity and sanctity, as reputed father of Jesus, husband of Mary, and head of the Holy Family.

We shall quote only a few of the many respectable authors before us.

The learned and eloquent Father Segneri

* "Dicendum est, Joannem Baptistam nunquam mortaliter peccasse; atque adeo in prima sua sanctificatione confirmatum in gratia fuisse. Hanc affirmationem existimo ita certam, ut sine magna temeritate, ac error negari posset." (Quæst xxxviii., Disp. xxiv., Sec. iv.)

† Matt. i. 16.

writes : " St. Joseph was ennobled and singularly privileged with the honour of spouse of the Mother of God. . . . St. Joseph was not only sanctified, as we maintain, in his mother's womb, but was afterwards *confirmed in grace* and exempt from evil." The devout client of St. Joseph, Father Vallejo, quotes many authorities for the above opinion, and says : " Hence, we may lawfully infer that the great St. Joseph was not only sanctified before appearing in the light of this world, but was also favoured with the use of understanding and free will. . . . This similarity to the Blessed Virgin, of loving God before birth, is conceded by great theologians to St. John the Baptist, and consequently to St. Joseph, a Saint to whom, in glory, and in the privileges of grace, his ministry and dignity give advantages over all the other blessed. Nor can we believe that God, who is so liberal of His favours, will deny the guardian and foster-father of His Son, the grace which He freely conceded to another Saint, who was not of so eminent a dignity, nor of so supreme a ministry. From the same motive we shall say that the foster-father of Jesus, the head, and in some sense, the superior of the Blessed Virgin, and of Christ as man, was confirmed in grace the instant he had

the use of reason by an extraordinary favour of heaven. . . . The privilege of avoiding, by a special grace of heaven, all deliberate sins is conceded to St. John the Baptist by grave theologians, who rely on the authority of St. Augustine and a hymn of the Church ; and I think that these doctors, whose arguments pass for solid with Suarez,* will not deny the same favour to St. Joseph when the reasons in his case are at least equal, if not superior" (Life, p. 36).

From the above sound arguments, we may safely conclude that St. Joseph was confirmed in grace like St. John the Baptist, and the Apostles, is a tenable and reasonable opinion. We the more readily hold and believe it, because it redounds to the greater glory of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I offer to you my heart and soul.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.

• Disp. 3., Art. 3.

SECTION V.

The purity of St. Joseph.

St. Stephen, the first martyr, was canonised by the Holy Ghost. "And they stoned Stephen," says the sacred text, "invoking and saying: Lord Jesus receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord" (Acts, vii. 58). The same Divine Spirit of truth and wisdom pronounces on the sanctity of St. Joseph, by styling him a "just man" (Matt. i. 19). The word "just" comprehends all virtues in the most eminent degree. St. John Chrysostom says: "Just, here means perfect in every virtue."* "No description," writes a client of our Saint, "can be more honourable, no eulogy more comprehensive; because this word just, according to commentators on Holy Writ, means that St. Joseph possessed all virtues in the degree of perfection" (Vallejo, p. 276).

St. Francis of Sales writes: "If the lily, by being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the sun, acquires its dazzling whiteness,

* *Justum hic in omni virtute dicit perfectum.* (Hom. xii. n. Matt. i. 19).

who can conceive the extraordinary degree of purity to which St. Joseph was exalted, by being exposed, as he was, day and night, for so many years to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and of that mystical moon which derives all her splendour from Him?" We are at a loss to know what virtue to begin with, but the above suggests the purity of St. Joseph.

In the Old and New Testament we have countless texts and examples to show how dear purity is to God. Saints excelled in different virtues; but purity is common to all. No soul shall ever enter heaven until she is purer than the sunbeam, and whiter than the virgin snow. Precious in the sight of God is the lily of holy purity. "No price is worthy of a continent soul" (*Eccclus. xxv. 20*). The chaste Susanna is held in to the admiration of the world; she preferred to die rather than sin in the sight of the Lord. The chaste souls are likened to the Angels. "At the resurrection," says our Blessed Lord, "they shall neither marry nor be married; but shall be as the Angels of God in heaven" (*Matt. xxii. 30*). The Angels are pure by nature; but the chaste are pure by grace. Hence, St. Bernard asserts, that a chaste man differs from an Angel only in felicity, but not in virtue.

Our Divine Lord loves the chaste souls, and feeds among the lilies, the emblems of purity. "I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valley. As the lily among the thorns, so my love among the daughters. . . . My beloved to me, and I to him, who feedeth among the lilies." (Cant. ii.)

The mystery of the Incarnation, and all its surroundings, prove to demonstration how dear to Jesus is the holy virtue of purity. St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Blessed Lord, was a chaste virgin. St. Peter was head of the Church; yet the favourite disciple, the "disciple whom Jesus loved," was St. John the Evangelist. This virgin disciple was privileged, at the Last Supper, to recline his head on the bosom of his Divine Saviour. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, and said to him: Who is it of whom he speaketh? He, therefore, leaning on the breast of Jesus, saith to him: Lord, who is it?" (John, xiii. 23.) When dying upon the cross, to whom did our Blessed Lord entrust what was dearest to Him on earth—His Blessed Mother? He gave charge of His Virgin Mother to the

virgin disciple, St. John the Evangelist. "Now," says the Gospel, "there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to his disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own" (John, xix. 25).

St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and other Fathers, assign virgin purity as the cause of this special love of Jesus for St. John. This can hardly be doubted; for the Church, in the Divine Office on the Feast of St. John, says that "Jesus loved him more tenderly than the other Apostles; for his special prerogative of chastity made him worthy of this preference, because when called to the Apostolate he was a virgin, and a virgin he remained all his life."

The confessors are high in heaven; they wore chains on earth for the love of Jesus. The martyrs, with the palm branch in their hands, are higher still; they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; they sealed their faith with their blood; they sacrificed their lives for the love of Jesus. Higher and higher still, is another band or choir of Saints. Who are they? They are the spotless virgins! In heaven above, the

Saints sing various hymns and canticles in praise of the Almighty. There is one special canticle which confessors or martyrs dare not pronounce, and which virgin lips alone are privileged to sing. Let us cite the inspired words of the Evangelist: "I saw the Lamb upon Mount Sion, and one hundred and forty-four thousand with him, singing, as it were, a new song, and which none else can sing but only these hundred and forty-four thousand which he had redeemed from the earth. These are such as were never defiled with women; they are virgins who follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes" (Apoc. xiv. 1-3). Such and so great are the special privileges awarded by God in heaven above to the pure and chaste. "Blessed," says the Redeemer, "are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8).

But the example of the Blessed Virgin preaches far more eloquently than the examples we have adduced, how dear and precious in the sight of God is the holy virtue of purity. The purity of the Blessed Virgin is as high above any Saint, or that of all the Saints put together, as the heavens are above the earth.* Not only did Mary,

* Suarez, Tomus xix., Ques. xxxviii., Art. iv., Sec. iv.

countless times, carry in her arms, and as many times more fondly press to her bosom, the Infant Saviour. Not only did Mary bear in her chaste womb for nine months the Incarnate Son of God, but the very blood, out of which the Sacred Body of Jesus was formed by the Holy Ghost, the Precious Blood, by which all mankind was redeemed on Mount Calvary, had its source in the Heart of Mary Immaculate. Such being the relation between Mary and Jesus, the relation of a mother to a son, no wonder that her privileges should be unique that she should be conceived without sin, and that the smallest stain of actual sin should never sully her soul. No wonder that she should be the purest, the most perfect, the most immaculate, the most holy soul, that the Almighty has ever created, or ever will create: of course we do not include the soul of our Blessed Saviour. When Mary Immaculate stood before her Maker, radiant in beauty, purity, and perfection, God, pleased, so to speak, with the work of His hands, deigned to salute her, saying: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in thee" (Can. iv. 7). "Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem. . . . One is my dove, my perfect one is but one. She is the only one." (Can. vi.)

The Blessed Virgin, as we have said above, was the purest, the most perfect, the most immaculate soul the Almighty ever created. Next to Mary in purity, dignity, and sanctity, is St. Joseph. In the first place, St. Joseph was chosen by heaven to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin. Now God was so jealous of Mary's purity, that He would give no one to her as a real husband, as Joseph was, but the purest and holiest of men. From among all the sons of Israel, God chose St. Joseph to be the guardian and protector of the virtue of the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer of the world; and hence, for this end, the Almighty showered upon him the choicest, the richest, and the most precious graces of heaven. To be chosen, and to be worthy to be the husband of Mary Immaculate, is in itself sufficient to prove the supereminent virtue and purity of our Saint. The title, "husband of Mary," fades away into insignificance compared to the title, "reputed father" of Jesus. The gleam of purity shining upon St. Joseph, from his relation with Mary, is lost in the meridian splendour of the virtue necessary for him from his relation with Jesus, the Eternal Son of Justice, Purity, and Sanctity itself. None but the clean and pure of

heart can see God. St. Joseph not only saw his God, but lived, walked, and worked in His visible Divine presence. If purity obtained for St. John the Evangelist the privilege of reclining his head on the bosom of his Saviour, what must be the purity of St. Joseph, who countless times bore in his arms the Saviour of the world, and pressed to his bosom the Divine Babe? If one ray of God's pure love is sufficient, as it is, to purify and sanctify the soul of man, what must be the purity of St. Joseph, upon whose soul shone for years, in their full effulgence, the rays of the Eternal Sun of Justice? Let the honeyed pen of St. Francis of Sales express it. "St. Joseph," says the Saint, "surpassed the Angels and Saints in purity. For if, being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the material sun, the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness, who can conceive the extraordinary degree of purity to which St. Joseph was exalted, exposed as he was, day and night, for so many years to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and of that mystical Moon which derives her splendours from Him?"

Venerable Maria of Jesus of Agreda writes: "In the virtue of purity, he was more elevated than the highest Seraphim. . . .

By this perfection and by his angelic integrity, he was prepared to be the spouse of the purest of creatures and to live in her society."

O Jesus, make us pure and chaste. O Jesus, help us when tempted against holy purity. O Mary Immaculate! obtain for us purity of body and soul.

"Guardian of virgins, and holy father Joseph, to whose faithful care Jesus Christ, innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed, I pray and beseech thee, by these dear privileges, Jesus and Mary, that being preserved from all uncleanness, I may, with a spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, ever most chastely serve Jesus and Mary all the days of my life."

SECTION VI.

The perpetual Virginity of St. Joseph.

That St. Joseph lived and died a pure virgin, like his Immaculate spouse, though not of faith, is absolutely certain. Reason, and the ancient and constant Tradition of the Church, prove it beyond doubt.

In the preceding section, we have seen how God loves purity, how dear to the Almighty is chastity, and with what jealous care God watched over the purity of Mary in

honour of the Incarnation. From this we may conclude that God Almighty would never choose, from among the sons of men, a guardian and spouse for the Immaculate Mother of God, and a foster-father for His beloved and eternal Son Jesus Christ, any but a pure and perpetual virgin; this guardian and spouse of Mary, this foster-father of Jesus, is St. Joseph: therefore, St. Joseph lived and died a pure virgin.

We shall select only a few out of the many authorities before us, in almost every age of the Church, in favour of the perpetual Virginity of St. Joseph.

St. Jerome, writing against the heresiarch, Helvidius, who impiously denied the perpetual virginity of our Blessed Lady, says: "Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a virgin. I not only maintain it, but aver that Joseph, too, was a virgin, through Mary; so that a Virgin Son might be born of this virgin marriage. It does not appear that Joseph had ever before contracted marriage. Of the Mother of God, he was rather a guardian than a husband: hence we must believe that he lived with Mary as a virgin, and so deserved to be called the Father of the Lord."

St. Augustine and St. Thomas maintain the same doctrine; and hence the learned

Cardinal Baronius, summing up the proofs, writes: "All the Catholic writers of the Latin Church, who have flourished since the days of St. Jerome, have followed his opinion as to the perpetual virginity of St. Joseph; so much so that St. Peter Damian, the ablest writer of his day, says, with great satisfaction, that the faith of the Church is, that St. Joseph was a virgin like his most pure spouse (meaning by faith, as the accurate Suarez explains, the pious belief of the Church). And surely, so far as we are allowed to have recourse to probable conjectures, who will believe that God would not select a virgin spouse for His Mother, when, after He became man, and was dying on the cross, He confided her to one who was a virgin?"*

The learned John Gerson, preaching before the Council of Constance, said: "As it became Mary to shine forth with the greatest purity, so was it becoming for her to have a most pious spouse, who would remain before and after in perpetual virginity."†

The Bollandists say, that "since the days of St. Jerome the whole Latin Church has unanimously adopted the opinion of the perpetual virginity of St. Joseph."

* Vallejo, p. 97.

† Serm. de Nat. Mariæ, etc.

We shall cite only one more authority.

Canisius writes: "Bede and Alcuin clearly confess the perpetual virginity of St. Joseph. . . . Hugh Victorinus, called in his time a second St. Augustine, and other theologians, especially St. Thomas and Gerson, not to mention moderns, maintain, with solid authorities, that Joseph and Mary, by mutual consent, consecrated themselves to God by a vow of perpetual virginity. . . . St. Peter Damian, an enlightened divine, warmly holds that the faith of the Church is, that not only the Mother of God, but Joseph, His reputed father, was a virgin."*

Hence, for the greater glory of our Saint, we are glad to repeat the heading of this section, that it is absolutely certain that our great Patriarch, St. Joseph, lived and died, like his immaculate spouse, a pure and spotless virgin. O most chaste St. Joseph, pray for us.

SECTION VII.

The Faith of St. Joseph.

"Faith," says St. Paul, "is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of

* Vallejo, p. 98.

things that appear not" (Heb. xi. 1). Faith is the foundation of our salvation: it is the groundwork of our supernatural life. Faith is the first great theological and divine virtue, for it has God and the truths of God as its immediate object. Faith is absolutely essential for the salvation of every adult that has come to the use of reason. "Now, this is eternal life; that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent" (John, xvii. 3). "Go ye into the whole world," said our Blessed Redeemer, "and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (Mark, xvi. 16). "Without faith," says St. Paul, "it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). "Man," writes the Apostle, "is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; we also believe in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Gal. ii. 16). And "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost," preached of Jesus: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For

there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts, iv. 12). "Faith," says the Council of Trent, "is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification; without which it is impossible to please God, and to come into the fellowship of His sons." (Sess. VI. c. viii.)

The grounds or authority of our faith is no other than the authority of God Himself. God cannot deceive or be deceived. God has deigned to reveal or make known to man His Divine truths or mysteries of religion; upon God's unerring word, upon God's infallible authority, we believe the doctrines of faith, which our minds cannot understand.

Faith is most pleasing to God; because, by faith, proud man bends his intellect and will, so to speak, to believe what he can neither see or understand. Faith gives great glory to the Almighty; because, by faith, man submits and gives up captive to God his proud intellect and stubborn will. Faith pays supreme homage to God; because, by faith, we acknowledge God's unerring truth; on God's authority, we adore and believe what we cannot comprehend.

Wonderful and admirable, no doubt, was the simple faith of St. Joseph. The Incar-

nation is one of the most sublime and most profound Mysteries of our holy faith. To a man that believes in the Incarnation, no Mystery can present a difficulty. St. Joseph's faith was wonderful, both with regard to Jesus and Mary. On the authority of God, Abraham believed that a barren woman would become a mother; at the word of an angel, St. Joseph believed that a virgin would become a mother, and yet be as virginal after as before the birth of her child! In blind obedience to faith, did St. Joseph salute the Virgin Mother.

We have said that the Mystery of the Incarnation is one of the most sublime and profound of our holy faith. All the unique privileges, all the choicest graces of heaven, showered so copiously upon the Blessed Virgin, were in honour of the Incarnation. The time of man's Redemption had come! Mary stands before God in all the beauty and odour of perfect sanctity: she is "sweet," "comely," "beautiful," "all fair." From the purest blood of her Immaculate Heart, the Holy Ghost formed a perfect body; a perfect human soul was created by God, and united to that body; at the very instant of that union, before that mind could think, or the heart beat, the Eternal Word, the Second

Divine Person of the most Adorable Trinity, descended from heaven, and was hypostatically united to the soul and body; thus, being *one* Divine Person in *two* distinct natures, Human and Divine. Stupendous and adorable is the Mystery of the Incarnation! To redeem fallen man, and through love for sinful, ungrateful man, the Eternal Son of God, descends from the bosom of His Father and assumes human flesh. The Eternal is born in time, the Infinite is circumscribed! After the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was the first on earth that believed and adored the Mystery of the Incarnation. "Behold," says the Gospel, "the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 20). Without inquiry or hesitation, St. Joseph accepted the word of the angel, and paid supreme homage to the Incarnate Son of God.

The Evangelist, soaring like the eagle, ascends to the bosom of the Eternal Father, and in awfully solemn and sacred words, narrates the profound Mystery of the Incarnation.

“In the beginning,” writes the inspired writer, “was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth” (John, i. 1-14). Meditating on the infinite love, mercy, goodness, and compassion of the Son of God, manifested in the Incarnation, as well as on the infinite humiliations of the Lord of glory, we can only exclaim with St. Paul: “O the depth of the riches of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways” (Rom. xi. 33).

Great and many were the tests and trials of St. Joseph's faith. If a creature could be worthy to be the dwelling-place of the great Creator, Mary's chaste womb was not an unfitting abode for the Incarnate Son of God. This none knew so well as St. Joseph. For the Nativity of the Redeemer of the world, St. Joseph might not unreasonably expect great preparation at Bethlehem, where, according to the prophecy, He was to be born. Arrived there, so far from a grand reception, he found not a lodging, a house,

or a home to shelter the Mother of God, fatigued from the long journey of about eighty miles. The bleak open cave was the royal palace, the cold crib the cradle of state, the swaddling clothes the gorgeous attire, and the ass and ox the attendants on the Saviour of the world. Far from being shocked at the humiliations and poverty of the crib and manger, St. Joseph's soul expanded, so to speak, in admiration of the sublime Mystery, and in simple, docile faith, joined Mary in adoring, praising, glorifying, and loving the Divine Infant Redeemer.

Sublime, docile, and supernatural was St. Joseph's faith in the Incarnate Son of God. With reverence and love, St. Joseph looks into the Divine face of the new-born Babe. The Infant Jesus appears weak, yet by faith St. Joseph recognised Him as the Omnipotent God by "whom all things were made." Jesus lies in the manger; yet the heavens and the earth cannot contain Him, planets and systems revolve in His immensity. He is friendless, and without homage; yet the eye of the most Adorable Trinity, and the attention of the nine choirs of the Blessed Spirits in Paradise, are fixed upon the Saviour. "Adore Him, all you his angels" (Ps. xcvi. 7). "And, again, when

he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him" (Heb. i. 6).

Meditating on the love and humiliations of the Divine Babe, St. Bernard cries out: "Hear, ye heavens, and lend your ears, O earth! Stand in raptures of astonishment and praise, O you whole creation! but you chiefly, O man—Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, was born in Bethlehem of Juda. O short word of the Eternal Word abridged for us, but filled with heavenly sweetness! The affection of this melting sweetness struggles within, earnestly labouring widely to diffuse its teeming abundance, but finds not words. For such is the grace and energy of this speech, that it tastes less sweet if one iota in it be changed."

Day after day, St. Joseph's faith was put to new tests and trials. Scarcely is the Saviour born, when the cruel Herod plots to take away His life!—the creature to take away the life of the Creator! Does Jesus, by a breath, wither up and annihilate the venomous reptile? or does the Saviour send one of His Angels to slay the tyrant by a look? No; far from it. There is no manifestation of the power, majesty, and Divinity of the new-born King. God makes use of the

services of man, of St. Joseph himself, to protect and save the life of the Saviour of the world.

After many years of exile, the Holy Family are admonished to return to their native home, and are assured that the life of the Child is safe. And why? Is there now to be a manifestation of the power of God over man? No; but simply because His enemies are dead. The Gospel says: "But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child" (Matt. ii. 19).

To many the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth was the greatest test of the faith of St. Joseph.

Jesus is God, the long-expected Saviour, the Author of a New Gospel. Jesus is come to teach, convert, and save the whole human family. Yet what does St. Joseph hear and see? He hears of false, wicked teachers and philosophers perverting, and corrupting the minds and hearts of men by false teaching and erroneous doctrine; he hears of kings and emperors preparing for war and battle now as of yore; he sees the Jew, as well as

the heathen, proud, wicked, and sinful; he sees mankind sitting in darkness and the shades of death; and yet among men were "the way," "the truth," "the life," "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Amid this night of darkness, sin, and error, St. Joseph sees, at Nazareth, Jesus hidden and unknown, nay, despised as the carpenter's son. This trial of faith lasted to his death; for St. Joseph was not privileged to see the stupendous miracles which manifested to the world the Divinity, power, and glory of the Son of God. Yet, so far from wavering, the divine, supernatural faith of St. Joseph in the Divinity of the Saviour of the world, increased every day, from the moment he knew of the Incarnation, to the hour of his death.

"O just and holy Joseph," exclaims Cardinal D'Ailly, "how didst thou so quickly and so firmly believe these sublime mysteries?"

The life of Jesus, hidden and unknown during the life of St. Joseph, is like the hidden life of Jesus in the Tabernacle. St. Joseph saw no miracles to animate his faith in the Divinity of Jesus; he believed the word of the Angel. We may not be privileged to witness miracles for the strengthening of our

faith in the Real Presence of Jesus on our altars ; but we have God's own unerring, infallible Word, which is as true as God Himself. May our faith be like the faith of St. Joseph ! May we ever treat Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with the same faith, reverence, care, and love with which St. Joseph treated the Infant and Child Jesus ! St. Joseph pray for us !

SECTION VIII.

The Charity of St. Joseph.

Charity is the love of God. Charity is the union, the peace, the friendship of the soul with its Maker. Charity is the queen of virtues ; and when, in heaven above, all other virtues cease to exist, charity reigns supreme, and that for all eternity. "Hear, O Israel," says the sacred text, "the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and

rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house" (Deut. vi. 4-9). Thus, by the great Commandment of divine love, our hearts with all their affections, our souls with all their faculties, and our bodies with all their senses and actions, belong, by precept, to God alone. Our Blessed Lord said: "This is the greatest and first commandment" (Matt. xxii. 38).

Upon the soul of man God has stamped His own image and likeness; and, as matter gravitates towards the centre, so our soul, by divine love, tends to and is united with God, its centre and Maker. By charity the soul soars, so to speak, above all created things, and unites itself with the Lord of glory; by charity the soul forsakes all earthly things, and flings herself into the infinite ocean of God's divine love.

Charity, or the love of God, not only soars above the highest heavens, and ascends to the bosom of the Eternal Father, but it circles the earth, and enfolds in its mantle the whole human family. By charity we love God for His own sake, and all mankind as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus said

to him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 37).

This charity, by which we love our neighbours as ourselves for the love of God, is a spark of that divine flame by which we love God above all things for His own sake.

"Dearly beloved," says St. John the Evangelist, "let us love one another, for charity is of God. And every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not his neighbour, knoweth not God; for God is charity. . . . God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John, iv. 7). Our Blessed Lord said to His disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John, xiii. 34).

As Jesus died for the whole human race, and shed His Precious Blood to redeem the

whole world, so this fraternal charity embraces all mankind, friends and foes alike. In the sublime Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans do this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 44). "If any man say," adds the Evangelist, "I love God, and hateth his brethren, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother" (John, iv. 20). Thus, the ray of divine charity, by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and that by which we love our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God, is one and the same, and issues from the Eternal Son of Justice.

In every soul in the state of grace this heavenly flame burns, and is extinguished only by mortal sin. This charity is intensified in holy souls in proportion to their virtues and sanctity.

We cannot measure, but only contemplate, and that at a distance, the intensity of the charity or love of our great St. Joseph. The nearer we approach the fire, the greater the heat; the nearer we come to the sun, the more intense the rays. What, then, must not be the heat of divine love that burned in the soul of St. Joseph, who lived for so many years in the very presence of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sun of Charity? "If," writes St. Francis of Sales, "by being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the material sun, the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness, who can conceive the extraordinary degree of charity to which St. Joseph was exalted, exposed, as he was, day and night, for so many years, to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and of that mystical moon which derives her splendour from Him?"

The Divine Providence of God proportions the means to the end. Hence, the more sublime the mission of a Saint, or the greater the dignity of a Saint, the more abundantly will God shower down upon that

Saint the graces of His Divine love. Now, after the Blessed Virgin, no Saint or Angel entered so intimately into the eternal decrees for the salvation of mankind as St. Joseph. Hence, it was meet on the part of God to bestow upon him love and grace beyond that of any other Saint or Angel in heaven. In a word, the heavenly-appointed mission of St. Joseph as spouse of the chaste Mother of God, and, higher still, as foster-father, guardian, and protector of the Redeemer of the world, is unique, has no equal; so his holiness, or love of God, surpasses that of any other saint, the Blessed Virgin Mary alone excepted. St. Alphonsus Liguori says: "We cannot doubt that whilst St. Joseph lived with Jesus, he received such a superabundance of graces, that he surpasses in merit all the other saints."

Nor need we wonder if, as the Gospel narrates, a short conversation with Jesus inflamed with divine love the hearts of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, what flame of divine love must have burned in the heart of St. Joseph, who spent months and years in the most intimate friendship and the closest communion with Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world.

If one ray of the burning love of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus is sufficient to consume with the flames of divine charity the soul of man, how can we measure the intensity of the charity of St. Joseph, who, countless times, carried in his arms, and pressed to his bosom, that burning furnace of infinite and divine love, the throbbing and loving Heart of the Infant Jesus. A devout client writes: "The light of the Divine Child's eyes, the sound of His voice, the play of His fingers, cast St. Joseph into a constant ecstacy of love."

O merciful Jesus, enkindle in our hearts the burning fire of Thy divine love. O Divine Redeemer! grant us the grace to love God, above all things, for His own sake; and to love our neighbours as ourselves for the love of God. Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, pray that we may love and serve God faithfully all the days of our lives.

SECTION IX.

The Humility of St. Joseph.

Charity is the crowning capital of the spiritual edifice; humility is its foundation. Charity is the queen of virtues; humility is its handmaid. By charity we soar up to

the bosom of the Eternal; by humility we descend down to the depths of our nothingness. Charity comprises all virtues; "humility," says St. Bernard, "is the foundation and preservation of all virtues." As an edifice cannot stand without a foundation, so there can be no Christian virtue without humility.

The sacred text teaches the necessity of this holy virtue. Our Blessed Redeemer said to His disciples: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as like children (by humility), you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). "God," says St. James, "resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James, iv. 6.)

In the Gospel of St. Luke, our loving Saviour puts before us, in a most striking parable, the beauty of the virtue of humility, and the hideousness of the vice of pride. "Two men," says the Saviour, "went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess. And

the Publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast saying : O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down unto his house justified rather than the other ; because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (Luke, xviii. 10). " O God, be merciful to me, a sinner," is the prayer to obtain pardon and mercy from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. " The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds. . . . And he will not depart till the Most High behold " (Eccclus. xxxv. 21). Such and so great is the efficacy of the prayer of an humble soul. All our gifts of grace and nature belong to God, and come from God alone. " Every best gift, and every perfect gift," says the sacred text, " is from above, coming from the Father of Light " (James, i. 17). St. Paul then asks : " What hast thou that thou hast not received ? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hast not received ? " (1 Cor. iv. 7). " For in any man," continues the inspired writer, " thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself " (Gal. vi. 7). One thing, and one thing only, belongs to ourselves exclusively,

and of which no man can be proud, and that is our sins.

St. John the Baptist, the precursor of the Redeemer, who was sanctified in His mother's womb, and of whom our Blessed Saviour said, that "Amongst those that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist," when asked who and what he was, answered in the depth of his humility: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (John, i. 19).

The Blessed Virgin, the most holy, the most immaculate, the most pure, the most perfect, the most exalted creature that ever issued from the hands of the Divine Maker, and yet the most humble, cried out, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke, i. 46).

But let us bridge over the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator; let us ascend from earth to heaven, from man to God. What lesson does Jesus Christ, the Incarnate, Eternal, Omnipotent Son of the Living God teach? The Gospel tells us: "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because

I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest in your souls" (Matt. ix. 29).

Let us now contemplate the humility of our great St. Joseph. We have seen that St. Joseph excelled in every virtue, therefore humility the most profound was his. God showers His graces in proportion to the rank and dignity of His great Saints; and we have seen that, after the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph is exalted in dignity beyond any Saint or Angel of God; hence we can conclude that his humility excelled that of the brightest Cherub or Seraph, the Mother of God, the humble handmaid of the Lord, alone excepted.

St. Joseph, though of the royal house of David, was content and happy at the humble trade of an artisan. For thirty years St. Joseph had before his eyes the model of humility, "the handmaid of the Lord," the Blessed Virgin Mary. For thirty years St. Joseph saw infinite sanctity, blended with unspeakable humility, beaming in the Divine countenance of Jesus, "meek and humble of Heart." In this school of Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph learned and practised humility in keeping with his dignity and sanctity. After Mary, St. Joseph was the most humble as well as the most holy soul ever created by the Almighty.

“Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart.” O “hand-maid of the Lord,” O humble St. Joseph, obtain for me humility, as well as purity of heart and soul.

We shall not dwell longer on the heroic virtues of our great Saint. The choicest gifts and graces that could sanctify, beautify, and adorn a holy soul were showered, in the plenitude of their abundance, upon the soul of St. Joseph to fit him, to make him worthy to be the spouse of Mary, and the reputed father of Jesus. The Gospel sums up all his virtues in the one word, “just;” and *just*, says St. John Chrysostom, “here means perfect in every virtue.”

St. Jerome writes: “St. Joseph is called ‘just’ on account of his perfect possession of all virtues.” St. Bernard of Sienna says: “How can a discreet mind think that the Holy Ghost would have united, by such a union, any soul to the soul of such a Virgin, unless most like her in the practice of all virtues. Whence I believe that this most holy man Joseph was most pure in virginity, most profound in humility, most ardent in charity, and most high in contemplation.”*

* Serm. de S. Joseph; Art. ii. cap. 1.

We might cite many other authorities, but we shall content ourselves with one passage from the pen of an eloquent writer: "For my part I reverence the virtues of St. Joseph, and leave to other pens to give them all the light and splendour which their brilliancy deserves—not with ink—but with the rays of the sun. Nor should anyone wonder at my saying that these virtues should be described with rays of light, when the eloquence of a Nazianzen, overwhelmed by the glory of the prerogatives and virtues of the father of Jesus, exclaims: 'In Joseph as a sun are gathered all the lights of the Saints'"—(Patrignani).

The pious reader will therefore agree with us when we say, there is no use or need to particularise the different virtues of our Saint, or to dwell longer on them. St. Joseph, as we have already seen, excelled in each and all.

St. Joseph excelled all the Saints, not only in the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; in the four cardinal or moral virtues of prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance; in the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and the fear of the Lord; but also in every grace and virtue

that could sanctify, adorn, and beautify a holy soul.

After Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph is the "example of all virtues."

PIOUS REFLECTIONS.

My soul! meditate on the exalted dignity, eminent sanctity, and heroic virtues of the great St. Joseph. St. Joseph, after Mary Immaculate, is the noblest work of the hands of the Almighty. In dignity his sublime mission lifts him up above the Cherubim and Seraphim. His sanctity expands beyond the grasp of the human mind; it is only less than that of the Blessed Mother of God. Like the Prophet Jeremias and the Baptist, he was sanctified in his mother's womb; and with the Apostles, confirmed in grace. In perpetual chastity he was like the lily of Israel, purer than a sunbeam, and whiter than the virgin snow. In faith he was ever ready to believe the most profound mysteries of religion; and his obedience was ever docile and prompt to the calls of God, to every whisper of an Angel. His charity, or burning love of God, was equalled by his profound humility, learned in the school of the "handmaid of the Lord," and of Jesus, "meek and humble of Heart."

RESOLUTIONS.

My God! I rejoice in the perfection of thy works; and I resolve—first, to thank Thee for the exalted dignity, eminent sanctity, heroic virtues, and sublime glories of our great patriarch, St. Joseph.

I love holy purity so dear to Jesus, my Saviour; and hence, O my Lord, I resolve, by God's grace, to avoid every occasion where there may be danger of sullyng the white lily of virgin modesty. Thirdly, I resolve, by the aid of divine grace, promptly to obey the calls and secret inspiration of the Almighty. And, lastly, in imitation of the Holy Family—the humble Joseph, Mary “the handmaid,” and Jesus “meek and humble of Heart,” I resolve to practise some little secret act of humility and self-denial known to God alone.

PRAYERS.

O my God! in honour of the incarnation, I thank, praise, and bless Thee for the dignity, sanctity, heroic virtues, and the glories of Mary and Joseph. I desire that every moment of my life may be an act of in-

finite thanks to Thee, O bountiful God, for having given me in Heaven Mary and Joseph, two most holy and dear friends, watching over my salvation. O God! make me pure and chaste; may I never sin against holy modesty. O dearest and most merciful Jesus! take from me, when Thou seest me fit, my life; but never take from me sanctifying grace, the life of my soul. Jesus, through the prayers of Thy beloved Mother Mary, and Thy reputed father Joseph, make and preserve my soul as pure as a sunbeam and as white as the virgin snow. O merciful God, through the bowels of Thy divine mercy, through the merits and name of Jesus, through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, grant me the grace promptly to obey the secret calls and inspiration of heaven, not only to avoid sin, and all occasions of sin, but also to advance in virtue. O loving Jesus! infuse into my sinful heart, from Thy Sacred Heart, one little spark of the ardent charity, lively faith, and profound humility of St. Joseph!

Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph! Jesus will not, cannot refuse to hear your petitions; pray, then, to Jesus that I may be pure and chaste; that I may be good and holy; that I may love and serve God all the days of

my life ; that I may die a happy death ; and that I may see and possess Jesus for all eternity in Paradise.

AN ACT OF CONSECRATION TO ST. JOSEPH.

Glorious St. Joseph ! worthy amongst all the Saints to be venerated, loved, and invoked, because of the excellence of thy virtues, the eminence of thy glory, and the power of thy intercession ; in the presence of the most Adorable Trinity, of Jesus thy adopted Son, and of Mary thy chaste spouse, and my tender Mother, I take thee this day as my advocate, my protector, and father. I firmly resolve never to forget thee, and to love and honour thee all the days of my life, and to do all that I can to spread devotion to thee among the faithful.

Deign to protect me in a special manner, O my beloved father. I am unworthy, it is true ; yet, in the name of the love thou bearest for Jesus and Mary, receive me among the number of thy special friends.

In the name of this double society, which was formed beside thee by Jesus and Mary, during thy whole life, protect me as long as I live, so that I may never be separated from God by sin. In the name of thy happy

death, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, protect me, especially at the hour of my death; so that dying, accompanied by thee, by Jesus, and by Mary, I may come to thank thee in heaven, and in thy holy company praise, bless, glorify, and enjoy God for all eternity. Amen.

Part III.



DEVOTIONS IN HONOUR OF
ST. JOSEPH.

MONTH OF MARCH IN HONOUR OF
ST. JOSEPH.

CHAPTER V.

DEVOTIONS IN HONOUR OF ST. JOSEPH.

SECTION I.

Faith and Devotions.

FAITH, like God Himself, is immutable. "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). From the beginning the Church received from her Divine Founder the full deposit of faith. The Church can neither abolish nor create a truth of faith. The articles of faith are divine truths revealed to man by God Himself: and these truths the Church can neither change, add to, nor subtract from, or modify in any form. They are as immutable and true as God Himself.

In almost every century, from the beginning of Christianity, the Church, guided by the Spirit of God, has proposed to her children new definitions of faith. Thus, at the Council of Nice, in the year 325, she defined

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the Divinity of Our Blessed Redeemer; at the Council of Ephesus, the Divine Maternity of Our Blessed Lady; at Trent, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist; in our own days at the Vatican Council, the Infallibility of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, &c. By these and like definitions the Church did not create new doctrines, or new revelations. To protect her children from deceit or error, and to warn them against the false reasonings and sophistry of heretical and proud philosophers, she only puts in clear and dogmatic form what was revealed and believed from the beginning; and by her authority guarantees to the world that the truth thus defined is contained in the written or in the unwritten word of God. The stamp of a Sovereign upon the coin is a guarantee to the subjects that the metal is not counterfeit, but genuine gold; though the seal adds nothing to the intrinsic value of the coin; in like manner, the definition of the Church, always assisted by the Spirit of God, affords absolute certainty to her children, that the doctrine defined is revealed by God, and is contained in the deposit of faith, entrusted to her guardianship by Jesus Christ, her Divine Founder. In one word, there have been, and likely there will be, *new definitions*; but there never

have been, nor never can be, *new doctrines*, in the Catholic Church.

In the Catholic Church the soul is in peace; she is not exposed to doubts or uncertainty; she rests secure upon the anchor of infallible and immutable faith; but in Feasts and Devotions she has all the beauty and charm of variety and change. An attractive chapter might be written on the beauty and variety of the Feasts of the Church—the Feasts of Jesus, the Feasts of Mary, and the Feasts of God, Angels, and Saints.

In the Catholic Church, too, we have a variety of approved Devotions to meet the wants of different ages, and to suit the tastes of different souls. Many love Devotion to the “Precious Blood,” which set on fire the soul of St. Catherine of Sienna; Devotion to the “Five bleeding Wounds” is the favourite with others; special Devotion to the “Blessed Sacrament” has sanctified millions; Devotion to the “Sacred Heart of Jesus” is as universal as the Church herself. The Church has put the seal of her approval upon the many Devotions in honour of Our Blessed Lady; such as the Devotions of the Holy Rosary; of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; of the Immaculate Conception; of the Seven Dolours; of the Living Rosary, &c. The

history of these various Devotions would be interesting and edifying; but would lead us too far from our subject, as St. Joseph alone is our theme.

SECTION II.

St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church.

Almost every century of the Catholic Church has witnessed the rise and fall of heresies. In every age she is assailed by new enemies. At one time, it is a league of kings, princes, and rulers in foul conspiracy to destroy her. At another time, the genius and learning of the greatest minds of the age, by brilliant but false sophistry, attempt to corrupt the masses, and to sap the foundations of faith of the simple and unwary. Sometimes the enemy is nurtured in her own bosom; and an heresiarch, like Martin Luther, attempts to stab the mother that gave him birth. At another time, a whole nation, like England, throws off the faith like a garment; and in serried ranks stands in battle array against the Church of God. God, who knows "the times and the seasons," whose Providence ever watches over His Church, and who provides a remedy for every disease, constructs new bulwarks against the spread of sin and error; raises up new Saints, and

inspires new Devotions, to give battle to the enemies of the Church, and to encircle her virgin brow with a new wreath of victory.

Thus in different ages, to meet the wants of the Church, God raised up great Saints, who under the inspiration of Heaven, founded Religious Orders of devoted men, who, like trained soldiers of Christ, gave battle to the enemies of the Church. In like manner, new Devotions inspired the hearts of the faithful with zeal and courage, to conquer sin and heresy. St. Dominic, by the Devotion of the Holy Rosary, stemmed the wild torrent of the formidable heresy of the Albigenses.

Devotions in honour of St. Joseph, as well as Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were reserved by God, for His own wise end, to the 19th century. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, to warm hearts grown cold, and to set on fire mankind with the burning love : Devotions in honour of St. Joseph, to secure in heaven a new Protector for the Church in the days of bitter and protracted trials ; to hold up our Saint as a model to every Christian of a holy, hidden, and active life, and as the Patron of a happy death.

We are not to be surprised to find but little mention of St. Joseph in the writings

of the early Fathers of the Church. The same is true of other great Saints ; and to some extent even of the Blessed Virgin. It is a fundamental principle to bear in mind, as we before remarked, that St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin, and the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, were vividly before the people's eyes in the early ages ; their virtues, nay, the very light and love of their features, were fresh in the minds of the first Christians for generation after generation ; and hence the first and great duty of the Apologists was to prove to an unbelieving age the Divinity of Christ ; that Jesus the Crucified was really the Son of the Eternal God.

Never, perhaps, in any age has the Church been assailed by more deadly enemies than at present. Never, surely, has a wilder tempest raged round the Head of the Church, the Pope of Rome ; hence God, in His infinite wisdom, has given to His Church a new Protector in St. Joseph.

At the dawn of Christianity, the Church, which may in some sense be said to have consisted of the Holy Family, was governed by St. Joseph, and was by him protected against the cruelty of Herod. To-day there are new Herods, new Pilates ; to-day the Church may be said to be journeying through a desert, a

thousand times more dangerous and desolate than that of the "flight into Egypt;" hence God has appointed St. Joseph to watch over the Church and to protect and guard her Head, the Sovereign Pontiff.

It was in this spirit that Pope Pius IX. ordained that the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph should be celebrated throughout the whole Catholic Church on the third Sunday after Easter; and the same illustrious Pontiff, at the Vatican Council, at the prayers of almost all the Bishops of Christendom, proclaimed, to the joy of all the faithful, St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church.

The following is a translation of the Decree:—

"As God established Joseph, son of the Patriarch Jacob, in Egypt, and made him governor of the land, in order that he might supply his people when they came to want the necessities of life—so when the time appointed to send His only Son upon earth had arrived, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first was a type, and making him Lord and Prince of His house and goods, chose him as guardian of His greatest treasures.

"And Joseph espoused Mary, the Imma-

culate Virgin, of whom was born our Lord Jesus Christ, who wished to pass as the son of Joseph, and was subject to him. And Him, whom so many Kings and Prophets longed to see, Joseph not only saw, but conversed with, and held Him in his arms, covered Him with kisses, and provided the daily bread of Him, who is the spiritual Bread of all the faithful.

“ Because of this great dignity, conferred by God upon His most faithful servant, the Church has always held St. Joseph in great respect and veneration, praying to him with great confidence in all her great necessities ; and as at this present time the Church is attacked on all sides by her enemies, and is oppressed by so many calamities, that impious persons here declared, that now at last the gates of hell shall prevail against her, the Bishops of the whole Catholic world have most humbly implored the Sovereign Pontiff, in their own name, and in the name of all the faithful confided to their care, to declare St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church.

“ These prayers were renewed more fervently at the time of the great Œcumenical Council at the Vatican ; and our Holy Father Pius IX., deeply moved by the last deplorable events, and wishing to place himself

and all the faithful under the special protection of the holy Patriarch Joseph, heard the prayers of his Bishops, and solemnly named the beloved foster-father of Jesus, Patron of the Catholic Church. He also ordained that the east of St. Joseph (19th March) should be raised to a double of the first class; but without an octave, on account of Lent. He further ordains that this declaration which has been made by the Decree of the Holy Congregation of Rites, shall be published on this day, which is consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, and Spouse of St. Joseph. Nothing is to prevent this order being executed.

“ 8th December, 1870.

“ CONSTANTINE, *Bishop of Ostia and Velletri.*

“ CARDINAL PATRIZI, *Prefect of the Congregation of Rites.*

“ D. BARTOLINI, *Secretary.*”

From the very beginning, for great work, the Almighty has usually selected weak instruments to carry out His designs; and hence the candid observer must attribute the success, not to human wisdom or power, but to God alone. In this spirit the Redeemer

chose for the first preachers of His Gospel twelve fishermen, without learning, power, eloquence, or wealth; and their mission was to storm the citadel of paganism, to refute the most learned, eloquent, and subtle philosophers, and to proclaim to a sensual, selfish, and proud world the hard doctrines of chastity, self-denial, and humility. To set the world on fire with the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, God chose Margaret Mary, a weak, timid nun, hidden and buried in her cloister at Paray-le-Monial. To give examples would be to write the history of the Church; to narrate the spread of the Gospel in every country; to describe the origin and progress of every new Devotion; and to record the battles and victories of the Church in every age, over heresy, sin, and schism. In all great works, as St. Paul says, "the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are. That no flesh should glory in his sight" (1 Cor. i. 27).

Signal and speedy, no doubt, will be the

victories of the Church in these her days of sore and bitter trials and persecutions ; since God in His infinite wisdom has given her St. Joseph as a Protector and Patron.

As St. Joseph guarded Jesus in His Divine Infancy, from the hands of His enemies, so will our great Saint protect the Church, the Spouse of Jesus, from her adversaries.

To an age in revolt against lawful authority, and puffed up with a spirit of independence and inquiry, the Church holds up St. Joseph as a model of perfect obedience and resignation, without murmur or hesitation, to God's holy will. To an age devoured by love of wealth and riches, St. Joseph is a model of holy poverty, ministering with joy and happiness to the wants of Jesus and Mary, by the labour of his hands. To an age corrupt and wallowing in sensual pleasures, the Church presents St. Joseph as a model of perfect continency and holy purity. To an age enslaved by ambition for honours, applause, glory, and high station, the Church presents St. Joseph, the noble descendant of the royal house of David, hidden and unknown, as well as happy and contented, in his workshop at Nazareth. To all Christians St. Joseph is a perfect model

of simple faith in the most sublime mysteries; of prompt obedience to the calls of Divine Providence; of perfect resignation in all things to God's holy will; of immaculate purity of soul and body; of a laborious and holy life; and of a happy death in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

“Foster-father Joseph, our guide, protect us and the holy Church.”

MEMORARE TO ST. JOSEPH.

“Remember, O most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, my amiable protector, that never was it known that anyone who invoked thy protection and implored thy help remained without consolation. Full of confidence in thy power, I come into thy presence, and recommend myself to thee with fervour. Oh, thou, who art called the father of the Redeemer, do not disdain my prayers, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.”

O Great St. Joseph! protect the Church; confound her enemies; help her children; and watch over the Pope, her bishops, and priests. St. Joseph! in every conflict give victory to the Church of Jesus.

SECTION III.

St. Joseph the Patron of a Happy Death.

In the age of fierce warfare against the Spouse of Christ on earth, Divine Providence has proclaimed St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church; but at all times St. Joseph has been the Patron of a happy death.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. cxv. 14). What can be more precious, more holy, and more to be desired than a happy death? “It is precious,” writes St. Bernard, “as the end of labours, the consummation of victory, the gate of life.” If we die a happy death, we have gained the end of our creation; we have gained heaven; we have gained God; we have gained our all. “And I heard a voice from heaven,” writes St. John, “saying to me: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours” (Apoc. xiv. 13). A happy death puts an end to the pains and miseries of this vale of tears. “And God,” continues the Evangelist, “shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor

mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). Not only does a happy death put an end to pain and woe : but what is infinitely more important, it ends the uncertainty of salvation, the fear of offending God by falling into mortal sin ; for until we have drawn the last breath in peace with God, we are never sure of being saved ; hence exclaimed St. Paul, " who shall deliver me from the body of this death. . . to me to live is Christ, to die is gain. . . I am straitened. . . having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). " O amiable Death," exclaims St. Augustine, " who will not desire thee, who art the end of evils, the close of toils, the beginning of everlasting repose ? "

A happy death not only ends sin, and pain, and sorrow, but secures heaven, and that for all eternity. At the moment of a happy death all the canticles and music of the Saints and Angels, all the joys and glories of heaven, break upon the soul. St. Paul, who saw the glory of heaven, was so overwhelmed by its dazzling splendour, that he describes it saying, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them

that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). The Royal Prophet seeing heaven cries out, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord; they shall praise thee for ever and for ever. . . For better is one day in thy courts above thousands" (Ps. lxxx. 3). The Prophet then addresses the Almighty, and says of His Saints, "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrents of thy pleasures" (Ps. xxxv. 9).

Heaven is the prize; the glories of heaven is the prize of a happy death; not only for countless ages, but for as many millions of ages as there are leaves in the forests, drops of water in the ocean, grains of sand on the sea-shore, atoms in the air—for all eternity.

A happy death being therefore so important, are we to wonder that the wise, pious Christians do so much to be sure to attain it? To die a happy death peopled, in olden times, the deserts with hermits, and has in all ages filled the cloisters with religious of both sexes. To die a happy death the pious Christian endeavours to avoid all sin, to serve God, to lead a pure and holy life. To die

happily the wise Christian secures the patronage of the Blessed Virgin ; knowing that no devout client of Mary was ever damned. To die a happy death what wise soul would forget Devotion to St. Joseph, the Patron of a happy death. Happy the death of St. Joseph, who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. The departing soul covets a last absolution from the minister of Jesus ; but St. Joseph at the hour of death was absolved by Jesus Himself. A spiritual writer describes the death of St. Joseph thus :—

“ Let us enter in thought the Holy House at Nazareth, and contemplate St. Joseph upon his death-bed. The Blessed Virgin supports his head tenderly with her immaculate hands ; beside him stands the Incarnate Word, who looks fondly upon him, and fortifies his soul with His gentle looks. Enter with great recollection and respect ; for the whole court of heaven is united round the dying man, assisting at the last operations of grace upon the soul of St. Joseph.

“ When Jesus and Mary see that the Holy Patriarch is about to breathe his last, they wish to show him all the love and gratitude of their hearts. Jesus presses His beloved father to His Heart, and speaks to him tenderly and fondly, inflaming the soul of the

dying man with the most ardent love. He touches St. Joseph's hands with His own adorable Hands, thereby sanctifying him by the contact, and filling his whole being with divine grace. Mary, standing by, supports the old man's head in her arms, and breathes sweet words of consolation into his ears. Joseph had been her loving spouse and tender protector during years of danger and difficulty; and her Immaculate Heart burns with loving gratitude towards the dying Patriarch. And thus under the eyes of the Incarnate Word, and in the arms of Mary, Joseph breathes his last sigh without the slightest pain or suffering. Our Divine Redeemer closes the eyes of the dead Joseph, and in fulfilling this filial duty, tears of tenderness and love fell from His Divine Eyes; and the Immaculate Virgin, touched to the heart, mingled her tears with those of her Divine Son."*

St. Leonard of Port Maurice thus pictures the death of our Saint:—

“Let us consider this blessed Patriarch in the arms of Jesus and Mary, at the moment of giving up his soul to his Creator. See him stretched on his poor bed, Jesus on one

• Pere Huguet.

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side and Mary on the other, surrounded by a multitude of Angels, Archangels, and Seraphims, who with respectful attention are waiting to receive this holy soul. O God, who shall tell us with what feelings, at this supreme moment, Joseph took a last leave of Jesus and Mary? What acts of thankfulness, of supplication, of humility, on the part of the old man! His eyes and his heart speak; his tongue alone is silent. He looks at Mary, and Mary at him—and with what love and veneration! Then he turns his dying eyes on Jesus, and Jesus returns the look—but with what tenderness! He takes the hand of Jesus, and presses it to his heart, and covers it with kisses, and bedews it with his tears, and says to him from time to time, less with his lips than in his heart, ‘My Son, my much beloved Son, I recommend to Thee my soul.’ And then placing his hand on his heart, he falls into a swoon of love. Ah, Joseph! if you could but keep fast hold of that hand, which is life, you would not die. Oh, how sweet it would be to die holding the hand of Jesus!

“The soul is on the point of leaving the body: it has already taken flight; but at the sight of Jesus and Mary it pauses; it cannot break its chain. I repeat, Joseph, if you de

not cease to look on Jesus, who is your life, you cannot die. Tender and Divine Redeemer Jesus, holy Mary! Joseph cannot quit this land of exile, if you will not give him leave. Jesus lifts His hand. He blesses and embraces His dearly beloved father, and Joseph expires in the arms of Jesus and Mary."

"Worn out with divine love," says Father Faber, "St. Joseph died in a sweet ecstasy, pillowed in the bosom of Jesus, and with Mary by his side; in the very lap of all that was most beautiful, and most holy, and most heavenly on earth" (B. S., p. 193). Such was the holy and happy death of St. Joseph, and such is the model of a happy death for every Christian: to die in the peace and love of Jesus and Mary.

To reward St. Joseph for having saved His life from the cruelty of Herod, our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ conferred upon him this signal and special favour and privilege, viz., to save the eternal lives, by obtaining a holy and happy death for all who, during life, and especially at death, invoke his aid. Thus is St. Joseph the Patron of a happy death. And this is the great reason why all pious Christians cultivate, by the grace of God, a

tender and lasting devotion to our holy Patriarch.*

St. Joseph! be with me dying, and obtain for me the grace of a happy death. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give to you my heart and soul." "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony." "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you."

O merciful Jesus, my sweet Saviour! Thou didst console and fortify St. Joseph upon his death-bed, attending him in his last hour as a dutiful son upon his father. O sweet Jesus! hear my prayer, grant me, through the merits of Thy Precious Blood, and through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, the grace of a happy death. Amen.

SECTION IV.

Testimonies of Saints and Modern Writers on Devotion to St. Joseph.

In the writings of the Fathers and Saints we find the true spirit of the Church regarding any Devotion. The following passages from Saints and modern writers prove how salu-

• St. Alphonsus Liguori.

tary, sweet, and holy is Devotion to our great Saint.

St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, writes:—

“Some Saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage in certain cases, but not in others, with peculiar efficacy; but to our holy Patron, St. Joseph, it is given to assist us in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking.”

We quote next from St. Bernardine of Siena:—

“If you compare him to the whole Church of Christ, is he not the special and chosen being, by whom, and under whom, the Lord was introduced into the world with becoming dignity? If all the faithful, then, are debtors to the Virgin Mother for being made worthy through her to receive the Redeemer; so, next to that Virgin Mother, do we not owe to St. Joseph special homage and veneration?”

St. Teresa, chosen by God to spread Devotion to St. Joseph, writes:—

“Oh! that I could induce all to be devout to this glorious Saint, from the experience I have of his great power with God. For many years past I have asked of him some favour on his feast, which he never failed to obtain for me: unless, perhaps, what I asked was

not for my good. For the love of God, I implore those who do not believe me, to make a trial of it, and they will soon find by experience how advantageous it is to have recourse to the glorious St. Joseph, and to become his devoted clients. It is wonderful what favours God has granted me by means of this blessed Saint; from what dangers, both of body and soul, He has delivered me. God would seem to have given to other Saints the grace to help us in some one necessity; but from experience I have learned that St. Joseph helps us in all, and therefore the Lord will have us understand that, as He was subject to St. Joseph on earth, so likewise in heaven the Saint obtains whatsoever he asks." (Life, chap. vi.)

"Oh! what a Saint is the glorious St. Joseph! He is not only a Patriarch, but the most distinguished among the Patriarchs. He is not merely a confessor, but far more than a confessor; for in him are included the dignity of the bishop, the generosity of the martyr, the excellence of the other Saints. St. Joseph will obtain for us, if we put confidence in him, an increase in every kind of virtue, but particularly in those which he possessed in a pre-eminent degree: these are, a perfect purity of body and mind, hu-

mility, constancy, fortitude, and perseverance, virtues which will render us victorious over our enemies in this life, and enable us to obtain the grace of enjoying in the life to come those rewards which are prepared for the imitators of St. Joseph." (St. Francis de Sales, *Entretien* xix.)

We might cite many other Saints, viz., St. Bernard, St. John Damascene, &c., but we shall content ourselves with one passage out of the many from St. Alphonsus Liguori, chosen by God to set the world on fire with the love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The Saint writes:—"The example of Jesus Christ, who was pleased while on earth to honour and to be obedient to Joseph, should alone be sufficient to inflame us all to be very devout to this great Saint. . . . Suarez says that St. Joseph, next to Mary, surpasses all the other Saints in merit and glory. . . . We should particularly entertain devotion to St. Joseph, that he may obtain for us a happy death. In return for having delivered the Infant Jesus from the snares of Herod, he has the privilege of delivering the dying from the snares of the devil."

The following passages from celebrated writers of our own time breathe a sweet and tender Devotion to St. Joseph:—

We have very many exquisite instances, and soul-stirring passages from the ascetic and poetic pen of Father Faber, in his works, "PRECIOUS BLOOD," and "The BLESSED SACRAMENT." He writes: "It is by comparing God's choice of him with the office he was to fill that we come to see the glory and the grandeur of St. Joseph, and to contemplate with reverent awe the heights of a holiness to which such familiarity with God was permitted." In another place he writes: "This is the immensity of his dignity, the incommunicable and ever blessed paternity is in figure communicated to him. He is the foster-father of Jesus. To the world without he passes for his father. He exercises the authority of a father over him; and performs for him all the affectionate and anxious offices of a father. The unspeakable treasures of God, Jesus, and Mary, are committed to St. Joseph's keeping; and he is himself a treasure as well as the treasure-house of God. He is part of the scheme of Redemption. What wonder theologians should tell us such great things of his copious graces and his mighty gifts? What wonder the faithful should believe that with him the resurrection of the just was anticipated; that he was one of those that walked the

streets of Jerusalem at Easter in his risen body; and that he had borne it with him into heaven, when he went up as a part of our Lord's equipage and retinue, on the Thursday of the Ascension? (B. Sacrament, p. 197.)

The learned Father Dalgarius writes: "It cannot be denied that in the first ages of the Church there appears a greater devotion to St. John the Baptist than to St. Joseph; now-a-days the very reverse is the fact. Why is this, if it be not because the worship of the Spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus is better suited to us than that of the mighty Saint who was the herald of His coming? There is no jealousy in heaven, and the great St. John, the very apostle of disinterested love, would willingly point to St. Joseph and say as he did to our Lord, 'He must increase, and I must decrease.' The thought of the sweet Saint who guarded Jesus and Mary in their weary flight through the wilderness, was to be more useful to Christians than the remembrance of the stern voice which sounded through the desert" (Devotion to the Heart of Jesus, p. 15).

The following passage is from the gifted pen of Cardinal Newman:—"There were Saints nearer to our Lord than either martyrs

or apostles ; but, as if these sacred persons were immersed and lost in the effulgence of His glory, and because they did not manifest themselves, when in the body, in external works separate from Him, it happened that for a long while they were less dwelt upon. As comparatively quiet times succeeded, the religious meditations of holy men and their secret intercourse with heaven gradually exerted an influence out of doors, and permeated the Christian populace, by the instrumentality of preaching and by the ceremonial of the Church. Hence at length those luminous stars rose in the ecclesiastical heavens, which were of more august dignity than any which had preceded them, and which were late in rising, for the very reason that they were so specially glorious. Those names, I say, which at first sight might have been expected to enter soon into the devotions of the faithful, with better reason might have been looked for at a later date, and actually were late in their coming. St. Joseph furnishes the most striking instance of this remark ; here is the clearest of instances of the distinction between doctrine and devotion. Who from his prerogatives and the testimony on which they come to us, had a greater claim to receive an early recognition among the

faithful than he? A Saint of Scripture, the foster-father of our Lord, he was an object of the universal and absolute faith of the Christian world from the first, yet the devotion to him is comparatively of late date. When once it began men seemed surprised that it had not been thought of before; and now they hold him next to the Blessed Virgin in their religious affection and veneration" (Anglican Difficulties).

A devout Client of St. Joseph writes:—

"The Church has not been satisfied with erecting temples and altars to the reputed father of Jesus; with founding confraternities or congregations; with annually celebrating his memory; with drawing up a proper Mass and Office, with hymns full of encomiums so sublime that they alone seem to form the fairest idea of a sanctity superior to that of all the blest. . . This being so, we may affirm that from the rising to the setting of the sun, where the names of Jesus and Mary are heard, resounds too the most sweet name of St. Joseph, who was chosen by God to be the guardian and protector of the Only Begotten of the Father; accomplishing in him that honourable promise of the Scripture, 'He that is the keeper of his Lord shall be glorified.' Pharaoh, the

monarch of Egypt, evincing his gratitude to the first Joseph gave him the superintendence of his palace, and his whole kingdom. The Church seems to have acted similarly with St. Joseph. . . I have no words, O St. Joseph, to express honour equal to thy merits, thy dignity, and thy ministry. I will call thee the glory of the Angels, and will endeavour to lead all by my example, to extol thy felicity, thy dignity, and thy virtues. I will call thee the anchor of hope that is sustaining the bark of the Church. I will applaud thee with the honour of a faithful minister of our salvation, advocate of guilty sinners, refuge of the afflicted, and comforter of the dying. I will give thee in two words the praises which thy authority merits. I will call thee the father of Jesus and the spouse of Mary. Most happy shall I be when I have the glory of hearing that, from ocean to ocean men chant thy glorious name, St. Joseph. My desire is, O foster-father of Jesus and spouse of Mary, that Angels and Christians, united in one harmonious choir of music, may applaud thy dignity, and signal merits; that thou mayest be more glorious than that Joseph who dreamt that he was worshipped by the sun, the moon, and eleven stars" (Patrignani Vallejo, p. 305).

We might cite many other passages, especially from Pastorals written in our own times, by holy and learned bishops throughout Christendom, but we will end this section by a few words spoken some years ago by Pius IX. of saintly memory.

“I have seen,” said the Holy Father, “a little picture which represents St. Joseph with the Divine Infant, who points towards him saying *Ite ad Joseph—Go to Joseph. To you I say the same—Go to Joseph. Have recourse with special confidence to St. Joseph, for his protection is most powerful, now above all that he is the Patron of the Universal Church.*”

PIOUS REFLECTION.

My soul! Reflect on the all-wise Providence of God over each of His creatures, as well as over His holy Church. Age after age, as new and formidable enemies assailed the Church, God raised up new bulwarks in her defence. At one time God gives to His Church a great Saint to conquer an heresiarch; at another time He inspires a new Devotion to extinguish a schism. God knows “the times and the seasons,” and hence His Divine Providence suits the Devotions to the wants of His Church. God has reserved De

votion to St. Joseph for the 19th century. In this age St. Joseph, in a special manner, is "Patron of the Universal Church."

God's watchful Providence is no less remarkable over individuals. Countless times God's all holy Providence has saved us, even unknown to ourselves, from death, and, worse still, from mortal sin. God gains our heart and wins our love by new Saints and new Devotions. Infinite thanks to God, each of us has St. Joseph, in a special manner, the Patron of a happy death.

RESOLUTION.

Knowing and believing God's infinite goodness to me, unworthy though I be, I resolve frequently, at least every day of my life, to thank God's tender, merciful, and patient Providence over me. How often, even when I knew it not, God's Providence saved me from the dangers of a sudden death, from the occasions of mortal sin, and from countless perils of body and soul.

Knowing, as I do, that everything upon which the Church sets her seal is holy and salutary; I resolve, if I be not prepared to practise, at least to treat with respect and reverence, all Devotions and Practices of

piety, approved of by the Church of God. Lastly, I resolve, every day of my life at least, if not oftener, to invoke St. Joseph to obtain for me the grace of a happy death.

PRAYERS.

My good and merciful God! I thank Thee for having created me and redeemed me. I wish that every breath I draw may be an act of infinite praise and thanksgiving, for Thy bountiful and tender Providence over me; for having so often saved me from hell, preserved me from the occasions of mortal sin, and watched over me by Thy Saints and Angels. O good God! may I think only of Thee, may I live for Thee, may I die for Thee. O merciful God! through the riches of Thy divine mercy, through the name and merits of Jesus, and through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, grant me the grace of a holy life and happy death.

A PRAYER OF ST. BERNARDINE OF SIENA
TO ST. JOSEPH.

“Remember us, O Blessed Joseph, and by the power of thy prayers with thy reputed Son, intercede for us, and obtain also favour

for us with that Virgin, thy most happy spouse, who was Mother of a Son who reigns with the Father and Holy Ghost for ever and for ever."

O my beloved St. Joseph! adopt me as thy child; take charge of my salvation; watch over me day and night; preserve me from the occasions of sin; obtain for me purity of body and soul; obtain for me the spirit of prayer, through thy intercession with Jesus; grant me a spirit of sacrifice, of humility, and self-denial; obtain for me a burning love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and a sweet and tender love for Mary my Mother. St. Joseph! be with me living, be with me dying, and obtain for me a favourable judgment from Jesus my merciful Saviour.

CHAPTER VI.

Month of March in honour of St. Joseph.

The devout Client of Mary longs for the dawn of May-day, and dedicates that whole month of flowers and roses to our Blessed Lady. During May we love to meditate on

the Glories of Mary ; and by the grace of God we try to enkindle in our hearts a tender, loving, and lasting devotion to **Mary Immaculate**. The month of June sets the world on fire with love and devotion to the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**. Solemn and holy are the thoughts of the pious soul during the month of July, dedicated to the honour of the **Most Precious Blood of Jesus**. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph comprise the **Holy Family** ; as June is for Jesus, May for **Mary**, so is March for **St. Joseph**.

During the month of March we glorify God for the dignity, sanctity, and power of **St. Joseph** ; and we invoke the aid of our Saint to lead a holy life, and die a happy death.

We cannot fail to obtain favour from the king, if we have at court influential and powerful friends ; nor can we fail to secure from the **King of kings** the grace of a happy death, if during life we have won for ourselves, by practical devotion, the friendship of **St. Joseph**, the patron of a happy death. To the praise, glory, and honour of the one **Eternal God** in three **Divine Persons**, and to the most adorable **Trinity**, three **Divine Persons** in one **God** ; in love, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition to **Jesus**, the **Incarnate**

Son of the living God; in honour of our peerless Queen, Mary Immaculate Mother of God; to make our sweet St. Joseph better known, and hence better loved among the simple faithful; and to secure at court his patronage for the grace of a happy death for ourselves, and for all who read this little book, is the object of these pages.

Omnipotent, Eternal God, have mercy on us. Most adorable Trinity, in one God, have pity on us. Jesus, Incarnate Son of God, have compassion on us. Mary, Mother of the Word made Flesh, watch over our salvation.

St. Joseph, reputed father of Jesus, and spouse of Mary, obtain for us the grace of a happy death. All ye Saints in heaven, ye nine Orders of Blessed Spirits in Paradise, especially ye Guardian Angels, pray that we may lead holy lives and die happy deaths in the peace and love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Amen.

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Come, O Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of thy servants, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy divine love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and our hearts shall be regenerated.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

LET US PRAY.

O God, who by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of the faithful; grant that by the same Divine Spirit we may have a right understanding in all things, and evermore rejoice in His holy consolations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

The above Invocation and prayers are to be devoutly recited, on bended knees, before each meditation.

MARCH 1st.

FIRST MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, the reputed father of the Incarnate Word of God, our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of

Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. i. 16.) "And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him" (Luke, ii. 33). "And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the pasch. . . behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke, ii. 48).

"And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty, being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph" (Luke, iii. 23).

"Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know" (John, vi. 42).

Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh. Jesus is infinite sanctity, infinite purity, infinite love. Jesus is the Saviour and Redeemer of the world; and yet, as we see from the above texts, He passed among men as the son of Joseph! St. Joseph called Him son; and Jesus called St. Joseph father; and for thirty years Jesus and Joseph lived in the intimate relationship of father and son.

St. Bernard puts it thus:—"The nature and dignities of St. Joseph are summed up in the title wherewith God honoured him, in such a way that all styled him and believed him to be the father of Jesus."

In the title, reputed father of Jesus, we

have the exalted dignity, sanctity, and glory of St. Joseph.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

O dear St. Joseph ! reputed father of Jesus, my Blessed Saviour ; after Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, dearest and nearest to Jesus ; next to Mary, most powerful with Jesus ; and after Mary the holiest soul ever created and sanctified by God ; to secure thy intercession in life and at the hour of death, I resolve, every day after my morning prayers and every night before I close my eyes in sleep, to recite piously the following aspirations :—

“ Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I offer to you my heart and soul.”

“ Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.”

“ Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.”

PRAYER.

A Prayer of St. Teresa to St. Joseph.

“ Omnipotent and all-merciful Lord, who didst give to the Virgin Mary, Thy most

holy Mother, the blessed Joseph, the son of David, as her spouse, and didst choose him for Thy foster-father, grant to Thy Church, through the prayers and by the merits of this great Saint, peace and tranquillity, and give us the grace and joy of one day seeing Thee eternally in heaven, who livest and reignest with God the Father, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen."

PRACTICE.

Make during the day at least one act of humility and self-denial in honour of Jesus and of St. Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

Jesus, have mercy on me; St. Joseph, pray for me.

MARCH 2ND.

SECOND MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, chaste Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called

Christ" (Matt. i. 16). "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 18-20).

St. Joseph's greatest dignity, honour, and glory is comprised in the title "reputed father of Jesus;" his next greatest privilege is that he was in truth, as the above texts clearly prove, the real spouse or husband of Mary. It is from his relations with Jesus and Mary that the mind conceives an adequate idea of the dignity, the grandeur, the glory, and the sanctity of St. Joseph. Think how much is contained in this title—"husband of Mary." Who is Mary? She is the Immaculate Mother of God. Long before her birth Prophet after Prophet announced her glories, her dignity, and her sanctity. In the Old Testament she is pronounced "all fair;" "without spot;" "beautiful, sweet, and comely;" "the perfect one;" "the only

one." The New Testament styles her "blessed;" "full of grace;" and proclaims that "all generations shall call her blessed." In one word the Blessed Virgin was the purest, the most holy, the most immaculate soul ever created by the Almighty. God gave her a Saint for her father, and a Saint for her mother. Who but the greatest Saint could be her spouse. From among the sons of men God raised up one Saint; God in a special manner sanctified his soul and body, and made him worthy to be not only the companion, but the real husband of the purest of virgins, the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer of the world. No wonder the pious Gerson exclaims, "O sublime elevation! O admirable dignity of Joseph, whom the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven, deemed worthy to call her spouse."

St. Leonard of Port Maurice writes:—
"The Evangelists say very little of the virtues and life of St. Joseph; but when they style him the spouse of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, they give him the most glorious title possible; for he was nearest in every way to Mary, the purest creature ever made by God Almighty."

O Jesus, make us chaste; O Jesus, make us pure. St. Joseph, pray for us, and recommend us to Jesus and to Mary.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

In order to create in my soul, by the grace of God, a lasting and living Devotion to St. Joseph, I resolve to pay a visit, every day of my life, to an altar, statue, or picture of St. Joseph, and there to pray to St. Joseph to obtain for me the grace of a happy death.

PRAYER.

O dearest St. Joseph! take my salvation under thy protection. O most chaste spouse of Mary, the purest of virgins, obtain for me purity of soul and body; obtain for me from Jesus the grace to lead a pure, chaste, and holy life; and the grace of a happy death. I salute thee, most chaste spouse of Mary; I salute thee as spouse and companion to her, who was the Mother of Jesus, and is now the Queen of heaven. St. Joseph, ask Mary to recommend me to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Joseph ask Mary to adopt me as her child, to make me her client, then I am sure to be saved.

PRACTICE.

To-day pay three visits to St. Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

St. Joseph, recommend me to Jesus and Mary!

MARCH 3RD

THIRD MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, the Guardian and Protector of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
 "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him. Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt. . . . But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead who sought the life of the child. Who arose and took the child and his mother and came into the land of Israel" (Matt. ii. 13-21).

Oh, how sublime and heavenly was the mission of St. Joseph! Jesus was God, and therefore could protect Himself; but no, He prefers the services of St. Joseph. Jesus was the Omnipotent, and therefore his very breath could wither and annihilate His enemies;

but no, He loves to shelter Himself in the loving arms of St. Joseph. God might have sent His Angel to extend his wings over the Infant Saviour and protect Him; but no, God sends that Angel to St. Joseph, that St. Joseph may have the privilege and honour to be the saviour of the Saviour of the world, One might expect God would send His Angel to the Blessed Virgin, as Mary was unspeakably higher and holier than St. Joseph; but no, God recognized the position of St. Joseph as head of the Holy Family. God might have transported by the hands of Angels the Holy Family, as He did the "Holy House" from Bethlehem to Egypt, and from Egypt to Israel, and thus spare them all the fatigues and privations of the long journey; but no, the arms of Mary and Joseph alone were privileged to carry the precious treasure, the Infant Jesus. Here a wide field for meditation expands before the pious soul.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Through love for man Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is as helpless as the Infant Jesus. Through love for man Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has exposed Himself to the sacrileges, irreverence, and insults of His enemies, as the Infant Jesus at Bethlehem.

By the grace of God, I resolve to treat, as far as in my power, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, with the same reverential, loving care that St. Joseph showed to the Infant Saviour. O sweet Jesus, help me to keep my resolutions.

Secondly, I resolve, by the grace of God, to practise myself, and by all the means in my power to extend among others, Devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

PRAYER.

O St. Joseph! who watched over Jesus, watch over me. St. Joseph, who protected Jesus from the cruel Herod, protect me from a more cruel enemy, the devil and sin. St. Joseph, who promptly obeyed the whisper of an Angel, pray that I may be ever obedient to the inspirations of grace. St. Joseph, who lovingly carried Jesus in thy arms through the desert into Egypt, protect me in my journey through life, till I arrive at "Horeb the mountain of God." St. Joseph, pray that I may treat Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with the same reverence, love, and care that thou didst treat the Infant Jesus.

I beseech thee, O glorious St. Joseph, by the paternal love with which thy heart was

inflamed for Jesus, and by his filial love for thee, to take special care of the salvation of my soul. Be thyself my director, my guide, my father, and my model in spiritual life, and in the way of perfection, that imitating thy example, I may, like the Saints, possess God eternally, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE.

To-day pay a very fervent visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

ASPIRATION.

Praised and blessed at every moment be the most holy and Divine Sacrament.

MARCH 4TH.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth" (Matt. xi. 23). "And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the pasch. . . And he went down

with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Luke, iii. 41 . . . 51.)

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph compose the Holy Family. Jesus was God, and Mary the Mother of God; and yet we see from the sacred text that St. Joseph was head of the Holy Family; for thirty years Jesus and Mary paid him homage and obedience. As a child obeys his parents Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph. "He was subject to them," says the Gospel. "This is wonderful humility," says St. Bernard, "a God obeying man; but to see a man commanding God is glory without equal." The Eternal Father treated St. Joseph as the Head of the Holy Family. The very name of the Redeemer of the world was communicated from heaven to St. Joseph. "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). When the life of Jesus was threatened the Eternal Father sent his commands to St. Joseph alone. "Arise," said the angel, "and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt. . . Arise and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel." (Matt. ii.) Mary obeyed St. Joseph; at his bidding she promptly set out for Egypt, and from Egypt to Nazareth; and frequently

from Nazareth to Jerusalem. O great thy dignity, St. Joseph, whom the Immaculate Mother of God regards and looks up to as her master and superior; but unspeakably greater thy dignity, St. Joseph, whom Jesus, the Eternal Son Himself, obeys and pays homage.

Joseph was no doubt pure and holy at the time of the Nativity of the Redeemer; but conceive and express if you can, his sanctity, when for thirty years the eyes of Eternal Justice, sanctity, and love shone and beamed upon him. One word from Jesus converted sinners into saints. St. Joseph heard and drank in divine wisdom from the lips of Jesus for some thirty years. The title Head of the Holy Family speaks volumes on the glory, sanctity, and power of St. Joseph.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

The Eternal Father has honoured St. Joseph and recognised him as Head of the Holy Family; and to St. Joseph He sent His commands by His heavenly ambassadors. Jesus the Incarnate Son of God, and Mary His Immaculate Mother rendered homage and obedience to St. Joseph as Head of the household. Since Heaven has elevated St.

Joseph to such a high pinnacle of glory, I resolve to regard St. Joseph all the days of my life as the greatest saint in heaven after Our Blessed Lady, next to her in dignity, sanctity, and power. St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, pray for me.

PRAYER.

Memorare to St. Joseph.

“Remember, O most amiable, most benevolent, most kind, and most merciful father, St. Joseph, that the great St. Teresa assures us that she never had recourse to thy protection without obtaining relief. Animated with the same confidence, O dear St. Joseph, I come to thee, and groaning under the heavy burden of my many sins, I prostrate myself at thy feet. O most compassionate father, do not, I beseech thee, reject my poor and miserable prayers, but graciously hear and answer my petition. Amen.”

St. Joseph, obtain for me the grace to love and serve my God faithfully all the days of my life.

PRACTICE.

To-day give an alms to some pious old man in honour of St. Joseph

ASPIRATION.

St. Joseph ! obtain for me a sweet and tender love for Jesus and Mary.

MARCH 5TH.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph's Love for the Child Jesus.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Joseph, son of David," said the angel, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 20).

The Almighty thus sent an Angel to give solemn, authentic information to St. Joseph of the Incarnation of the Son of God. We are of opinion that long before, St. Joseph heard this secret from the lips of the Blessed Virgin herself; for it is hard to believe that Mary would have kept concealed the knowledge of this sublime mystery and honour from Joseph, her chaste, loving, and tender spouse.

After the Blessed Virgin St. Joseph was the first to adore and love the Incarnate Son of God. This love for Jesus became intensified day after day, hour after hour. The nearer we approach the fire the greater the heat, but what thermometer could measure the intensity of the heat of divine love that burned in the soul of St. Joseph, who for so many years lived in the presence of the burning furnace of Uncreated Love, Jesus Christ Himself.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

The presence of God is Paradise. Jesus is God. And hence the presence of Jesus converted the "Holy House" at Nazareth into a Paradise. In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus is really and truly present; the light of His love shines from the altar; the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the tabernacle, a glowing furnace of burning love, sheds heat and light and lustre upon the Christian world. Before Jesus in the tabernacle the holy soul finds her Paradise on dull earth! "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

A holy soul when asked how she could spend so many hours before the Blessed Sacrament, replied that she could stay there for all eter-

nity ! because before the Blessed Sacrament she was kneeling in the presence of her God, her Saviour, her Jesus, her love, her all. I resolve to pay every day of my life a reverent visit of love to Jesus in the tabernacle. If I cannot go to the church or oratory, where the Most Adorable Sacrament is preserved and adored, I resolve to kneel down in my room and turn to the nearest tabernacle where Jesus is, and there pay the very same visit, and say the very same prayers as if I were really present before the Most Adorable Sacrament. O Blessed Saviour, help me to keep my resolution. Holy Virgin and St. Joseph, pray for me.

PRAYER.

O my loving Jesus ! grant me burning love for the Holy Mass, for Holy Communion, and for Thyself, living and reigning in the Most Adorable Sacrament of the altar. May the purest delights of my life be to adore and pay Thee supreme homage, coming down from heaven at the consecration ; to receive Thee at the Communion rails with a heart on fire with divine love, and to visit Thee in the tabernacle where Thy Sacred Heart is ever shedding rays of burning love upon the cold, ungrateful hearts of men.

When in pain may I run to Jesus in the tabernacle for relief; when in sorrow may I run to Jesus in the tabernacle for consolation; when tempted may I run to Jesus in the tabernacle for help; when in sin may I run to Jesus in the tabernacle for pardon; and when in peace may I run to Jesus in the tabernacle for perseverance.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH.

O great St. Joseph! obtain for me the grace to love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as thou didst love Jesus in His divine infancy.

PRACTICE.

To-day make a spiritual communion as often as you hear the clock strike.

ASPIRATION.

“ May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.”

MARCH 6TH.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph's Labour of Love to support Jesus.
 Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
 “ Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“ Arise and take the child and his mother

and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee" (Matt. ii. 13).

Reflect on the happiness of St. Joseph to be privileged to supply the wants and comforts of Jesus and Mary by the labour of his hands. During the long and fatiguing journey from Bethlehem to Egypt, St. Joseph's labour of love was to mitigate, by every means in his power, the wants and privations of Jesus and Mary. How long the Holy Family stayed in Egypt we know not for certain; but it was St. Joseph's glorious privilege to support by the labour of his hands the Holy Exiles in a strange land. With what anxious love did St. Joseph help and comfort Jesus and Mary during their return to their native country. At Nazareth, whilst Jesus and Mary prayed, St. Joseph toiled in his little shop to supply the modest wants and comforts of the Holy Family. If the most perfect religious find, as they do, their supreme happiness in doing the will of Jesus, made known to them by their lawful superiors, what must be the happiness of St. Joseph in doing for so many years the will of Jesus, made known to him by Jesus Himself. If in heaven above the highest spirits find their most perfect sanctity in hanging, so to speak, upon the breath of God, to know and to do His holy will, how holy

and happy did St. Joseph feel whilst he constantly and reverentially looked into the divine countenance of Jesus, there to know and anticipate His wants and wishes. How willingly did the hands of Joseph work whilst his mind ever told him that the bliss of the happiest Angel in heaven would be increased a million fold were he privileged to do once what St. Joseph did for so many years, to win bread to support the Eternal Son of God, the Saviour of the world! What our Blessed Saviour said of His Eternal Father, St. Joseph could say of Jesus, "I do always the things that please Him" (John, viii. 29).

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

"The will of God is your sanctification" (Thess. iv. 3), writes St. Paul; and again, "Whatever you do in word or work, do all for the glory of God." "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). To please Jesus alone St. Joseph lived and laboured. That I too may labour and live to please God alone; that all the affections of my heart, the thoughts of my mind, and the labour of my hands may belong to God alone; I resolve, by the grace of God, every day of my life to

make a fervent "Morning Offering," and from time to time during the day to renew the offering, and thus to do each and every action for the greater glory of God. May Jesus in His infinite mercy grant me grace to keep my resolutions. St. Joseph, pray for me.

PRAYER.

Morning Offering.

O my good God! I now consecrate and offer to Thy greater glory every thought, word, action, pain and suffering, the pulsations of my heart and the motions of my senses, not only of this day, but all the days of my life; in union with the actions and the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, and His Sacred Humanity in heaven; in union with all the Masses that have been said, that now are being said, and that will be said throughout Christendom; and in union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in all the tabernacles throughout the world.

O my good God! grant me the grace in all my works to seek Thy divine will alone. May I do all my actions to please God alone; may the greater glory of God be the sole aim of my life! may the light of God's presence ever shine upon my soul; may I see and do

all things in God ; may God's holy will be ever done in me, and by me. When pain and sickness touch me, may God's holy will be done. In trials and troubles may God's holy will be done. In losses and disappointments may God's holy will be done. I accept life and death from the hands of God. Living and dying may God's holy will be done.

Prayer to St. Joseph to obtain the Holy Virtue of Purity.

“ O faithful guardian and father of virgins, glorious St. Joseph, to whom was confided the care of Jesus and of Mary, the Queen of Virgins, I most humbly supplicate thee, by the love thou didst bear Jesus and Mary, to obtain for me that, being preserved from every stain during life, I may serve them with unspotted purity of mind and body.”

MARCH 7TH.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

Paradise on Earth. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph at Nazareth.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“ Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“ And his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became as white as snow. . . . Lord it is good for us to be here” (Matt. xvii. 11.)

Consider that if one ray of the glory of Jesus on Mount Thabor inundated, as it did, the soul of St. Peter with heavenly delights, what must be the celestial joys of Joseph and Mary for so many years at Nazareth? If our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ consoled His disciples by the dazzling glory of His Transfiguration, how often did not the same loving Saviour manifest to Mary and Joseph all the splendour, glory, and majesty of His divinity at Nazareth? How often did not Jesus open the heavens and show to Mary and Joseph His kingdom and court, and all the joys and glories of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the very thrones and diadems prepared for themselves by God's own hands? No wonder that St. Joseph, seeing the glories of Paradise, should cry out, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 1).

Where God is, there is His court; Jesus is God. His court is Nazareth, and hence countless millions of Angels, with outspread wings, kept watch and ward over the Infant Saviour, now reposing on the chaste bosom of His Immaculate Mother, another time pillowed asleep in the arms of St. Joseph. Every now and again Jesus uplifted the veil,

and all the glory and canticles of the heavenly Spirits broke upon the eyes and ears of Mary and Joseph, and transported their souls with celestial delights.

The unknown presence and conversation of Jesus with the disciples on the road to Emmaus set their hearts on fire with divine love. "And they said one to another: was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke on the way?" (Luke, xxiv. 32.)

If the presence and the brief conversation of the unknown Jesus lighted up as it did with divine love the hearts of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, conceive, if you can, the love divine, the joys supreme, the delights so heavenly, that inebriated the hearts and souls of Mary and Joseph, who knew Jesus to be the Son of God; lived in His divine presence; saw divine intelligence beaming in His countenance; and enjoyed the sweets of His conversation, not for one hour or day, but for the long space of thirty years. The "Holy House" at Nazareth was a chapel; Jesus was God and man; Mary and Joseph were the holy worshippers.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

When as a priest I go to celebrate the holy

sacrifice of the Mass, and on the altar to take in my unworthy hands Jesus Himself, as St. Joseph did; when I go to give the holy Viaticum to the sick, and go to my stations in the country and carry over my poor sinful heart Jesus in the Sacred Host, as St. Joseph carried the Infant Jesus in his arms; when I kneel to adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as St. Joseph knelt before and paid homage to Jesus in Mary's arms; when as a lay person I go to Holy Communion and receive on my unworthy tongue and into my poor breast the same Jesus that St. Joseph so often pressed to his bosom; when I kneel to adore, praise, bless, thank, and love Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, the Blessed Eucharist, I resolve, by the help of the grace of God, to call to mind, and to try to imitate, the faith, humility, reverence, adoration, and love of St. Joseph to the Infant Jesus. O Infant Jesus! O Jesus in the Sacred Host, help me to keep my resolution. St. Joseph, pray for me.

PRAYER.

O merciful Jesus! deign to give me in some degree the simple faith of St. Joseph, that I may believe in Thee, as St. Joseph did.

O tenderest Jesus! give me in some degree the reverence of St. Joseph, that I may treat Thee in the Blessed Sacrament as St. Joseph treated Thy Divine Infancy. O most humble Jesus! give me in some degree the humility of St. Joseph, that I may kneel or stand in Thy divine presence, with the same sense of my nothingness and unworthiness as St. Joseph did.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH.

O great St. Joseph! obtain for me simple faith to believe in Jesus as thou didst believe in Him; obtain for me the same love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with which thou didst love the Divine Babe; obtain for me grace to treat Jesus on our altars with the same adoration, profound humility, and reverence with which thou didst treat the Infant Saviour.

O most holy Patriarch, Patron of a happy death! obtain for me the grace to receive in my last illness the holy Viaticum—Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament,—with the same faith, love, hope, humility, and resignation with which thou, on thy death-bed, didst kiss the divine hand of the Saviour of the world. Amen.

PRACTICE.

To-day, several times, ask St. Joseph to

obtain for you a lively faith, an ardent love, and sweet devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

ASPIRATION.

“I adore Thee every moment, O Living Bread of Heaven, Great Sacrament. Jesus, Heart of Mary, I pray Thee send Thy blessing on my soul. Holiest Jesus! loving Saviour! I give Thee all my heart. May all know, adore, and praise every moment always the most holy and Divine Sacrament.”

MARCH 8TH.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph's Love for Jesus, his God and Saviour.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matt. i. 16).

“Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. . . She shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. i. 20).

Reflect on the boundless love of St. Joseph

for Jesus, his God, his Saviour, and the Redeemer of the world. This supreme love began the very moment our great Saint learned, from divine revelation, and from Mary's own lips, the profound Mystery of the Incarnation, and increased at every moment for the long space of thirty years. The nearer we approach the fire, the greater the heat; the closer we move to the sun the more intense the rays. What thermometer could measure the degrees of the heat, the intensity of the rays of divine love that consumed the soul of St. Joseph, who so long lived in the very presence of the Eternal Sun of Charity?

"If," writes St. Francis of Sales, "by being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the material sun, the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness, who can conceive the extraordinary degree of charity to which St. Joseph was exalted, exposed as he was day and night for so many years to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and to that mystical Moon which derives her splendour from Him."

If the beloved Disciple became inflamed with the most ardent love for Jesus because for a few moments he was permitted to incline his head on the bosom of his Saviour what Angel's plummet could fathom the depths of the divine love of St. Joseph, who

so often looked into the countenance of Jesus and saw divine intelligence beaming in His sacred eyes, who so often pressed to his bosom the Infant Jesus, and felt the very pulsations of His Sacred Heart; who so often took into his arms the Infant Jesus and lulled Him to sleep on his bosom. Contemplate the Infant Jesus asleep, pillowed on the bosom of His holy Mother, and St. Joseph on his knees kissing and adoring His sacred feet. Every now and again the eyes of the sleeping Babe open and cast a look of love on our Saint. These looks of love must have enraptured and inundated with celestial joys the heart and soul of St. Joseph. A celebrated writer says:—“The light of the Divine Child’s eyes, the sound of His voice, the play of His fingers, caused St. Joseph a constant ecstasy of joy.”

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Without grace we cannot approach Jesus, be faithful to Jesus, or love Jesus. Without grace we cannot see nor obey the secret inspirations of heaven to love Jesus. Without holy grace we cannot draw near, like St. Joseph, to the burning furnace of divine love, the throbbing and Sacred Heart of Jesus. The grace of God is obtained by prayer. I

resolve hence frequently on bended knees, to beg most humbly the grace to love Jesus, and for an increase and an intensity of the love of Jesus. Secondly, I resolve every day, and especially after Holy Communion, to offer to Jesus, and to beg of Jesus to accept it for me, the love of Mary and Joseph.

PRAYERS.

Thanksgiving to the most Adorable Trinity for the Privileges granted to St. Joseph.

“I adore Thee, I love Thee, and with all my heart I thank Thee, O Eternal Father, for having chosen St. Joseph to be the spouse of the most holy Mary. I adore Thee, I love Thee, and with all my heart I thank Thee, O Eternal Son, for having chosen St. Joseph to be Thy foster-father.

“I adore Thee, I love Thee, and with all my heart I thank Thee, O Eternal Holy Spirit, for having chosen St. Joseph to be the guardian of Jesus and Mary.”

O Jesus! grant me the grace to love Thee, to live for Thee, and to die for Thee. O Jesus! be ever the sole object of my love, and the sole subject of my thoughts. O Jesus! light up in my heart and soul the burning fire of Thy divine love. O Jesus!

take now and for ever my heart with its affections, my soul with its faculties, my body with its senses. O Jesus! I wish at every moment of my life to offer Thee the love of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

A Prayer to St. Joseph to obtain love for Jesus.

St. Joseph! who first after Mary adored the Infant Jesus, obtain for me love for Jesus. St. Joseph! who protected the Divine Babe, beg of Jesus to grant me His love. St. Joseph! whose hands were privileged to supply the wants and comforts of Jesus, obtain for me the grace to work and to live only for the love of Jesus.

PRACTICE.

Have the habit of frequently offering to Jesus for yourself the love of Mary and Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

My Jesus, my God, my Saviour, and my all, I love Thee with my whole heart and above all things for Thy own sake.

MARCH 9TH.

NINTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph the Chaste Spouse of the Blessed Virgin.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
 "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ . . . When as His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. . . . behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 6-20.)

Reflect on the intimate union between husband and wife, and consider then the purity and sanctity of St. Joseph, who was chosen by God to be the spouse of Mary Immaculate. It is from Jesus and Mary we learn the glories of Joseph. According to the Old Testament the Blessed Virgin was "all fair," "without spot," "beautiful," "sweet and comely," "the Perfect One," "the only one." The Gospel styles her "full of grace," and proclaims that she had "found grace with God," that the "Lord is with her," and in

no fewer than in four passages pronounces her "blessed." The Precious Blood of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had its source in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Mary is the Mother of God ; and hence she is the purest, the holiest, the most immaculate soul ever created by the hands of the Almighty. In one word, Mary is nearer and dearer to God than all the Saints and Angels put together.

God was so delighted, if we may so speak, with the work of His hands, and so jealous of Mary's honour and privileges, that He would choose none to be her spouse but the purest, the chastest, the most holy man that ever saw the light of day. This man was St. Joseph. Let us hear the sayings of the Saints on St. Joseph as the spouse of Mary.

St. Thomas of Aquin says : "If the Saviour, in dying on the cross, wished to leave His Blessed Mother under the protection of His virgin disciple how could He allow her spouse to be anything but the purest of men?" (In. Epes. ad. Gal.) "Husband of Mary," writes St. John Damascene, "than which nothing else greater can be said."

St. Bernard, writes : "Joseph was made like unto Mary, his spouse. Spouse of Mary, that is, of the most sublime of creatures, the delight of the Father and the Son. Spouse

of Mary, one heart and one soul with that soul, who bore in her heart the soul of the Son of God. Spouse of Mary, chief of the Queen of the world, for "the man is the woman's chief." Spouse of Mary, master of this august Mistress, who understood this precept of Genesis, "Thou shalt be under the power of man. . . What more can we say when we declare that he is like unto Mary his virginal spouse." The Bollandists write :—"The Evangelist St. Matthew seems to have accumulated on St. Joseph all praise that can be conceived or spoken when he said "Husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

St. Leonard of Port Maurice writes : "The Evangelists say very little of the virtues of St. Joseph, but when they call him the spouse of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, they give him the most glorious title possible, for he was nearest in every way to Mary, the purest creature ever made by God Almighty. It is thus from Mary we learn the glories of St. Joseph."

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Jesus is God. Jesus is infinitely holy, infinitely sacred, infinitely wise, infinitely

powerful, and worthy of the supreme homage, adoration, and love of men and Angels for all eternity. Next to Jesus, but of course infinitely inferior in dignity and sanctity, is Mary His Mother. Mary Immaculate Mother of God is the holiest soul ever created by the hands of the Almighty. The next noblest and holiest soul that issued from the breath of God to animate the slime of the earth is that of Joseph. St. Joseph is next to Mary, yet unspeakably beneath her, in dignity, sanctity, and glory.

When I adore Jesus and pay my loving and Blessed Saviour supreme homage and worship, I resolve always to invoke the aid and intercession of Mary and Joseph.

PRAYERS.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I offer to you my heart and soul. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. "Foster-father, Joseph, our guide, protect us and our holy Church." "Guardian of virgins and holy Father Joseph, to whose faithful custody Jesus Christ, Innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed, I pray

and beseech thee, by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that being preserved from all uncleanness, I may, with a spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, serve Jesus and Mary all the days of my life."

"God who in Thine ineffable Providence didst vouchsafe to choose Blessed Joseph to be the husband of Thy most holy Mother, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may be made worthy to receive him for our intercessor in heaven, whom on earth we venerate as our holy Protector, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

PRACTICE.

To-day several times on bended knees pray to St. Joseph to ask and request his holy spouse the Blessed Virgin to adopt you as her child.

ASPIRATION.

O Blessed Virgin Mary my holy mother and St. Joseph my protector, obtain for me the grace to love and serve Jesus faithfully all the days of my life.

MARCH 10TH.

TENTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph the Guardian and Protector of the Blessed Virgin.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph saying: Arise, take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt. . . Who arose and took the child and his mother by night and returned into Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. . . But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying, arise and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel. Who arose and took the child and his mother and came into the land of Israel” (Matt. ii. 13-20).

Meditate on the sublime mission of St. Joseph. Mary was nearer and dearer to God than any creature that ever existed. Mary wanted a guardian worthy of herself, and God chose from among the children of men St. Joseph for this holy mission. After the Incarnation with what reverence did St. Joseph regard Our Blessed Lady. Reflect on his unique privileges. During the long and fatiguing journey from Nazareth to Bethle-

hem, with what reverence and love did St. Joseph minister to Mary's wants and comforts. When fatigued, how often the Virgin Mother used to lean upon his arm for support, and recline her head upon the chaste bosom of her spouse to seek repose.

At the whisper of an Angel the Holy Family fled into Egypt. St. Joseph's loving care lightened Mary's fatigues during the journey. The cedar of the forest, as well as the fruit trees of the desert, recognising the Lord of creation, bowed down in homage, and St. Joseph plucked fruits and flowers for Mary and Jesus. During the stay in Egypt on the return home to Judea, and during his life at Nazareth, St. Joseph was the guardian protector of the Blessed Virgin, and with a loving hand supplied all her wants and comforts. What privilege could be higher, holier, or more sublime!

Meditate what lights, what graces, what sanctity did St. Joseph receive from God by his constant and holy conversation with the Blessed Virgin on heavenly subjects. The moon reflects upon dull earth her cheerful, refreshing light shed upon her by the sun; so the Blessed Virgin, the mystic moon, reflected upon the soul of St. Joseph the choicest gifts and graces, shed upon her own

soul by Jesus Christ the Eternal Sun of Justice.

If cold hearts are warmed, and tepid souls made fervent, as they have been, by the society and conversation of holy souls; how estimable the heavenly joys, the sublime graces, the choicest gifts showered upon the soul of St. Joseph, by the grace of God, from his heavenly communing with the Blessed Virgin on divine truths. St. Joseph may say of his holy spouse, "When I go into my house I shall repose myself with her, for her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness" (Wisd. viii. 16).

A celebrated French author, writing on this subject, says:—"When we meditate upon these things it is difficult to find words to express even inadequately the wonder and astonishment that we feel at this sublime vocation of Joseph, to whom God has confided the richest treasures of heaven and earth."

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Meditating on the glories of the Holy Family, we may exclaim with St. Peter at the Transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three

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tabernacles," one for Jesus, one for Mary, and one for Joseph. Under the protection of St. Joseph, Mary, the choicest, the most tender, and the most precious jewel on earth, after Jesus, was in safe keeping, so if I be happy enough to secure the protection of St. Joseph, my salvation will be safe, beyond risk or peril.

To secure the protection of St. Joseph for myself, living and dying, I resolve, at the end of my prayers, and frequently during the day, to invoke St. Joseph to obtain for me the grace of a holy life and happy death.

PRAYERS.

St. Joseph, who didst protect Mary Immaculate, watch over me. St. Joseph, who didst guard Mary from all harm, guard me from the evils of sin. St. Joseph, who didst minister to all Mary's temporal wants, watch over my spiritual necessities. St. Joseph, who didst live for so many years under the influence of the rays of divine love, reflected by Mary from her Son Jesus, pray that I may ever live in the presence of Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph, so dear to Mary, obtain that Mary may adopt me for her child.

"God, who art wonderful in Thy Saints, and more wonderful in Blessed Joseph, making him dispenser of heavenly gifts over Thy

family, grant we beseech Thee, that we, who devoutly venerate his name on earth, may, through the assistance of his prayers and merits, happily attain into the haven of salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

PRACTICE.

Always have in your room a statue, or at least a picture, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

St. Joseph! recommend me to Jesus and Mary.

MARCH 11TH.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, “a just man.”

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately” (Matt. i. 19).

Meditate on the sublime virtues of St. Joseph. The Holy Ghost Himself canonised St. Joseph, and described all his virtues by

one word, "just." "Here," says St. John Chrysostom, "'just' means perfect in every virtue." A celebrated Jesuit Father writes: "In one word, the Holy Ghost gives us the noblest description of the prodigious virtues of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God. . . . No description can be more honourable, no eulogy more comprehensive, because this word "just" in the Gospel, according to commentators on Holy Writ, means that St. Joseph possessed all virtues in their highest perfection. By this word "just" are signified those flames of love which consumed the soul of St. Joseph from the moment of the Incarnation to his dying hour in the arms of Jesus and Mary" (Vallejo. *Life*, p. 276).

The word "just" not only comprehended St. Joseph's love for God, but his charity to Mary as his neighbour. "Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately." "Just" comprehended his prompt and blind obedience to God's commands, when, at the bidding of an Angel, he fled into Egypt, and again returned to his native country.

An eloquent writer says:—"For my part I reverence the virtues of St. Joseph, and leave to other pens to give them all the light

and splendour which their brilliancy deserves, not with ink, but with the rays of the sun. Nor should anyone wonder at my saying that these virtues should be described with rays of light, when the eloquence of a Nazianzen, overwhelmed by the glory of the prerogatives and virtues of the reputed father of Jesus, exclaims: 'In Joseph, as a sun, are gathered all the lights of the Saints.' "

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

St. Joseph, the "just man," is a model of every virtue. Our Saint is a model in holy purity, in humility, in prompt obedience to God's call, in charity to God, and charity to his neighbour. He is the model of a holy life, as well as of a happy death. St. Joseph manifested his justice or virtue in a special manner by charity to his neighbour.

For the love of God, then, I resolve to be blind to the faults and sins of my neighbour, and never to say a word or do an act to wound fraternal charity. May Jesus grant me the grace to keep my resolutions. Mary and Joseph, pray for me.

PRAYERS.

St. Joseph the "just," pray that I too may

be just in my relations with God, and just in my relations with my neighbour. St. Joseph, pray that I may see and correct my own faults, and be charitable to the sins and faults of my neighbours. St. Joseph obtain for me from Jesus zeal for the salvation of souls, and sweet gentle charity for the poor abandoned sinners.

“Blessed be God. Blessed be His holy name. Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Blessed be the name of Jesus. Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy. Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception. Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother. Blessed be God in His holy Angels, and in His Saints.

PRACTICE.

To-day perform a spiritual and corporal work of mercy. Visit some poor sick person, suggest to the sick a holy prayer, and give a little alms.

ASPIRATION.

O my good God! I love Thee with my whole heart, and above all things for Thy own sake; and I love my neighbour as myself for the love of God.

MARCH 12TH.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph the Chaste.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God” (Matt. v. 8). “No price is worthy a continent soul” (Ecclus. xxv. 30).

Consider how precious in the eyes of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the holy virtue of purity. Our Divine Redeemer on every suitable occasion manifests His love and preference for this holy virtue. None but Mary “most pure,” Mary “most chaste,” Mary “undefiled,” Mary “Virgin of virgins,” Mary “Immaculate” was chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. Who was privileged to recline his head upon the bosom of the Saviour at the Last Supper? The virgin disciple St. John the Evangelist. When Jesus was dying upon the cross, in whose charge did He leave the dearest and most precious treasure He had on earth, His Virgin Mother? Jesus dying gave charge of His Virgin Mother to the virgin disciple, St. John the Evangelist. In heaven the virgins enjoy special honours and favours above all other Saints. In heaven are the confessors, who

wore chains for Jesus Christ. In heaven are the countless martyrs with their palm branch in their hands, the emblem of their martyrdom. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Could they do more than shed their blood and give their life for Jesus. Yet far beyond these, and far nearer to Jesus is another band of Saints who are privileged to sing special hymns, and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Who are these privileged souls? Pure virgins. The Evangelist thus narrates it: "And they sung as were a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the ancients, and no man could say the canticle but these three hundred and forty thousand . . . for they are virgins. These followed the Lamb whithersoever he goeth . . . for they are without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. xiv. 3).

Thus in heaven, as on earth, all who approached nearest to Jesus, the "Lamb," were the pure and the chaste. Now, it is from his relation with Mary and Jesus that we form a true notion of the purity and chastity of St. Joseph. God was so jealous of Mary the Immaculate Mother of Jesus that He would choose no other for her spouse but the purest and chastest man ever created. Let us hear

the beautiful and sublime words of St. Bernardine of Sienna: "How can a disreputable mind think that the Holy Ghost would have united by such a union any soul to the soul of such a Virgin unless most like her in the practice of virtue? Whence I believe that this most holy man Joseph was most pure in virginity, most profound in humility, most ardent in charity, most high in contemplation, and most solicitous for his spouse." So much for St. Joseph in his relation with Mary.

But how speak of the purity and chastity of St. Joseph from his relation with Jesus? If Mary called him spouse, Jesus called him father. How pure and chaste must St. Joseph be, who for about thirty years lived in the presence of uncreated purity, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate and Eternal Son of God. The purity and chastity of St. Joseph was on account of the Incarnation, in honour of Jesus and Mary. St. Francis of Sales writes: "St. Joseph surpassed the Angels and Saints in purity; for if being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the material sun the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness, who can conceive the extraordinary degree of purity to which St. Joseph was exalted, exposed as he was, day and

night, for so many years, to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and to that mystical moon which derives all her splendour from him."

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

To be near Jesus, and to be dear to Jesus, like Mary and Joseph, we must be pure and chaste. Heaven the soul of man shall never possess until she be purer than a sunbeam and whiter than the virgin snow. Chastity is a special gift of God. The inspired writer says: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave I went to the Lord and besought him" (Wisd. viii. 21). Prayer, therefore, is the first means to preserve chastity. The second means is to avoid every dangerous occasion of sin. And the third is to subdue our sinful flesh by acts of mortification, and our proud spirit by acts of humility and self-denial.

I resolve, therefore, by God's grace, to shun, all the days of my life, every occasion which I know from experience to be dangerous to holy purity; and, secondly, every day to practise some little acts of humility and self-denial known to God alone. O Jesus, grant me the grace to keep my resolutions.

PRAYER.

O loving Jesus! make me pure. O sweet Jesus! make me chaste. To preserve purity, dearer to me than my life, O Jesus, grant me the spirit of prayer. O merciful Jesus! may I call upon Thee in the dark hour of temptation. Jesus, save me from the foul evil of impurity. Help me, O blessed Saviour, when I am tempted. May I die, O Jesus, take me out of life, O Lord, but never permit me to fall into mortal sin. O merciful Saviour, give me a living fear of sin, and the dangerous occasions of sin. "Pierce thou my flesh with Thy fear." O Blessed Lord, grant me a horror of pride, and love for humility. O Saviour, grant me the grace to shun sensuality of all sorts, and to love and practise mortification and self-denial. St. Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus purity of body and soul.

"Guardian of Virgins, and holy father Joseph, to whose faithful custody Jesus Christ, Innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of Virgins, were committed, I pray and beseech thee by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that, being preserved from all uncleanness, I may, with spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, ever serve Jesus and Mary all the days of my life."

Virgin most pure, Virgin most chaste,
Virgin immaculate, pray for me, and obtain
for me purity of soul and body.

PRACTICE.

To-day practise four acts of self-denial:
of the eyes, the tongue, the taste or appetite,
and the will.

ASPIRATION.

O Jesus! make my heart and soul, my
mind and body, as pure and chaste as the
angels of God in Paradise.

MARCH 13TH.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

*St. Joseph, a Man of Prayer. The necessity
of Prayer.*

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page
278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Without me you can do nothing" (John,
xv. 5). "Not that we are sufficient to think
anything of ourselves, as of ourselves,
but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor.
iii. 5). "For it is God who worketh in you

both to will and to accomplish to his good will" (Phil. ii. 13).

Reflect that by prayer we lift our hearts to God and pay Him supreme homage. By prayer we acknowledge God to be the Creator, the supreme Lord and Master of the entire universe, of heaven and earth, and of everything that therein exists. By prayer we thank God for all that we are and all that we have, for all the gifts and graces of soul and body. All are from the hands of God. By prayer we beg pardon of God for our daily sins, and beg of God grace and help to sin no more. Prayer is the communing of the soul with its Maker and Redeemer.

For an adult, prayer is absolutely necessary for salvation. Without grace we cannot be saved, and grace is obtained by prayer. It is of faith that without the grace of God we cannot elicit one supernatural act, or advance one step on the road to salvation. "If any one saith," defines the Council of Trent, "that without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent, as he ought . . . let him be anathema" (Sess. vi. Can. iii). "Without me," says our Blessed Saviour, "you can do nothing."

And St. Paul says: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). And again the Apostle says: "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13).

Prayer is necessary for salvation, because God has so commanded. The Word of God says:—"We ought always to pray" (Luke, xviii. 1). "Pray lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke, xxii. 40). "Ask and you shall receive" (John xvi. 24). "Pray without ceasing" (1st Thess. v. 17).

Prayer alone can meet and conquer the three mortal enemies of our salvation, viz., the world with its seductions, the flesh with its concupiscences, and "the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter, v. 8). Without prayer we cannot overcome "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John, ii. 16). Without salt meat soon corrupts. Without the dew of heaven the tender plant fades and dies; so without prayer the soul is soon tainted by sin, and dies a spiritual death by losing the grace of God.

St. Joseph, enlightened by the Spirit of

God in every grace and virtue, and living for so many years under the influence of the divine light of Jesus Christ Himself, knew better than any man that ever lived the necessity of prayer for poor fallen man.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My good God, I know that prayer is the key of heaven. Prayer sheds the light and grace of God upon the soul. Prayer is the salt of the earth, the dew of heaven upon the soul. Without prayer I cannot overcome myself, the world, and the devil. Without prayer I cannot be saved. I resolve every day of my life, and often during the day, to beg of God, through the bowels of His divine mercy, and through the name and merits of Jesus, my Blessed Saviour, to grant me the spirit of prayer.

PRAYER.

O Eternal Father, through the bowels of Thy divine mercy and through the merits and holy name of Jesus Thy Divine Son, enlighten me on the necessity of prayer, and grant me the spirit of prayer. O God of mercy, wash away all my past sins in the Precious Blood of Jesus. I am sorry I ever offended so good a God. O Jesus, help me

for the future ; save me from sin ; help me when tempted ; grant me the grace to call upon Thee, O Jesus, in the hour of need. I beseech Thee, O God, to take me out of life rather than permit me to commit one mortal sin. O Mary and Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus the spirit of prayer.

“Divine Mercy, incarnate in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inundate the world and diffuse Thyself upon us.” “May the most just, the most high, and the most amiable will of God be done, praised, and eternally exalted in all things.”

PRACTICE.

To-day several times renew your morning offering.

ASPIRATION.

My God ! I offer to Thee my heart with its affections, my soul with its faculties, and my body with its senses, in union with the life and Death of Jesus.

MARCH 14TH.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

The Efficacy or Power of Prayer.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278.

“Come, O Holy Ghost, &c.

“Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (Matt. vii. 7, 8). “Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it to you” (John, xvi. 23).

Consider that to overcome ourselves, the world, and the devil, is no doubt difficult for poor fallen man. To hate ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ, would seem almost impossible to frail humanity. To forgive, nay, to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that persecute and calumniate us, appears even harder still. Before this mighty task we might well sit down and faint in despair. But God has come to our aid and has given us the means by which success is assured. The means is prayer. In the Old and New Testament God Almighty has promised over and over again that He will give us victory if only we ask it. Deep reflections upon these promises of God cannot fail to impress upon the mind the greatest confidence in prayer.

In the Old Testament God says: “Cry to me and I will hear thee” (Jer. xxxiii. 3). “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will

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deliver thee" (Ps. xlix. 15). "Turn to me and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zac. i. 3). "For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee" (Ps. lxxxv. 5). "Thou hast gone astray after many lovers, but return to me and I will receive thee" (Jer. iii. 1). The Prophet says to the sinner, "Weeping thou shalt not weep, he will surely have pity on thee at the voice of thy cry, as soon as He shall hear he will answer thee" (Isa. xxx. 19). "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: and why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezech xxxiii. 2.) One text more for the poor sinner. "Come and accuse me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow, and if they be as red as crimson they shall be white as wool" (Isai. i. 18).

We shall confine ourselves to a few texts from the New Testament. "Ask," says our Blessed Saviour, "and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Matt. vii. 7, 8). In the Gospel of St. John we

find the following texts: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (xiv. 13). Again, "Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (xvi. 23).

From these texts we see that God Almighty has pledged Himself, has pledged His Divine Word to help us in our wants, to support us in our needs, to hear us when we pray to Him. God cannot deceive, nor be deceived. God cannot, like man, break His word or promise. "God is not as a man that he should lie, nor as the son of man, that he change. Hath he said then, and will he not do?" (Num. xxii. 19).

A deep and thoughtful reflection upon the above texts cannot fail to impress upon the serious Christian the greatest faith and confidence in holy prayer.

The sinner cannot excuse himself to God by saying I was weak; God had promised to make him strong. He cannot say, I was frail; he had God's right arm ready to support him. Nor can he say, the temptation was too strong for me, therefore I fell; for

God has promised to allow no one to be tempted beyond his strength. The sinner's fall and fault is all his own.

The excellency of the school stamps its mark upon the scholar: St. Joseph, brought up in the school of Jesus Christ Himself, knew to perfection the power and efficacy of prayer. Prayer and perfect correspondence with grace exalted St. Joseph in sanctity beyond that of any other Saint of God except the Blessed Virgin Mary.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

O my God ! how good and merciful Thou art. Seeing that Thou hast promised to hear and help me when I pray to Thee, and also knowing that my Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has promised that His Eternal Father will grant me everything I ask in His holy name, I resolve, first, by the grace of God, to have the greatest faith and confidence in holy prayer ; and, secondly, in all my wants, in all my temptations and dangers, to beg help and grace of the Eternal Father, through the name and merits of His Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

Eternal Father, through the name and merits of Jesus, grant me the grace to keep all my good and holy resolutions.

PRAYERS.

O my good and merciful God, hear me and help me in my poor prayers. Eternal Father, through the name and merits of Thy Beloved Son, Jesus, my Blessed Lord and Saviour, save me from sin, and from the dangerous occasions of sin; grant me purity of intention to do all my actions; grant me the grace to walk ever in the presence of God; when my head and hands are at work, may my heart watch, and praise and bless God by holy and constant aspirations. Father! through the name and merits of Jesus, Thy Divine Son, grant me the spirit of prayer, the love and practice of humility and self-denial, and zeal for the salvation of souls.

St. Joseph, so exalted in the spirit of prayer, obtain for me faith and confidence in the power and efficacy of prayer.

“Soul of Jesus, sanctify me. Body of Jesus, save me. Blood of Jesus, inebriate me. Water flowing from the side of Jesus, wash me. Passion of Jesus, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Hide me in Thy wounds. Permit not that I should be separated from Thee. Defend me from the malignant enemy. Call me at the hour of my death, and bid me come to Thee, that with Thy Saints I may praise Thee for all eternity. Amen.”

PRACTICE.

To-day beg of God, through the name and merits of Jesus, the grace to conquer your predominant passion.

ASPIRATION.

O my God! I beg of Thee, through the name and merits of Jesus, and through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, to grant me the grace to overcome all sensuality.

MARCH 15TH.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, a Man of Prayer. The Conditions for Efficacious Prayer.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss" (James, iv. 3). "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (*Ibid.*, iv. 6). "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Ecol. xxx. 21.) "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James, i. 6).

Reflect that though men pray, yet the world abounds with sin. We pray to-day and relapse to-morrow. We pray in the

morning, and sin before night. We pray for conversion, grace, and perseverance, but our prayers are never heard; hence many continue to live in sin, others are always relapsing into sin; and a third class never advance in virtue. The reason is that such prayers are cold, careless, inattentive, and distracted. They never think of God's presence. The lips pronounce holy words, but their minds and hearts are far away from God. God Himself says of such prayers: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. xv. 8).

To have our prayers heard, to be entitled to the promises of God to hear us when we cry to Him, we must pray, first, with attention and fervour. That is, we are to call to mind the presence of God, that by prayer we are addressing God, and speaking and communing with the Almighty. Whilst our tongues are pronouncing holy words let our mind and heart be fixed on God.

Secondly, we must pray with humility. "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James, iv. 6). The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds. . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). The Royal Psalmist thus addresses the

Almighty: "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. l. 19). The penitent publican obtained mercy and pardon by one fervent and humble prayer — "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." And on the occasion our Blessed Lord said: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke, xviii. 14).

Thirdly, we are to pray with confidence and perseverance. The word of God says: "No one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded" (Eccles., ii 11). Our Blessed Lord said to His Disciples: "Have the faith of God. Amen I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done, it shall be done unto him. Therefore, I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you" (Mark, xi. 23). . . . "Ask in faith," says St. James, "nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (i. 6.).

A fourth condition is perseverance in prayer. Our Blessed Lord has said: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt., xxiv. 13). Again, the inspired text tells us: "We ought always to pray" (Luke, xviii. 1). "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times" (Luke, xxi. 36). "Pray without ceasing," says St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 17). If our prayers be not immediately heard we are not to desist. Our Blessed Lord loves to be importuned. We are to keep asking until we get our request. We are to continue knocking until the door be thrown open. We are to persevere in seeking until we have found grace and mercy from the loving Heart of Jesus.

St. Joseph, taught by Jesus Christ Himself, knew best how to pray, and hence we are not surprised at his eminent sanctity, his perfection in all virtues.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My good God! I have prayed, yet I lived in sin; I prayed, yet I relapsed into sin; I prayed, yet I have made no progress in virtue. My God! I know that Thou art ever faithful to Thy word and promise. All the fault was my own. My prayers were

not heard, because they were cold, careless, distracted, and inattentive.

The real spirit of prayer comes from God alone: it is the gift of the Most High. I resolve, therefore, every day of my life, and often during the day, to beg of God, through the name and merits of Jesus, and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, to grant me the grace to pray as I ought, that is, to pray with fervour and attention, to pray with humility, to pray with confidence, and to persevere in prayer.

PRAYER.

O good and merciful God, through the name and merits of Thy Beloved Son, my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, grant me the spirit of prayer, grant me the grace to pray as I ought. May I do all things to please Thee alone, so that every work and act of my life may be a prayer. Grant me, O Lord, the grace to pray with attention and fervour. Grant me the grace to pray in a spirit of profound humility. When tempted to sin may I remember Thy Divine Presence. On every occasion of falling into sin, may I call upon Jesus and Mary. O Eternal Father, through the love of Jesus,

keep me ever in Thy divine fear and love. O Mary and Joseph, pray for me to Jesus, that I may love and serve Him all the days of my life.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH.

O glorious St. Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, to thee do we raise our hearts and hands to implore thy powerful intercession in obtaining from the benign Heart of Jesus all the helps and graces necessary for our spiritual and temporal welfare, particularly the grace of a happy death, and the special favour of the spirit of prayer. Amen.

O Guardian of the Word Incarnate, we feel animated with confidence that thy prayers in our behalf will be heard by the Saviour of the World.

PRACTICE.

Before you begin to pray, always call to mind the presence of God.

ASPIRATION.

“Incline unto my aid, O God. O Lord, make haste to help me.”

MARCH 16TH.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph's ardent Desire and Love for our Salvation.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

" . . . There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness. . . . despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows. . . . He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God . . . he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins " (Isai. liii. 5).

"He humbleth himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross " (Phil. ii. 8).

"You are bought with a great price " (1 Cor. vi. 20).

Consider that it is from the value of a soul in the eyes of Jesus Christ that we are to conceive and understand the ardent love of St. Joseph for the salvation of each of us. To save our souls the Eternal Son of God descended from heaven and assumed human

flesh. To save our souls Jesus was born in poverty and humility, and deprived of all human comforts. To save our souls Jesus, Our Blessed Lord, at His very Nativity, was persecuted and exiled. To save our souls Jesus preached and taught, suffered and died. To save our souls Jesus sweated drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemani, was scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, and after three hours of agony His Sacred Heart broke of anguish on Mount Calvary.

To save our souls Jesus established His Church, and has given to popes, bishops, and priests power beyond that of the angels of God in heaven. To save our souls Jesus instituted the seven sacraments, has given to the world to the end of time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Most Adorable Sacrament of His own Precious Body and Blood. All this and more did Jesus do for the salvation of our souls.

After Mary, no saint ever loved God so ardently and fervently as St. Joseph. "Love of God and love of our neighbour," says St. Gregory, "are two rings that compose the same chain, two streams that come from the same source." "They are not," says St. Thomas of Aquin, "two virtues, but two

branches of one root, two acts of the same habit of virtue, which is charity." No saint, therefore, ever loved our salvation so ardently as St. Joseph.

Now, after the Blessed Virgin, no saint ever entered so closely and intimately into the designs, desires, and wishes of Jesus, our Blessed Saviour, as St. Joseph. As we have so often said, St. Joseph was illuminated beyond all other Saints. He lived for years in the light and presence of Jesus. Countless times he felt the very beatings and throbbings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and knew the ardent desire and the burning love of Jesus for the salvation of souls.

St. Joseph, therefore, knowing so well the value of our souls, the price that Jesus paid for our redemption, the burning thirst of Jesus for our salvation, St. Joseph, to-day in Paradise, longs, loves, and ardently desires the salvation of every one of us.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My good God! teach me to understand the value of my soul. To save my soul the Eternal Word descended from heaven, and was made flesh in Mary's chaste womb. To

save my soul Jesus lived in poverty and died in sufferings. To save me and sanctify me my beloved Lord Jesus Christ instituted the seven sacraments, and bequeathed to the world the infinite treasures of His divine love, contained in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist. Countless other holy and divine things has Jesus done for my salvation. I resolve, therefore, to regard my salvation as the great and sole end of my existence. Secondly, I resolve, at every opportunity, and by every means in my power, to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls, and in preventing sin. St. Joseph, take charge of my salvation.

PRAYER.

“O most glorious Patriarch, my dear Patron, blessed are the eyes that see what thou now seest. I hope with holy Job, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and by thy powerful intercession, that in my flesh I shall see my God, my Saviour. Stretch out for thy unworthy client those happy arms which so often carried and provided for the Son of God. Pray that I may live and die in God’s fear and love. I most humbly beg

that thou wilt prevail with thy Immaculate Spouse to join in prayer with thee, that I may be saved and numbered amongst the Elect. With profound humility I beseech thee to be present with me at the dreadful hour of my death. Amen."

A PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI TO
ST. JOSEPH.

"O my holy Protector, St. Joseph, my sins deserve an evil end, but if thou dost defend me I cannot be lost. Not only hast thou been a dear friend of my Judge, but thou hast been, too, His guardian and foster-father. Commend me to Jesus, who for thy sake will receive me. I place myself under thy protection; receive me as thy servant for evermore. And in the name of the holy society of Jesus and Mary, of which thou didst enjoy the advantages in this life, obtain for me at the moment of my death a special assistance of Jesus and Mary. Amen."

PRACTICE.

To-day frequently thank St. Joseph for all the graces and favours, known and unknown, he has obtained for you from God.

ASPIRATION.

St. Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus a faithful correspondence with all the graces and secret inspirations of God.

MARCH 17TH.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

*St. Joseph's Power with our Blessed Lord
Jesus Christ for our Salvation.*

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you" (Gen. xli. 55). "Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey. . . . Behold I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt . . . without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt . . . and he called him in the Egyptian tongue the saviour of the world" (Gen. xli. 40). "He made him master of his house and ruler of all his possessions" (Ps. civ. 21).

In our last meditation we reflected on St. Joseph's ardent love and desire for our salvation, because he knew from Jesus Himself

the value of souls, the dear and high price that Jesus paid for them, and because he knew that nothing gives more consolation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus than the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners.

To-day in Paradise St. Joseph is giving constant glory to God, and consoling the Sacred Heart of Jesus by obtaining the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of souls. What is his power? Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, showered all the honours in his power and in his kingdom upon the first Joseph. He created him Viceroy of Egypt, and ordered all his subjects to pay him homage and obey him. "He made him master of his house and ruler of all his possessions." To his subjects Pharaoh said: "Go to Joseph, and do all things he shall say to you, and receive what he shall give you."

The first Joseph, the son of Jacob, was, in a sense, a figure of the second Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pharaoh, King of Egypt, made the first Joseph master of his household and ruler of his kingdom. Unspeakably greater is the dignity of the second Joseph, for the King of kings created him head of the Holy Family, lord and master, in a sense, over Jesus and

Mary. If the people of Egypt obeyed and paid homage to the first Joseph, the Saviour of all mankind, God Himself, and His Holy Mother obeyed and revered the second Joseph. If the first Joseph supplied bread to starving nations, the second Joseph was privileged, by the labour of his hands, to minister to the maintenance, wants, and comforts of Jesus and Mary.

St. Joseph, according to the above figure, is created by Jesus Christ viceroy of His kingdom, master and ruler of His Church; and Jesus says to His people in their necessities: "Go to Joseph." Let the Saints speak for us. St. Bernard says: "Jesus is so full of charity that he could never refuse to hear St. Joseph's prayer. If it is true that He does the will of those that fear Him, how could He refuse anything to St. Joseph, who watched over and tended Him so faithfully during His tender infancy?"

In another place the same Saint writes: "If it is true that Jesus Christ, who is our Advocate with His Father, shows His Wounds and bleeding Side; if Mary presents to her Son the only womb that bore Him, may we not add that Joseph shows to his dear Son and His Mother the hands with which he toiled and worked for so

many years on earth for their support. And if the Eternal Father can refuse nothing to His Beloved Son, nor the Son to His most holy Mother, may we not easily believe that neither the Son nor the Mother could refuse anything to the glorious St. Joseph. If, when Jesus and Mary were living at Nazareth, we had wished to receive a favour from one or the other, could we have employed a better mediator than St. Joseph?"

St. Bernardine of Sienna concludes: "Jesus, wishing to give St. Joseph in heaven a constant proof of His filial respect and obedience, grants all his requests and fulfils all his desires."

A serious reflection upon the above points cannot fail to impress upon the thoughtful mind the greatest faith and confidence in the power and prayers of St. Joseph.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My good God! from the above reflection I clearly understand how powerful is the intercession of St. Joseph, and all that my great Saint can and will do for my salvation. In my spiritual wants and in my temptation I neglected to "go to Joseph." My Divine Saviour, I know Thou wilt not refuse the

requests of St. Joseph, who loved Thee so tenderly on earth, who saved Thy very life, and supplied Thy wants and comforts. I resolve, therefore, frequently and fervently to invoke the aid and prayers of St. Joseph to save me from sin, to help me in temptations, and to obtain for me the grace of a holy life and happy death. Secondly, when I want a special favour, I resolve to go straight to St. Joseph and ask it of him, and to keep asking till I get it.

PRAYER.

O my father, patron, and generous dispenser of everlasting riches, it is to thee I address my humble prayers for thy aid and protection. If God Himself says to me: "Go to Joseph," it is because He has placed special graces in thy hands to dispense them to me. It is in thy powerful hands, O St. Joseph, I place my life and salvation. Be thou my support and my aid for the rest of my days. May my last words be, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph."

O holy father, St. Joseph, whose power is so great with Jesus, pray for me; adopt me as thy child; watch over my salvation; help me when I am tempted; keep me in God's holy fear and love; be with me dying; and

never abandon me until thou seest me safe in Paradise.

Jesus, my Blessed Saviour, grant me faith and confidence in the power and prayers of St. Joseph.

PRACTICE.

To-day, on bended knees, before an altar or statue of St. Joseph, firmly resolve, every day of thy life, to beg the prayers of St. Joseph for the grace of a holy life and a happy death.

ASPIRATION.

O my great St. Joseph ! pray for me when I am tempted to sin ; pray for me to avoid the occasions of sin, and obtain for me a happy death and favourable judgment.

MARCH 18TH.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph a Model of Conformity to the Holy Will of God.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the child

and his mother and fly into Egypt . . . Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt. . . . An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying : Arise and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel . . . Who arose and took the child and his mother and came into the land of Israel ” (Matt. ii. 13-21).

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. vi. 10): “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. iv. 3).

Reflect that the highest order of sanctity consists in doing the holy will of God. In heaven above, the Saints and Angels know no higher perfection than hanging on the nod of God, and doing His blessed will. Hence our Divine Redeemer has taught us to pray to the Eternal Father in these words: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And He Himself declares: “I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me” (John, vi. 38). In His sorrow and anguish, even “unto death,” in the garden of Gethsemani, when the green grass beneath the olive-trees was purpled by the Blood of Redemption, our loving Saviour thus prayed: “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice

pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxv. 39).

St. Paul, converted into a "vessel of election" by the grace and very presence of Jesus Christ Himself, cried out: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do" (Acts, ix. 6). To know and do the will of God was the first prayer of the Apostle of the Gentiles. In like manner the prayer of the Royal Psalmist to God was, "Teach me to do thy will" (Ps. cxlii. 9).

How beautiful and sublime the prayer of holy Job in the darkest midnight of his abandonment, humiliation, and sufferings! "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (i. 21).

St. Teresa justly concludes: "All that he who practises prayer should seek is to conform his will to the Divine Will; and let him be assured that in this consists the highest perfection."

"The perfection of love," concludes St. Alphonsus Liguori, "consists in conformity to the Divine Will."

No wonder, therefore, that our great Patriarch, St. Joseph, was prompt and ready

to obey the whispers of God's Angels. The life of St. Joseph was to watch, to know, and to do the will of Jesus Christ, his Lord and Saviour.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

To do the will of God is Christian perfection. To be resigned in all things to God's holy will, to take all things from God's holy hands, converts dull earth into a paradise. Our days in this vale of tears are full of sorrows; but resignation to God's holy will sweetens all the bitterness of life. In pain, therefore, in trials, in disappointments, in evil as in good fortune, in sickness and in death, I resolve, by the aid of Divine grace, to be resigned to God's holy will; to take all things from God's divine hands, and to say, with holy Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done: blessed be the name of the Lord."

PRAYER.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God." "For what have I in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do I de-

sire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart have fainted away! Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25). "May the most just, the most high, the most amiable will of God be done, praised, and eternally exalted in all things." "To Thee, O merciful God, I confess that often, under trials and disappointments, I have murmured and repined against Thy adorable will. In Thy divine mercy, O Lord, forgive the past, and, for the future, grant me the grace to be resigned in all things to Thy holy will. In trials, in pains, in evil as in good things, in sickness and in death, may I ever say, 'Thy will be done;' 'as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

PRACTICE.

To-day make several fervent acts of conformity to the holy will of God; and, after each act, beg of God the grace, in all future trials, to be resigned to the holy will of Providence.

ASPIRATION.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "The Lord gave and the Lord

hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord."

MARCH 19TH.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

The Sanctification of our Ordinary Actions.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

St. Joseph a model of the sanctification of ordinary actions by purity of intention.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). "Whatever you do in word or work, do all for the glory of God." "Man seeth those things that appear; but the Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings, xvi.) "If thy eye be single, the whole body shall be lightsome" (Matt. vi. 22).

Reflect that to be pious and holy it is not necessary to work miracles, or to perform extraordinary actions. No miracle is recorded in the lives of many great Saints. Of the great St. John the Baptist, the Gospel says: "And many resorted to him, and they

said: John, indeed, did no sign" (John, x. 41). Countless millions are crowned in Paradise by the brightest diadems of glory, by the sanctification of their daily actions. To be holy, to be great Saints, it is only necessary to sanctify our ordinary actions. How, therefore, are we to sanctify our daily actions?

We sanctify our ordinary actions by doing each and all simply to please God alone. The intention is the soul of the act. "Man seeth those things that appear; but the Lord beholdeth the heart." The intention stamps the value of the act. It is the common teaching of theologians that no act, no matter how good in itself, performed without a supernatural motive, will obtain any reward from God in heaven. For instance, if we gave a million of pounds sterling to the poor through a natural motive of pity or compassion, we get no reward from God in heaven. St. Paul puts it clearly: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor; if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity" (that is, except I do it for God), "it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3). How many even good Christians lose the reward of their good acts, their almsgiving, and the reward of even

the greater part of their lives, for want of this supernatural motive, by not doing their good acts for God's sake, or to please God alone.

On the other hand, we know from the Gospel, that the widow's mite, the very cup of cold water, given for God, will be rewarded in paradise. "If thy eye be single," says our Blessed Saviour, "thy whole body shall be lightsome."

The greater glory of God, to please God alone, is the intention or motive for which we ought to perform each and every one of our daily actions. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." "Whatever you do in word or work, do all for the glory of God."

St. Augustine therefore says, "God attends not so much to what man does, as to the motives of his acts." "The good which you will do," writes St. Ambrose, "shall be proportioned to the purity of intention with which you do it for the divine glory." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzis, says: "A person who performs all his actions with the pure intention of the greater glory of God goes straight to heaven, without passing through the fires of purgatory."

Here a deep and useful subject for medi-

tation and self examination expands before the mind.

It was by the sanctification of his daily ordinary actions, in doing all things for the supernatural motive of God's greater glory, to please God alone, that St. Joseph acquired that eminent sanctity to which God had raised him.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My whole life, each and every one of my actions belongs to God by precept. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Many of my good actions, nay, years of my life, have been taken from God, and given to the world. I resolve, therefore, to make a fervent morning offering, and to renew it frequently during the day; secondly, I resolve, as far as I can, by the grace of God, to offer each and every one of my daily actions to the greater glory of God, in union with the actions of Jesus, and in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily offered on countless altars throughout Christendom.

PRAYERS.

Morning Offering to be renewed often during the day.

O my good God ! I devote, consecrate, and offer to Thy greater glory, every thought, word, action, pain, and suffering, the circulation of my blood, the pulsations of my heart, and the motions of my senses, not only of this day, but all the days of my life, in union with the Actions, the Passion, and the Death of Jesus Christ ; in union with the Masses that have been celebrated, that are being or will be celebrated to the end of time throughout Christendom ; in union with the infinite praise, adoration, and homage which Jesus dwelling in the Tabernacle has rendered to Thee ; and for the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Begin each act by saying, "My good God, I offer Thee this work in union with Jesus."

"Covenant with God," from St. Gertrude.

"O Almighty God ! I sanctify, dedicate, and consecrate to Thee every beating of my heart, and every pulsation of my blood ; and I desire to make this compact with Thee that every beating shall say to Thee : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth ; and I beseech Thee to impute this meaning

to them, so that they may be before Thy Divine Majesty as the increasing echo of that heavenly canticle which the Seraphim sing without ceasing to Thee. Amen."

"Each sigh, each look, each thought of mine,
Shall be an act of love divine,
And everything that I shall do,
Shall be, dear Lord, for love of You."

PRACTICE.

To-day frequently renew your morning offering, and remember to offer each important act of the day to the greater glory of God in union with the actions of Jesus.

ASPIRATION.

My God, I offer to Thee my days and nights, my life and death, in union with the Life and Death of Jesus Christ.

MARCH 20TH.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

The Sanctification of our Ordinary Actions.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

St. Joseph, the Model of the Sanctification of Ordinary Actions by the Practice of the Presence of God.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Walk before me, and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1.) "All the days of thy life have

God in thy mind " (Tob. iv. 6). "I remembered God and was delighted" (Ps. xxvi. 4). "I have set the Lord always in my sight" (Ps. xv. 8). Reflect that the practice or habit of the presence of God follows close upon purity of intention, or is a part of it, and is one of the best means to sanctify our ordinary actions.

Let us realise the great truth that God is everywhere present, that His Divine eye is ever upon us, that He sees our inmost and our most secret thoughts. How beautifully the Psalmist expresses it: "If I ascend to heaven thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. c. xxxviii. 8). "The spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth" (Wis. i. 7). "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" (Jer. xxiii. 24.) "God," says St. Paul, "is not far from every one of us. For in him we live, move, and be" (Acts, xvii. 28). God is everywhere within us, and around us. In God we exist, walk, think, and live. God is present within us, and equally present in the most remote fixed star, countless millions of miles distant. All created space is

but a point in the infinite Immensity of God. God sees us! His eye is ever upon us. The presence of God is an awful terror to the wicked. To sin, to indulge his guilty passions, the wicked may seek the darkness and the lonely spot. But there the eye of God is upon him; before God there is no midnight, but eternal mid-day. Not only does God see the sinful deeds of the wicked man, but each and every sinful secret thought is known to God, and noted down in the book of eternal death.

God sees us, His eye is ever upon us! If this truth be so terrible, as it is, to the wicked, it is the joy and consolation of the just man. Not only does God see our good acts, both public and private, but our secret thoughts, and good holy intentions and desires, are known to the Almighty, and will be rewarded by an eternal weight of glory. Though we fail in a thousand things, though we are not a tenth as good as we ought to be, yet it is a consolation in this vale of tears to know that a tender merciful God sees our temptations, our struggles, our ardent desires to serve Him, and to see Him loved by the whole world. "I remembered God," said the Royal Prophet, "and was delighted."

Let us here insert a few sayings from the Saints on the presence of God.

St. Jerome says: "The remembrance of God banishes all sorts of sin." "Every evil happens to us," writes St. Teresa, "because we do not reflect that God is present with us, but at a distance."

St. Bonaventure, writes: "To employ ourselves continually in the exercise of the presence of God, is to begin in this life to enjoy the felicity of the blessed in the next."

St. Alphonsus Liguori calls it a "short and easy road to perfection." "In a word," adds the Saint, "by this exercise of the presence of God the Saints have succeeded in acquiring great treasures of merit."

We shall conclude with one beautiful passage from the great Doctor, St. Augustine. He writes: "When I attentively consider, O Lord, that you have your eyes attentively fixed upon me, and that day and night you keep a continual watch over me, with so great care as if neither in heaven nor on earth you had any other creature to govern besides myself—when I think you behold all my actions, and that you penetrate my most secret and hidden thoughts, and that all my

desires are exposed to your view, I find myself filled with confusion" (Confessions.)

After the Blessed Virgin, no Saint ever enjoyed the sweets and consolations of the presence of God as St. Joseph did. For thirty years, St. Joseph lived in the presence and company of Jesus. For thirty years, the light of divine intelligence, beaming from the eyes of Jesus, shone upon the soul of St. Joseph; and for the same thirty years, the burning heat of divine love, emanating from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inflamed the heart of St. Joseph. No wonder then that St. Joseph is a perfect model of the holy exercise of the presence of God.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My good God! The holy exercise of Thy presence has raised to the highest sanctity countless millions. To remember Thee, O God, and yet to sin in Thy sight is impossible. The presence of God not only banishes sin, but is a "short and easy road to perfection." "Walk before me and be perfect." "I set the Lord always in my sight," says the Royal Psalmist. I resolve, therefore, first, when I am tempted to sin, to call to mind the presence of God, to remember that the

awful and all-seeing eye of God is upon me. Secondly, I resolve, by the grace of God, to keep my mind filled day and night with holy aspirations, pious thoughts, and good desires. "Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me."

PRAYER.

My good God! may the parting advice of holy Tobias to his son—"all the days of thy life have God in thy mind"—ever ring in my ears. May I ever walk in Thy divine presence, O Lord. When tempted, may I remember that Thy divine eye is upon me, and fear and shun sin. My God! grant me the grace ever to think of Thee, to fear Thee, and to love Thee. O God! fill my mind, by day and by night, with holy thoughts, and pious desires.

LOVING AFFECTIONS OF ST. GERTRUDE.

"O Thou most excelling King of kings, Prince of glory, my loving Jesus! Thou art the life of my soul. May all the affections of my heart be inflamed with the ardour of Thy love, and be for ever united to Thee. May it sink back, baffled and exhausted, when it would love aught but what tends to

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Thee alone. O King of kings! most worthy Sovereign Lord of all, Prince most glorious, I choose Thee in preference to all creatures. For Thy sake alone I renounce all pleasures, for Thee I run with joy to meet all adversities, and in all do I seek no other praise than Thine. With the energy of Thy fervour, I unite my intention to that of Thy most availing prayer, that in virtue of this divine union every movement of rebellion may be quelled, and crushed within me; and that I may be led by Thee to the summit and pinnacle of perfection."

PRACTICE.

To-day, several times each hour, call to mind the presence of God.

ASPIRATION.

I love Thee, God, with my whole heart. God be merciful to me a sinner! Incline into mine aid, O Lord; O God, make haste to help me.

MARCH 21st.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

The Sanctification of our Ordinary Actions.

**THE HABIT OF EJACULATIONS OR SHORT
PRAYERS.**

St. Joseph sanctified his ordinary actions by the habit of ejaculations or short prayers.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Teach me to do thy will" (Ps. cvii. 2).
"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" (Acts, ix. 6). "The sins of my youth and my ignorance, remember not, O Lord." "Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities." "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare thy servant" (Ps). "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind" (Tob. iv. 6).

Purity of intention, or doing all our ordinary actions solely to please God, inspires a supernatural motive into all our acts, and lifts them from earth to heaven. The exercise of the presence of God is the light and sanctification of the soul. Now, purity of intention, and the exercise of the presence of God, are best reduced to practice, and kept alive in the soul, by the habit of ejaculations, or short prayers, or aspirations.

To pay homage to God and to adore Him we need not go to the Church, nor need we kneel. God is everywhere present, and hence everywhere we can lift up to Him our hearts, and praise and bless him. In the midst of our work, when our hands toil, our hearts are free to love the Lord. As matter gravitates towards its centre, so our hearts incline to God, their Centre, Maker, and the object of their love.

The Saints ever kept God before the eyes of their soul. "I have set the Lord always in my sight," says the Royal Psalmist (Ps. xv. 8). And again, "Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened: seek his face evermore" (civ. 4). On the frequent use of aspirations or ejaculatory prayer, St. Francis of Sales writes: "The great fabric of devotion leans upon this exercise; it can supply the defects of all other prayers, and all other prayers cannot supply for it." Another great Saint calls aspirations "inflamed arrows which pierce the heavens." St. Bernard writes: "As there is not a moment in which we do not enjoy the benefits of God, so there is not a moment in which we should not remember God, and prove our gratitude." We read in the life of Gregory Lopez, that for three whole years, at every respiration, he

elicited in his heart this holy aspiration, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
"Wonderful is God in His saints."

Aspirations, or short prayers, have another excellence or advantage, that they never fatigue the mind or head like long vocal prayers; they are fervent, and can be multiplied by thousands at all times, in all places, in the midst of our daily toil, and unobserved by our neighbour, who works or sits by our side.

In this cold, dreary, and sinful world, it is consoling and refreshing to think of God and pay Him homage. Some labour in the garden, others in their shops, some work at their trade, others at their desk, some travel by train, others walk the lonely road, anywhere we are, there is God present, and when our hands are engaged in toil our hearts are free to praise and love the Lord.

How sweet to turn to Jesus, and say: "My Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart! My Jesus, I offer Thee the love of the Blessed Virgin! My Jesus, I wish, at every pulsation of my heart, to offer Thee the love of all the Saints and Angels in heaven, and also the love of Mary Immaculate!"

In pain and trials how pleasing to God are acts of conformity to the Divine will. "Not

my will, O Lord, but thine be done." "Teach me to do thy will" (Ps. cvii. 2.) "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" (Acts, ix. 6). How consoling the words of holy Job in the darkest midnight of his afflictions. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job, i. 21).

The repentant sinner will often say in the secret closet of his heart, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." "The sins of my youth and my ignorance remember not, O Lord." "Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities." "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare thy servant" (Ps.) O merciful Jesus, wash away all my sins in Thy Precious Blood.

How often the holy soul will say "Jesus, save me from sin. O Jesus, keep me in Thy divine fear and love. O Jesus, take me out of life rather than allow me to commit one mortal sin. Jesus, grant me a happy death."

It is sweet to turn to the altar, and adore, and praise, and love Jesus in the Tabernacle. "Praised and blessed at every moment be the most holy and Divine Sacrament. Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on me. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved."

The glory of heaven consists in seeing God,

“face to face;” on earth the holy soul sees God by faith, and communes with Him and enjoys Him by holy prayer. Short aspirations are the light of Paradise to the soul, the dew of heaven upon the heart; and the soul and heart thus illumined by the light of God’s love, and watered and refreshed by the dew of God’s grace, are ever in flower and blossom, and producing the rich and precious fruits of Christian virtues.

For thirty years did St. Joseph commune in silent prayer with Jesus Christ, his Lord and God.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My God! what a supreme happiness that the soul, in all places, and at all times, can speak to Thee, love Thee, and bless Thee. Amid the din of toil and distracting occupations, the soul can turn to Thee, O Lord, and adore and thank Thee, can beg mercy for her sins, and can petition Thee for heaven above.

I resolve, therefore, every day at my morning prayer to choose some few holy aspirations, and to keep them in my mouth and heart as often as I can during the day.

PRAYERS.

May Thy sacred name, O God, be ever in my heart and tongue. Wherever I may be,

may my heart and soul turn to Thee, and bless Thee, "the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever." When my hands toil, may my heart love Thee, O Lord. On the lonely roads, may I offer to Thee the homage of Thy Angels, O Lord. At the morning's dawn, O God, be Thou the first object of my thoughts; and retiring to rest, may I fall asleep in the Lord.

A Prayer to obtain the Patronage of St. Joseph.

"O God, who, by thy ineffable providence, didst vouchsafe to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Thy most holy Mother, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may have as our intercessor in heaven, him whom we venerate as our protector on earth: Who livest and reignest one God, world without end. Amen.

PRACTICE.

To-day choose some few holy aspirations, and keep them continually on thy tongue and in thy heart.

ASPIRATION.

"The sins of my youth and my ignorance remember not, O Lord." "Turn away thy

face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities.”
“From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord,
and from those of others spare thy servant”
(Ps.)

MARCH 22ND.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

St. Joseph and “Union with Jesus.”

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. xvii. 5). “Who, in the days of his flesh, offering up prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears, to him that was able to save him from death, was heard from his reverence” (Heb. v. 7).

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof: because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. . . . The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and, divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction” (Apoc. v. 9-12).

Meditate on the infinite goodness of Jesus.

Oh! how many and how wonderful are the means Jesus has given us for our salvation and sanctification.

Not only did our loving Saviour die upon the Cross, and shed His Precious Blood to the last drop for our Redemption, but every moment of our lives we can make the most profitable use of His Life, Death, and Precious Blood for our salvation and sanctification.

What means "*Union with Jesus?*" "*Union with Jesus*" means this: that in intention and desire we unite each and all the actions of the day and night, and of our whole lives, with the sacred actions of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, with His Life, Death, and Precious Blood, and thus united, offer them to His Eternal Father; and beg of the Father, through the name and merits of Jesus to accept them.

Man is so frail and sinful that our very best actions in themselves are imperfect, and of little value in the presence of infinite sanctity; but when united with the infinite actions of Jesus, the Eternal Word Incarnate, they become precious and acceptable in the sight of God.

The ivy, left to itself, can never lift its branch or leaf from the ground; but it will

grasp the trunk of the tallest tree in the forest, and climb to the summit. Jesus to us is the tree of life, the pillar to paradise. When we twine our actions round the infinite actions of Jesus they ascend to the highest heavens, in the presence of the Eternal Father.

We see at a glance the value of this holy practice—“*Union with Jesus.*” Our Blessed Lord while on earth prayed and fasted, ate and drank, toiled and slept, just as we do; and in the end suffered, and died upon the Cross for our Redemption. Each act of Jesus, being the act of the Man-God, was of infinite value in the sight of His Eternal Father. We may humbly hope that our actions, united to and sanctified by the holy actions of Jesus, will be acceptable to the Eternal Father through love for His beloved Son, “in whom he is well pleased.”

St. Teresa says: “Everyone will gain the desired end of his prayers more efficaciously by offering his actions to the Eternal Father, in union with the merits of Jesus Christ.” St. Gertrude, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and St. Mechtildis, have practised in a special manner this devotion, and tell us that Jesus Christ Himself taught them the value of it.

From the Holy House at Nazareth went up to the Eternal Father supreme homage in all its perfection from Jesus, Mary and Joseph. "*Union with Jesus,*" the blessed company of Jesus for thirty years, elevated to the highest pinnacle of sanctity the souls of Mary and Joseph.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTIONS.

Oh, the infinite goodness, love, and mercy of Jesus! For man's salvation did Jesus live and die. Jesus is our Redeemer, our Advocate, our Mediator with His Heavenly Father. Since every act of Jesus is of infinite value, being the act of the Man-God, how precious in the sight of His Eternal Father must be the whole Life, the Death, and the Precious Blood of Jesus?

I resolve, therefore, every morning, and often during the day, to offer all my little works to the Eternal Father, in union with the actions of Jesus.

O merciful Jesus, help me to love and serve Thee.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! may I ever think of Thee, love Thee, and serve Thee. O sweet Jesus! be

ever in my mind, on my tongue, and in my heart. O Jesus! I desire that every breath I draw may be an offering to Thee for myself, of the love of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

“Eternal Father, we offer Thee the Blood, Passion and Death of Jesus, the sorrows of most holy Mary and St. Joseph, in atonement for our sins, in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, for the wants of our holy mother the Church, and for the conversion of sinners.”

PRACTICE.

To-day, at least every hour, or more often, offer your actions to God in union with Jesus.

ASPIRATION.

O Eternal Father! I offer Thee my life and death, in union with the Life and Death of Jesus.

MARCH 23RD.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

St. Joseph and “Union with the Perpetual Sacrifice of Jesus on the Altar, and with Jesus in the Tabernacle.”

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost,” &c.

“From the rising of the sun even to the going down my name is great among the

Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malach. i. 11).

"The same Christ is contained and immolated (on the Altar) in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the Altar of the Cross. . . . For the Victim is one and the same, the same now offering Himself by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the Cross" (Council of Trent, Sess. xxii. c. 2.) "This is my rest for ever; here I will dwell, for I have chosen it" (Ps. cxxxii. 14).

"Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion; for great is he that is in the midst of thee; the holy One of Israel" (Isal. xii. 6).

Meditate on the infinite value and treasure of the Holy Mass. By the sacrifice of Calvary Jesus redeemed the entire world. The Mass is the very same sacrifice as that of Calvary. On the Altar, as on Calvary, Jesus is the High Priest, Jesus is the infinite Victim, and Jesus sheds His Blood mystically for man's Redemption. "We must needs confess," says the Council of Trent, "that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mys-

tery wherein the life-giving Victim by which we are reconciled to the Father is daily immolated on the Altar by priests." (Sess. xxii.)

Meditate on the words of God's Saints, whose expressions are so full of unction and piety. St. Thomas of Aquin writes: "The Mass is not only the greatest of all God's miracles, but it is an abridgment of all the wonders He has ever wrought." St. Bonaventure says: "The Mass is a compendium of all God's love, and of all His benefits to men." St. Alphonsus Liguori concludes that "all the honours which Angels by their homages, and men by their virtues, penances, martyrdoms, and other good works, have ever given to God, could not give Him as much glory as a single Mass" (Selva).

One quotation from St. Leonard of Port Maurice: "The Mass is the sun of Christianity, the soul of faith, the centre of the Catholic religion, the condensation of all that is good and beautiful in the Church of Christ. The Mass is the miracle of miracles, the wonder of wonders. O treasure inestimable, O treasure beyond all comprehension. The Mass is the sun of our holy religion, which dissipates the clouds, and restores serenity to the heavens. . . . For my part I am persuaded that if it were not for the holy

Mass, the world would have long since tottered from its foundations, crushed beneath the enormous weight of its many accumulated iniquities" ("Hidden Treasure," p. 13).

At every moment of the day and night, during the year round, this infinite Victim is immolated on several altars in some part of the world for the salvation of mankind; and hence the pious practice of uniting ourselves, and our actions with Jesus upon the Altar. This devotion is called "UNION WITH THE PERPETUAL SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE ALTAR."

It is a consolation for the devout soul to know that infinite homage, adoration, praise, love, thanksgiving, atonement, reparation, supplication, and petition, ascend at every moment of the day and night to the Eternal Father, from Jesus the Divine Victim unceasingly immolated on our Altars. It is, therefore, a holy and salutary practice to offer to the Eternal Father all our deeds, words, and thoughts, in union with the infinite sacrifice of Jesus in the holy Mass.

Jesus is in Paradise; yet, by a miracle of divine love, He remains on earth. Day and night, Jesus, in all his glory and majesty, is in the Tabernacle. A chain of love supreme

binds Jesus a captive on our altars. No wonder the Prophet says: "Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion, for great is he that is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Sion." From countless Tabernacles, throughout the Christian world, Jesus our Blessed Saviour renders, in behalf of mankind, infinite homage, praise, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition, to His Eternal Father. This is ours also; this we can make use of. O dearest Saviour! we can offer our worthless actions to Thy Eternal Father in union with Thyself in the Tabernacle.

There is no doubt but St. Joseph fully understood the prophecies announcing the future sacrifice of the New Law, as well as the sacrifices of the Old Law, which were but types and figures of the Blessed Eucharist; it is also easy to believe, that he learned from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself the mysteries of the Mass, Holy Communion, and the Blessed Sacrament; and that, therefore, our great Saint sanctified himself, daily more and more, by offering his actions to the Eternal Father, in union with Jesus in the future sacrifice of the Mass, and in union with Jesus in the Tabernacle.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTIONS.

O infinite love of Jesus, unknown and unrequited ! O infinite mercy of Jesus for man's salvation ! O Sacred Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of love divine for the sanctification of the world ! Not only did Jesus shed His Precious Blood to the last drop on Calvary for man's Redemption, but at every second of the day and night the same Precious Blood, Jesus, in His infinite mercy and love, mystically pours out upon the Altar for man's Redemption and sanctification, and as a Captive of divine love has dwelt, and will dwell for countless ages, in the Tabernacle. O the infinite, the tender love of Jesus in instituting the most adorable sacrifice of the Mass, and the most holy sacrament of the Altar. I resolve, therefore, to hear all the Masses I can, and to hear them piously. Secondly, I resolve frequently during the day and night to unite myself and my actions with the Divine Victim immolated at that moment on some Altar in Christendom, and in union with Jesus dwelling in the Tabernacle.

PRAYER.

O Eternal Father ! I offer to Thy greater glory every thought, word, action of my life.

the circulation of my blood, the pulsations of my heart, and the motions of my senses, in union with the Life and Death of Jesus Christ; in union with Jesus in countless tabernacles in Christendom, and in union with the infinite Victim unceasingly immolated on our Altars.

PRACTICE.

To-day, frequently offer to the Eternal Father yourself and your actions, in union with the Masses being celebrated throughout Christendom.

ASPIRATION.

Eternal Father! I offer to Thee myself and my actions, in union with the Divine Victim, this moment immolated on our Altars.

MARCH 24TH.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, a model of Humility.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Ex. xxxv. 21.) "God resisteth the proud, and giveth

grace to the humble" (James, iv. 6).
"Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi. 29).

Consider that by the virtue of humility we give to God what belongs to Him, and to ourselves, nothing but our own. Now what belongs to God? All that we are, and all that we have, in the order of nature as well as in the order of grace, belong to God alone. Every gift of nature, as well as of grace, is gratuitously bestowed upon us by the Almighty. The talents of mind, as well as the qualities of body, are given by God. "And which of you," says the Redeemer, "by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit" (Matt. i. 27).

The grace of our soul is God's gratuitous gift. We cannot conceive a holy thought, or elicit one interior supernatural act, or advance one step on the road to Paradise, without the grace of God. "Without me," says Jesus, "you can do nothing." "What, therefore," exclaims St. Paul, "hast thou that thou hast not received: And if thou hast received why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) It is clear then, that if we give or attribute to ourselves what is not our own, we are simply robbing the

Almighty, and trying to deprive God of the merits of His gifts.

Now, on the other hand, God has given to man free will and action. We can love or hate God. We can use or abuse His gifts. Hence, in the supernatural order, sin is our own. God has no share in it. In the order of nature, our own work is the abuse of God's gifts, which may be talents of mind, nobility of birth, culture, wealth, influence, social position, &c. Who, then, will be so base or shameless as to glory in his sins, or to glory in abusing and turning against God the very gifts that the Almighty gave him for His own greater glory ?

Humility is truth. It gives to God what belongs to Him, and to ourselves what is our own. And when we examine ourselves in the light of the sanctuary, the consciousness of our sins, the knowledge of the abuse of God's grace and of God's gifts ought to humble our souls to the dust, and our foreheads to the ground. No wonder, then, the Scripture says, "every proud man is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 7). "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (James, iv. 6). And again, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled ; and he

that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 12).

Humility is to the soul what a foundation is to the house. We cannot raise a structure in the air; it must have a foundation. Nor can the soul have virtue without humility. Hence St. Cyprian says, "humility is the foundation of sanctity." St. Jerome calls it "the first Christian virtue." St. Bernard writes, "Humility is the foundation and preservation of all virtues." St. Augustine has written, "were he asked which was the first virtue, he would answer humility; which was the second, humility; which the third, humility; and that as often as questioned on the subject, he would answer, humility; because humility is the foundation of all virtues, and in some way the only virtue that includes all the others."

As, after the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was the most holy and exalted of God's creatures, so, next to "the handmaid of the Lord," St. Joseph was the most humble of God's Saints.

The excellence of the school sheds a lustre on the scholar; St. Joseph learned the virtue of humility in the best of all schools—that of Mary and Jesus. "Learn of me," says Jesus, "because I am meek and humble of heart,

and you shall find rest to your souls." This holy lesson of humility St. Joseph learned and practised for many long years, under the Divine eyes of the meek and humble Jesus ; and hence our great Saint is a model of humility.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

O my Jesus! the spirit of pride pursues me day and night. O my Jesus! how far I am removed from the humility of Thy Saints! The abuse of grace, and the consciousness of my countless sins, ought to humble me to the dust. How often has the infinite mercy of God saved me from hell, and saved me from mortal sin ; and yet I am proud. The Word of God and my reason convince me that all that I have and am, belongs to the Giver of all good gifts ; and yet I feel my heart swell with pride.

To try to gain some little part of this favourite virtue of my Blessed Lord, I resolve, by the grace of God, to practise daily some little hidden acts of humility in honour of Jesus, "meek and humble of heart."

PRAYER.

"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart."

O meek and humble Jesus! kill within me the spirit of pride. I wish to hate pride, and to love humility. O Jesus! grant me the grace to know Thee and to know myself. May my sins, O Jesus, keep me humble. All the days of my life, I will ever thank the Patience of God that spared me in my sins; the Mercy of God that pardoned, I humbly hope, my sins; and the Providence of God, that so often saved me from the occasions of sin. O Jesus! grant me the grace never to boast of my good acts; grant me the grace to hide my good acts. Jesus! grant me the grace never to despise my neighbour, and to seek the lowest place. "Handmaid of the Lord," and humble St. Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus the holy virtue of humility.

PRACTICE.

To-day, frequently perform some little acts of humility, known to God alone.

ASPIRATION.

"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart."

MARCH 25TH.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, a Model of Self-denial.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 24). "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." (Luke, xiii.) "If you live according to the flesh you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deed of the flesh you shall live" (Rom. viii. 13).

"I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

Consider the necessity of self-denial. It goes hand-in-hand with holy humility. From the cradle to the grave, from the perfect use of reason till our heart has ceased to beat on our death-bed, three mortal enemies of our salvation continually assail us. There are the allurements and scandals of a wicked world which try to seduce our hearts, and to draw us away from God. A greater enemy

is our own flesh, our own corrupt hearts. Fallen nature, the corrupt flesh of fallen Eve, will never give us peace, but will war against our salvation till death. St. John calls this enemy, "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John, ii. 16).

A still greater foe has sworn our ruin, and that is the devil, who "as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter, v. 8). "Our wrestling," says St. Paul, "is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. vi. 12).

To overcome these three deadly enemies we have need of the constant habit and practice of self-denial.

The Word of God is clear and loud on the necessity of self-denial. "If any man," says our Blessed Saviour, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die." "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24).

The necessity of self-denial for every Christian who wishes to save his soul, is as clear as the sun in the heavens at mid-day. Every Saint who has gone to Paradise, has got there by denying himself, by subduing his passions, by overcoming flesh and blood, and by walking on the strait and rugged road of humility and self-denial. "Enter ye in," says our Blessed Redeemer, "at the narrow gate How narrow is the gate and strait the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it" (Matt. vii. 13).

The life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is our model and example. From His birth in the crib at Bethlehem to His last moment on the Cross at Calvary, poverty, humiliation, sufferings, and self-denial, compose His life. "If any man," says our Divine Redeemer, "will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Mary, too, is the Mother of Sorrows. Mary is the Immaculate, the patient, the mortified the humble handmaid of the Lord."

No wonder, then, that St. Joseph, who excelled in every virtue, is the model of self-denial, for he had ever before his eyes the example of Jesus, for he lived for thirty

years in the sanctified school of Jesus and Mary.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

O my Jesus! I know there is but one road to heaven, "the king's highway of the cross." To save my soul, I must walk on the narrow and rugged road of self-sacrifice and self-denial. To save my soul, I must wage eternal war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. To save my soul, I must, like St. Paul, "chastise my body," and lead a penitent and mortified life. O my loving and beloved Jesus, to save my soul I must conquer my passions, deny my senses, take up my cross, and follow Thee. O my merciful Jesus! it is hard and difficult, but Thy grace can make it soft and easy. "Heaven is the prize."

In order that I may the more easily refrain from unlawful things, and never indulge in unlawful things, I resolve, every day of my life, to practise some little acts of self-denial in lawful things, these acts to be hidden and known to God alone.

PRAYER.

O my Jesus! Grant me the grace to deny myself, to take up my cross, and to follow

Thee, O Saviour! Grant me the grace to mortify my passions and to keep Thy Commandments. O merciful Redeemer! grant me the grace to mortify my eyes, my tongue, my ears, and my heart. O my Divine Lord! grant me the grace, every day of my life, to practise some little acts of humility and self-denial, known to God alone.

A Prayer of St. Gertrude.

“O most holy Father, I, Thy poor and vile creature, entirely renounce my own will, and offer and resign myself to Thy most holy will and pleasure. Above all delights of this world, I wish and desire that Thy most adorable and placid will may be perfectly done in me and by me in all that concerns me, whether in body or in soul, in time and in eternity.”

St. Joseph, obtain for me from Jesus the grace daily to mortify my senses.

PRACTICE.

To-day practise some little acts of self-denial known to God alone.

ASPIRATION.

O Jesus! grant me the grace to deny

myself, to take up my cross, and to follow Thee
all the days of my life.

MARCH 26TH.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph a Model of the "Hidden Life."

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them. . . . When thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee. . . . Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. . . . When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall repay thee" (Matt. v. 1-6).

"He was in the world and the world knew him not" (John, i. 10).

"Verily thou art a hidden God" (Isai. xlv. 15).

Reflect on the mysteries of the Hidden Life of Jesus Christ. From the age of twelve to thirty, that is, during eighteen years, there is not one word in the Gospel on the Life of

our Blessed Saviour. The Eternal Son of God descended from heaven to convert the world, to change the face of the earth, to establish a New Law and a New Gospel, and yet for years He is hidden and unknown. During these years proud philosophers and wicked doctors perverted the intellects, and corrupted the hearts of men by their false and immoral doctrines. One ray of Eternal Wisdom could confute and confound them, yet Jesus is silent.

At the "Holy House" at Nazareth, in the company of Mary and Joseph, for years hidden and unknown, lived Jesus, the long-expected Messiah, "the Lamb the Ruler of the earth," "the Desired of the eternal hills," "the Author and Finisher of the faith," the *Word made flesh*, the Redeemer of generations dead, living, and unborn. The world, Jew and Gentile, were running adrift to eternal ruin, and yet Jesus was silent. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (John, i. 10). The Gospel does not narrate even one of the wonderful acts which doubtless the Incarnate Son of God daily performed during these years at Nazareth. Thus Jesus practised what He afterwards preached: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men to

be seen by them. . . . Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doth. . . . Pray to thy Father in secret."

The Blessed Virgin imitated and practised the virtues of the Hidden Life of Jesus her Divine Son; and hence the Gospel narrates so little of the extraordinary life, and so few of the eminent virtues of Our Blessed Lady.

With the example of the Son of God, and of Mary His Mother before his eyes, no wonder that St. Joseph is the model of a hidden life. When the Gospel is silent on the lives of Jesus and Mary for so many years, no wonder that fewer facts would be narrated in the sacred text of the life and virtues of our great St. Joseph.

The hidden life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, is the model, joy, and consolation of countless holy souls. The young soul with a tender, warm heart, and with high and holy aspiration, joyously bids farewell to the deceitful pleasures of this world, hides herself in her lonely cell, and loves to be "hidden with Christ in God." The holy missionary bids an eternal adieu to home and country, kin and kindred, and in a foreign land, on the frozen coasts, or burning sands, or wild wastes of the desert, wins souls to Jesus, and, hidden

and unknown, finds a paradise on earth communing with his God.

The praise of this world is false and fleeting. For the Christian it is quite enough that God sees and knows our acts. Our great St. Joseph, after Jesus and Mary, is the perfect model of the hidden life.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My God! open the eyes of my soul to see the vanity of the things of this world and the hollow emptiness of the praise of men. Too often have I sought the esteem of men; too often have I worked hard for the admiration of the world. All this world cannot satisfy the longings, fill up the void, of the soul. God alone can satisfy the longings and yearnings of the human heart. God alone, therefore, shall be my portion and inheritance. Hence I resolve, by the grace of God, never to do an act or good work to gain the esteem or praise of men. Secondly, I resolve, in imitation of the teaching and example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, to pray, to give alms, and to do all my good deeds in secret, and known, as far as I can, to God alone.

PRAYER.

My loving Jesus! teach me to despise this

world, and the things of this world. Open, O Lord! the eyes of my soul to see and to know the real value of all human things. O God! grant me the grace to set at nought the praise, esteem, and admiration of this false world. O Jesus! grant me grace to pray in secret, to give alms in secret, and to do all my good works purely for the greater glory of God, to please God alone.

Loving Affections of St. Gertrude.

“O Thou most excellent King of kings, Prince of glory, my loving Jesus. Thou art the life of my soul. May all the affections of my heart be inflamed with the ardour of Thy love, and be ever united with Thee. May it sink back baffled and exhausted when it loves aught but what tends to Thee alone. O King of kings, most worthy sovereign Lord of all! Prince most glorious, I choose Thee in preference to all creatures: for Thy sake I renounce all pleasures; for Thee I run with joy to meet all adversity; and in all I do I seek no other praise but *Thine*. With the energy of Thy fervour I unite my intention to that of Thy most availing prayer, that in virtue of this divine union every movement of rebellion may be quelled and crushed within me; and that I may be led

by Thee to the summit and pinnacle of perfection."

St. Joseph! obtain for me the grace to love and lead a hidden life.

PRACTICE.

To-day, watch the motives of thy acts, and give in secret three alms—one in honour of Jesus, a second in honour of Mary, and a third in honour of St. Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

O Jesus! grant me the grace to do all my actions, to live and die, to please God alone.

MARCH 27TH.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

*St. Joseph, Patron and Protector of the
Universal Church.*

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278, "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"He made him master of his house and ruler of all his possessions" (Ps. civ. 21).

"Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey" (Gen. xli. 40).

“ Our Holy Father Pius IX., wishing to place himself and all the faithful under the special protection of the holy Patriarch Joseph, heard the prayers of his bishops, and solemnly named the beloved foster-father of Jesus, Patron of the Universal Church.” (8th December, 1870).

Meditate on the wonderful Providence of God over His Church. In each succeeding age the Church has been assailed by new enemies inspired of the spirit of darkness. At one time kings, emperors, and mighty rulers, leagued together to destroy her. “ The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord, and against his Christ ” (Ps. ii. 2). At another time, genius, the profound and brilliant learning of the age, is in deadly array against the Church, and every attempt is made to sap the foundations of faith. Sometimes the enemy comes forth from her own bosom, and heresy and schism bid fair to corrupt the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our blessed Saviour, who knows “ the times and the seasons,” ever watches over His Immaculate Spouse the Church, comes to her aid in the hour of need, raises up new Saints, and inspires her with new Devotions to give victorious battle to her enemies. In this sense we perceive

the finger of God in the foundation of the various Religious Orders, and in the rise and spread of new Devotions.

Special Devotion to our great St. Joseph was reserved by the Providence of God, for His own wise ends, to the 19th century.

In every age the Church has had her deadly enemies to combat, but perhaps in no age has the bark of Peter been assailed with such fury of wind and waves as at present. On every side are deadly enemies. There are heresies and schisms; there is the genius and learning of an enlightened but corrupt age; there are great statesmen and mighty emperors; and many of her own faithless children—all in open rebellion and in arms against her. In this hour of need and peril God sends a valiant captain to fight the battle of the Church: God sends a new Angel to breathe upon the face of the foe and to scatter them. The Captain and the Angel is St. Joseph. The Church, which in its infancy may be said in a certain sense to have consisted of the Holy Family, was governed and protected by St. Joseph. St. Joseph saved from the cruelty of Herod the life of the Infant Jesus, the Divine Founder of the Church. The 19th century has witnessed the birth of new Herods and the rise of new and

formidable enemies of the Church ; hence the Providence of God has raised up a new friend, and has appointed St. Joseph the Patron and Protector of the Universal Church. And as in the first century St. Joseph protected Jesus, the invisible Head of the Church, so in the nineteenth, his heavenly-appointed mission is to guard and protect the Sovereign Pontiff, the visible head of the Church on earth.

At the Vatican Council, on the 18th of December, 1870, at the pressing, earnest prayers of almost all the Bishops of Christendom, and to the joy of all the faithful throughout the Catholic world, Pius IX. of holy memory proclaimed St. Joseph Patron and Protector of the Universal Church.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

My Jesus ! I know and I believe that Thy Church can never teach error. The Church is built upon a rock, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." The Church, like Thyself, O Jesus, is the same "yesterday and to-day, and the same for ever." As in the past, so in the future, revolution after revolution will sweep away thrones and dynasties ; new heresies and schisms, new

and formidable enemies, will assail the Church; but Jesus is with her, and if needs be, Jesus will raise up a new St. Dominic, another St. Augustin, a St. Francis, a St. Vincent de Paul, another St. Ignatius, even a new St. Joseph, to protect his Immaculate Spouse the Church.

Happy the Catholic who believes that as it is impossible to separate the most Adorable Trinity, it is no less so to destroy the Church of Christ.

PRAYER.

Blessed be the Divine Providence of God, who in this age of trials has appointed the great St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church.

Infinite praise, honour, glory, thanksgiving, at every moment, from every creature, and for all eternity, be to Jesus, who is ever with His Church, and protects her in every trial and in every necessity.

“Foster-father Joseph, our guide, protect us and holy Church.”

O most holy Patriarch St. Joseph! ever protect the holy Church of Jesus; humble her enemies, confound their wisdom, and defeat their plots. O great St. Joseph! obtain

from Jesus, for His Church, holy Popes, holy prelates, holy priests and holy religious.

PRACTICE.

Frequently beg of St. Joseph to protect the Universal Church, and to pray for the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

ASPIRATION.

“Foster-father Joseph, our guide, protect us and Holy Church.”

MARCH 28TH.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION:

St. Joseph the Perfect Model of the Holy Nun.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
“Come, O Holy Ghost, &c.”

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee for ever and for ever” (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). “They (the virgins) shall be as the Angels of God in heaven” (Matt. xxii. 30). “In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother Mary, ever Virgin, I do vow and

promise to God, poverty, chastity, and obedience; and to persevere to the end of my life in this Institute. For what have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. . . . He has placed a seal upon my forehead, that I should admit no other lover” (Profession).

“The cell well kept becomes sweet. . . . Stay with Jesus in thy cell; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else” (Imitation).

Reflect that in St. Joseph the holy nun finds a perfect model of sanctity. St. Joseph no sooner knew of the profound Mystery of the Incarnation, than he devoted his whole life to Jesus. The nun at her profession vows and consecrates her soul and body, also her whole life, to Jesus. The perfect observance of the three vows of religion—poverty, chastity, and obedience—sanctifies the good nun. St. Joseph is a model of poverty. In wants and privations he never repined or murmured. Though of the royal house of David, he supplied by the labour of his hands, even in a strange land of exile, the wants of Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph is a model of chastity to the chaste Spouse of Christ. After

Mary, St. Joseph was the most pure, the most chaste, the most immaculate soul ever created by the Almighty. St. Joseph is a model of obedience to the holy religious; for to every call and inspiration of God, to the command of God's Angel, under the most difficult and trying circumstances, prompt, docile, and blind, was the obedience of our Great Saint.

St. Joseph, the perfection of every virtue, lived for years hidden and unknown, and thus died in the full odour of sanctity. In like manner the holy nun will bury herself in her cell, and will love to be hidden, unknown, and unseen by the world.

St. Joseph is the model of the active life of the religious. Our Saint prayed and worked; but the whole day, nay, his whole life, was a perpetual prayer; for each and every act of all the days of his life was performed to do the will of God, and to please God alone. In like manner, the holy nun will keep her rules and obediences, will perform her duties and charges, to do the holy will of God, made known to her by her rules and by the voice of her superiors, and to please no creature but the great God alone. When she does the holy will of God, it is the same thing for the pious nun to be at the school as at holy Mass; to be in the kitchen as in the chapel; to dust

down the staircase or corridor, as to make her meditation or say her beads. By the supernatural motive of doing everything to please God alone, each act becomes a most holy prayer, merits grace here, and an eternal weight of glory hereafter.

One point more: St. Joseph lived in the perpetual presence of Jesus Christ, and in Jesus he found his sanctity and supreme happiness in this vale of tears. In like manner, the holy nun has under her roof, and can adore in the Tabernacle, the very same Jesus, the light of whose Divine countenance perpetually beamed upon the soul of St. Joseph at the "Holy House" of Nazareth, and at every moment of the day and night she can turn to the altar, and with the eyes of faith, gaze in wondrous reverential love, praise, peace, and joy on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, shedding upon her soul, from the tabernacle, light and grace. Like St. Joseph, the holy nun places her joy and peace in Jesus, in his Sacred Heart, in the Tabernacle, joy and peace which no human hand can touch, nor the whole world disturb.

Here a wide field for pious meditation expands before the mind of the fervent religious. Truly is St. Joseph the perfect model of the holy nun.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

The presence of Jesus sanctified St. Joseph; I, too, live in the perpetual presence of Jesus; and yet I am so sinful and imperfect. Jesus is under the same roof with me, and yet I forget Him. My loving Jesus! I fear the abuse of grace even more than my sins. The abuse of grace at holy Mass, holy Communion, prayer, meditation, retreats, and the good example of others frighten me. In imitation of St. Joseph, I resolve, by the grace of God, to be exact in the observance of all my rules, and to perform all my obediences and all my charges to please God alone. Secondly, I resolve continually to pray for fervent, tender, and holy love for Jesus in the Tabernacle.

PRAYER.

O my God! my rules, approved of by the Pope, thy Vicar on earth, are to me the manifestation of thy Divine will. O God, may I keep them in that spirit! May I observe my rules purely to please Thee alone, O my God! O God! grant me the grace to perform all my duties and charges to please Thee alone. O my Blessed Saviour! grant me the greatest love for holy Mass, for holy Communion, and for Jesus in the Tabernacle.

May I find my delights before Jesus on the altar. Wherever I am during the day and night, may I love to turn to the tabernacle, invite Jesus into my heart by spiritual communion, and there entertain my Saviour by holy affections.

A PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH TO OBTAIN PURITY OF INTENTION.

“ O Blessed St. Joseph! I consecrate myself to thy honour, and I give myself to thee that thou mayest always be my father, my protector, and my guide in the way of salvation. Obtain for me great purity of heart, and a fervent love of the interior life. After thy example may I perform all my actions to do the will of God, and to please God alone.”

PRACTICE.

Constantly purify your intentions. Be exact in the observance of your rules, and perform all your duties and charges to do the holy will of God, and to please God alone.

ASPIRATION.

My good God! I offer to Thy greater glory each and every act of the day, and of my whole life, in union with the life and death of Jesus.

MARCH 29TH.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph the perfect Model of the Holy Priest.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt, and be there until I tell thee. . . . Who arose and took the child and his mother by night and retired into Egypt. . . . But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel. . . . Who arose, took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel" (Matt. ii. 13-21). "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them" (Luke, ii. 50). "Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his ways shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James, v. 20).

“They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity” (Dan. xii. 3).

Consider how the life of St. Joseph is a model of perfect sanctity to the holy priest. St. Joseph lived in the perpetual presence of Jesus; his whole work, care, and anxiety was the person of Jesus, or the interests of Jesus. Before the Nativity, St. Joseph watched over the Mother and the unborn Babe. St. Joseph adored the Divine Infant at Bethlehem. Our Saint saved the life of Jesus from the cruelty of Herod; and in his arms carried the Saviour through the sands and deserts of Egypt. By the labour of his hands St. Joseph maintained the holy exiles in Egypt. At the bidding of an Angel, St. Joseph brought back Jesus and Mary to “the land of Israel,” and at Nazareth Jesus “was subject” to St. Joseph.

Jesus was subject to St. Joseph; but unspeakably more is Jesus subject to the priest. At the holy Mass Jesus comes down from heaven into his hands; and in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus, without apparent divinity, humanity, life, or power, leaves Himself to the mercy, charity, and care of the priest.

St. Joseph carried Jesus in his arms through the deserts of Egypt; the priest, over his bosom, over the throbbing of his

heart, carries the same Jesus through bog and mountain, to cellar and garret, to prepare the departing soul for her journey to the tribunal of Jesus.

St. Joseph was occupied with the care and interests of Jesus; the time of the holy priest is spent in the confessional, in the pulpit, in the schools, in visiting the sick and the sinner, as well as in prayer and meditation, all of which are the intimate interests of Jesus.

St. Joseph lived in the presence of Jesus; much of the time of the holy priest is spent before the Blessed Sacrament in the oratory, where Jesus is as truly present as He was at Nazareth, as He now is in Paradise.

As St. Joseph is the perfect model of the holy priest exercising his sacred ministry, so also is our great Saint the model of the interior sanctified life of the pious priest. The fingers of the priest should be holy and his tongue pure, to be privileged to touch the Sacred Body of Jesus; St. Joseph was the purest, the chastest man ever created by the Almighty. The holy priest must be a man of prayer; the soul of St. Joseph ever communed with Jesus his God. The holy priest must be mortified and humble, like his Master the humble Jesus; St. Joseph was the perfect pattern of humility and self-

denial. In one word, the holy priest must excel in every virtue; the Gospel styles St. Joseph a "just man," which, according to St. John Chrysostom, means that he possessed "the perfection of all virtues."

What a field of meditation, humiliation, and remorse for many a consecrated minister of God, and for none more than the writer of this consideration. St. Joseph is truly the perfect model of the holy priest.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Would that my life was worthy of Jesus, and that I imitated even at a great distance St. Joseph, the perfect model of the holy priest. Would that Jesus and the interests of Jesus ever occupied my mind, my heart, and my thoughts, as they ever occupied the mind, the heart, and the thoughts of St. Joseph. Would that I ever treated Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in the holy Mass, and holy Communion, in the Tabernacle, in the church, and in my oratory, in going to the stations and to sick-calls, with the same faith, love, care, and reverence with which St. Joseph treated Jesus during His Divine Infancy, and his life at Nazareth. Would that my life, like his, had been pure, mortified, "just," holy, and worthy of the per-

petual presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

I resolve, firstly, by the grace of God, to treat Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in all my relations with the Divine Mystery, as St. Joseph treated the Infant Saviour. I resolve, secondly, when I stand upon the altar to celebrate the "stupendous mystery," and at the memento for the living, to ask of God, through the merits of the Divine Victim, the sanctity of the priesthood in all its plenitude.

PRAYER.

O most holy Jesus, my God and Saviour! Grant me the simple faith of St. Joseph, the love of St. Joseph, the zeal, self-denial, humility, purity, interior life, and spirit of prayer of St. Joseph.

O Eternal God! grant me the grace to treat Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as St. Joseph treated the Divine Babe.

A Prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Incarnate Word, Divine Jesus, true God and true man, I believe that Thou art here present. I adore Thee with the most profound humility. I love Thee with my whole heart;

and as Thou dost come upon this altar for love of me, I consecrate myself entirely to Thee, through the hands of Mary and Joseph.

“I adore the Precious Blood Thou didst shed for all men, and I hope, O my God, that Thou hast not shed it in vain for me. Grant me the grace to apply all its precious merits to my soul. I offer Thee my heart, O dear Jesus, in gratitude for Thy loving charity, which induced Thee to die upon the cross for me.”

St. Joseph, pray and obtain for me the grace to love and serve Jesus as thou didst.

PRACTICE.

To-day, in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, renew the most holy resolutions thou hast made at the most fervent retreat of thy whole life.

ASPIRATION.

O Eternal Father! I beg of Thee, through the bowels of Thy Divine mercy, through the merits of the infinite Victim of the altar, through the name and merits of Jesus, and through the intercession of Mary, Joseph, and all Thy Saints and Angels, to grant me the perfection of the priesthood in all its plenitude.

MARCH 30TH.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

St. Joseph, the Patron of a Happy Death.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
 "Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. cxv. 14). "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours" (Apoc. xiv. 13). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be no more, for all these things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). They (the just) shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrents of Thy pleasures" (Ps. xxxv. 9).

Reflect that a happy death is one of the greatest and the last blessing of God in this life. A happy death not only saves the soul from every danger of hell, and the eternity of hell's torments, but it secures for her the possession of paradise, the joys of heaven, the blessed company of the Saints, the Angels, and the Queen of heaven, and the Beatific Vision of God Himself, not only for

countless ages, but for all eternity. A happy death secures what St. Paul describes: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). A happy death secures what the Royal Prophet, seeing the glories of heaven, cried out, "How lovely are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord; they shall praise thee for ever and for ever. . . . For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands" (Ps. lxxx. 3).

A happy death shuts out the risk of every evil and secures every good—God Himself—for all eternity. No wonder, then, that the thoughtful, pious Christian, makes use of every means to secure, by the grace of God, a happy death.

Our great St. Joseph is the model and patron of a happy death. He is the model of a happy death: dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary he "fell asleep in the Lord." "Worn out with divine love," says a spiritual writer, "St. Joseph died in a sweet ecstasy, pillowed in the bosom of Jesus, and with Mary by his side, in the "very life of all that was most beautiful, most holy, and heavenly

on earth." May our death be, like that of St. Joseph, in the peace and love of Jesus and Mary.

St. Joseph is the patron of a happy death. It is believed that certain Saints have got from God special privileges. Thus we pray to St. Mary Magdalen to obtain for us true sorrow for our sins. We pray to St. Aloysius for great purity of soul, to St. Bernard for sweet devotion to Our Blessed Lady, to St. Thomas of Aquin for the science of God, to St. Francis Xavier for zeal for souls, &c. ; but the special grace and privilege we beg of St. Joseph is a happy death.

St. Joseph saved the life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, from the cruelty of Herod ; and to reward him for that act, Jesus Christ has conferred upon him the special and signal favour and privilege of the saving of the souls, of obtaining a happy death for all, who during life, and especially at the hour of death, invoke his aid.

To obtain the grace of a happy death, through the intercession of our Saint, is the great reason why pious Christians have erected churches, altars, and statues, to St. Joseph, and have prayed for a tender and constant devotion to the great Patriarch.

After the greater glory of God, to secure

for himself the patronage of St. Joseph during life, and still more especially to obtain, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the grace of a happy death, and that others may obtain like favours, is the chief and only aim of the author in writing these pages.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

O my God! open the eyes of my soul to see and realise the value and importance of a happy death. I know that a happy death secures for me the possession of heaven, the glory of God, the Beatific Vision, for all eternity. As a wise Christian, I should omit no means, I should employ every means, to gain that end, remembering that "HEAVEN IS THE PRIZE." I resolve by the grace of God, every day of my life, to visit an altar or statue of St. Joseph, and there pray to the Saint to obtain for me the grace of a holy life and happy death.

PRAYERS.

"Adorable Jesus, my sweet Saviour! Thou didst console and fortify St. Joseph upon his death-bed, attending on him in his last hour as a dutiful son upon his father. O God of mercy, do not refuse my request which I ask of Thee by the merits and virtues of St.

Joseph. Grant that I may die in Thy love, and breathe forth my soul into the arms of Joseph and Mary. Amen."

The Prayer of St. Gertrude for a Happy Death.

"O Lord Jesus Christ, Prince both of life and death, I beseech Thee by Thy holy death for us upon the cross, that Thy coming to me in death may not find me asleep, careless, and unemployed; but watching and ready for Thee, I beseech Thee, let me not depart this life impenitent and unprepared; but strengthen and fortify me with the true Catholic faith, with sincere contrition, with a good confession and fitting satisfaction, and with the most holy Sacraments of the Blessed Eucharist and Extreme Unction. Then, when all the vain and fleeting things of earth leave, forsake me not. O Thou who abidest for ever with Thy chosen; O Jesus! be with me in that last dread agony when my struggle with the enemy shall be most deadly and decisive. May Thy holy Angels be with me then and shield me from all the temptations, and give me consolation and fortitude amidst my sufferings. May faith, and hope, and charity, and patience, be strong within me.

Enable me, with unclouded consciousness, to commend my soul into Thy hands, and may I fall asleep in holy peace, and so pass in safety into the kingdom which Thou hast purchased for us with so great a price. Remember me, then, O Lord, as Thou didst promise to remember the penitent thief at his last hour, and in Thy mercy didst bestow on him what Thou hadst promised. Amen."

PRACTICE.

To-day, pay three visits to an altar or statue of St. Joseph, and there pray to the Saint to obtain for thee the grace of a holy life and happy death.

ASPIRATION.

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give to you my heart and soul. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you."

MARCH 31st.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

*The Happy Death of the Devout Clients of
St. Joseph.*

Invocation of the Holy Ghost, as at page 278,
"Come, O Holy Ghost," &c.

"He made him master of his house and ruler of all his possessions" (Ps. civ. 21).

"Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you. . . . Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey, only in the kingly throne will I be above thee. And he took his ring from his own hand and gave it into his hand, and he put upon him a robe of silk, and he put a chain of gold about his neck. . . . And the king said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (Gen. xli. 40-44).

"Precious" and holy must be the death of the devout Client of St. Joseph, when we reflect that our great Saint has the *power* and the *will* to make it so. The providence of God made use of the first Joseph to save from starvation the people of Egypt and other nations ; to reward him, King Pharaoh made

him Viceroy of Egypt, loaded him with all honours and power, and ordered all his subjects to honour and obey him. "He made him master of his house and ruler of all his possessions." Pharaoh said to his subjects: "Go to Joseph and do all things he shall say to you."

The power which the first Joseph exercised over the land of Egypt is a figure of the power and influence of the second Joseph, our great Saint, in the kingdom of heaven for his devout Clients. If the first Joseph supplied bread to starving nations, the second Joseph, by the labour of his hands, procured the necessaries of life for Jesus and Mary; and saved, not only from want, but even from death, Jesus Christ, the Author of Life.

To reward St. Joseph for all his pains, all his labours, and all his love, Jesus Christ has made our Saint Viceroy of the kingdom of heaven; and hence every request of St. Joseph partakes of the nature of a command, and is sure to be heard and granted by Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord. St. Bernardine of Sienna writes: "Jesus, wishing to give St. Joseph in heaven a constant proof of his respect and obedience, grants all his requests and fulfils all his desires."

It is clear, therefore, that St. Joseph has the power to obtain a holy and happy death for his devout Clients.

St. Joseph has the will, as well as the power, to obtain a happy death for his devout Clients. St. Joseph ardently desires what is most pleasing to Jesus, his Blessed Lord and Saviour. Now there is nothing more pleasing to Jesus than the happy death of the departing soul. The salvation of the departing soul cost the Life and Death, and the Precious Blood of Jesus. A happy death secures the prize, bought at so dear a rate. It is clear, therefore, that to please Jesus, and for Jesus' sake, St. Joseph most ardently desires the happy death of his devout Clients.

The cup of cold water given for God will have its reward. St. Joseph, like his Divine Master Jesus Christ, is grateful, and remembers his friends. Hence, if during life we have been devout to St. Joseph, and tried to imitate his virtues, if during life we have constantly prayed to him for a happy death, if during life we have been his devout Clients, as sure as the sun shines in the heavens St. Joseph will hear our prayers, and obtain for us a holy, precious, and happy death.

As a matter of fact it is attested by experience, that souls, whether in the cloister

or the world, who during life had a constant and tender devotion to our great Saint, depart this life fortified by all the consolations of religion, depart in peace and joy ; and even sometimes St. Joseph obtains from Jesus, for his devout Clients on their death-bed a foretaste of the joys of paradise.

PRACTICAL RESOLUTION.

Infinite thanks be to Jesus for all eternity, for having conferred upon St. Joseph the special privilege to obtain for his devout Clients the great grace of a happy death. St. Joseph saved the life of Jesus, and to reward him, Jesus has given to St. Joseph the great favour to obtain eternal life, by means of a happy death, for his devoted friends. Jesus has made St. Joseph "master of his house," the kingdom of heaven ; "ruler of all his possessions," that is, the thrones of paradise ; and Viceroy of Egypt, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem. Hence our great Saint can distribute at his will and choice, thrones of glory to his devout Clients. I resolve, therefore, to practise every day of my life, some little secret devotion of my own in honour of St. Joseph ; also to be specially devout to my great Saint during the month

of March, and on every Wednesday of the year; and, lastly, by every means in my power, to make my dear Patriarch known and loved by others, thereby to become his devoted Client, and hence to be sure of the grace of a happy death.

PRAYERS.

Litany of St. Joseph.

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *have mercy on us.*

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *hear us.*

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Ghost, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary,

Holy Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin
Mary,

Nursing-father of Jesus,

Man according to God's own heart,

Faithful and prudent servant,

Guardian of the Virginity of Mary,

Companion and solace of Mary,

Pray for us.

Most pure in virginity,
Most profound in humility,
Most fervent in charity,
Most exalted in contemplation,
Who was declared to be a "just man"
by the testimony of the Holy Ghost
Himself,
Who was the chosen minister of the
counsels of the Most High,
Who was taught from above the
mystery of the Incarnate Word,
Who didst journey to Bethlehem with
Mary, thy spouse being great with
child,
Who, finding no place in the inn, didst
betake thyself to a stable,
Who was thought worthy to be present
when Christ was born and laid in a
manger,
Who didst bear in thine arms the Son of
God,
Who didst receive the blood of Jesus at
His Circumcision,
Who didst present Him to the Lord
in the Temple, with Mary his
Mother,
Who, at the warning of the Angel, didst
fly into Egypt with the Child and His
Mother,

Pray for us.

Who, when Herod was dead, didst return
 with them into the land of Israel,
 Who, for three days, with Mary His
 Mother, didst seek sorrowing the Child
 Jesus, when He was lost at Jerusalem,
 Who, after three days, didst find Him
 with joy sitting in the midst of Doc-
 tors,
 Who hadst the Lord of lords subject to
 thee on the earth,
 Who was the happy witness of His
 hidden life and sacred words,
 Who didst die in the arms of Jesus and
 Mary,
 Whose praise is in the Gospel: "The
 husband of Mary, of whom was born
 Jesus."
 Humbler imitator of the Incarnate
 Word,
 Powerful support of the Church,
 Our Advocate, *St. Joseph, hear us.*
 Our Patron, *St. Joseph, graciously hear us.*
 In all our necessities,
 In all our distresses,
 In the hour of death,
 Through thy most chaste Espousals,
 Through thy paternal care and fidelity,
 Through thy love of Jesus and Mary,
 Through thy labours and toils,

Pray for us.

St. Joseph help us.

Through all thy virtues, *St. Joseph, help us.*

Through thy exalted honour and eternal blessedness, *St. Joseph, help us.*

Through thy faithful intercession, *St. Joseph, help us.*

We, thy clients, *Beseech thee, hear us.*

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to obtain for us from Jesus the pardon of our sins,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to commend us faithfully to Jesus and Mary,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to obtain for all congregations perfect love and concord,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to direct all rulers and prelates in the government of their subjects,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to assist all parents in the Christian education of their children,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to protect all those who rely upon thy patronage,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to support with thy paternal help all congregations instituted under thy name and patronage,

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to visit and stand by us, with Jesus and Mary, in the last moment of our life,

We beseech thee, hear us.

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to succour,
 by thy prayers and intercession, all
 the faithful departed,
 O chaste Spouse of Mary,
 O faithful Nursing-father of Jesus,
 Holy Joseph,
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
 the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
 the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*
 Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of
 the world, *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*
 Christ, hear us.

We beseech, &c.

Christ, graciously hear us.

V. Pray for us, O blessed Joseph.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray.

“O God, who didst choose St. Joseph to be the Spouse of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and to be the Guardian and Nursing-father of Thy beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, we humbly beseech Thee to grant us, through his patronage and merits, such purity of mind and body, that being clean from every stain, and clothed with the true marriage-garment, we may, by Thy great mercy, be

admitted to the heavenly nuptials. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

PRACTICE.

To-day frequently ask of Jesus the grace of a special, tender devotion, during thy whole life, for St. Joseph.

ASPIRATION.

O Jesus! grant me the grace of a fervent devotion to thy foster-father St. Joseph. Mary Immaculate, obtain for me from Jesus the grace to love St. Joseph.

We conclude the month of St. Joseph by the following indulgenced Devotion: "*The Seven Sorrows and Seven Joys of St. Joseph.*"

THE SEVEN SORROWS AND SEVEN JOYS OF
ST. JOSEPH.

The First Sorrow and First Joy.

St. Joseph, pure Spouse of most holy Mary, the trouble and anguish of thy heart were great, when, being in sore perplexity, thou wast minded to put away thy stainless Spouse, and thy joy was inexpressible when the Archangel revealed to thee the high mystery of the Incarnation

By this, thy sorrow and thy joy, we pray thee, comfort our souls now and in their last pains with the consolation of a well-spent life, and a holy death like unto thine own, with Jesus and Mary at our side.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Second Sorrow and Second Joy.

St. Joseph, blessed Patriarch, chosen to the office of Father of the Word-made Man, the pain was keen that thou didst feel when thou didst see the Infant Jesus born in abject poverty, but thy pain was changed into heavenly joy when thou didst hear the harmony of Angel-choirs and behold the glory of that night when Jesus was born.

By this, thy sorrow and thy joy, we pray thee obtain for us, that when the journey of our life is ended, we, too, may pass to that blessed land, where we shall hear the Angel-chants, and rejoice in the bright light of heavenly glory.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Third Sorrow and Third Joy.

St. Joseph, who wast ever most obedient in

executing the law of God, thy heart was pierced with pain when the Precious Blood of the Infant Saviour was shed at His Circumcision; but with the Name of Jesus new life and heavenly joy returned to thee.

By this, thy sorrow and thy joy, obtain for us that, being freed in our life from every vice, we, too, may cheerfully die with the sweet Name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Fourth Sorrow and Fourth Joy.

St. Joseph, faithful Saint, who was admitted to take part in the Redemption of man; the prophecy of Simeon foretelling the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, caused thee pang like that of death; but, at the same time, his prediction of the salvation and glorious Resurrection of innumerable souls filled thee with a blessed joy.

By this thy sorrow and thy joy, help us with thy prayers to be of the number of those who, by the merits of Jesus and His Virgin Mother, shall be partakers of the resurrection to glory.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Fifth Sorrow and Fifth Joy.

St. Joseph, watchful Guardian, friend of the Incarnate Son of God, truly thou didst greatly toil to nurture and to serve the Son of the Most High, especially in the flight thou madest with Him into Egypt; yet didst thou rejoice to have God Himself always with thee, and to see the overthrow of the idols of Egypt.

By this thy sorrow and thy joy, obtain for us grace to keep far out of the reach of the enemy of our souls, by quitting all dangerous occasions, that so no idol of earthly affection may any longer occupy a place in our hearts, but that, being entirely devoted to the service of Jesus and Mary, we may live and die for them alone.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Sixth Sorrow and Sixth Joy.

St. Joseph, Angel on earth, who didst so wonder to see the King of Heaven obedient to thy bidding, the consolation thou hadst at his return was disturbed by the fear of Archelaus, but, nevertheless, being reassured

by the Angel, thou didst go back and dwell happily at Nazareth, in the company of Jesus and of Mary.

By this thy sorrow and thy joy, obtain for us that, having our hearts freed from idle fears, we may enjoy the peace of a tranquil conscience, dwelling safely with Jesus and Mary, and dying at last between them.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Seventh Sorrow and Seventh Joy.

St. Joseph, example of all holy living, when, though without blame, thou didst lose Jesus, the Holy Child, thou didst search for Him for three long days in great sorrow, until with joy unspeakable thou didst find Him, who was as thy life to thee, amidst the doctors in the Temple.

By this thy sorrow and thy Joy, we pray thee with our whole heart so to interpose always in our behalf, that we may never lose Jesus by mortal sin; and if (which God avert) we are at any time so wretched as to do so, then we pray thee to aid us to seek Him, particularly in the hour of our death, that we may pass from this life to enjoy Him for

ever in heaven, there to sing with thee His divine mercies without end.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Pius VII. granted to all the faithful who, with contrite heart, practise the foregoing devotion, an indulgence of 100 days, once on any day of the year; and of 300 days, on any Wednesday of the year, and on every day of the Novena preceding his two chief feasts—March 19th, and third Sunday after Easter (Feast of his Patronage). Also a Plenary Indulgence (after Confession and Communion) on these feasts, or once a month for those who say these prayers daily for a month. (*Raccolta.*)

After many and long interruptions we have at last come to the end of our work. We pause, and feel the sensation, so to speak, of pleasure and pain—pleasure at having finished what has cost many hours of hard work, snatched from the higher duties of our sacred ministry; and pain, that the work is over, and that we have no more to write or labour for the honour of our great

St. Joseph. We confess the work was a labour of love, and the hours devoted to it were sweet and happy. The great St. Augustine thus expresses it: "In works which we love, we either do not feel the labour, or if we do, we love the labour."*

After the greater glory of God, and the honour of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph—our chief aim in writing this little book was to obtain for ourselves, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the "PATRON OF A HAPPY DEATH," the grace of a holy and happy death; and that our pious readers may obtain for themselves the same choicest favour of heaven.

In this, as in our other little books, intended chiefly for the poor and uncultured, we have endeavoured to express ourselves in a style, plain, simple, and unadorned, that all may clearly and easily understand every page and line of our little volume.

St. Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6). Hence it is from the blessing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus alone that we expect the success of our worthless efforts, that we

* "In eo quod amatur, aut non laboratur, aut labor amatur."—(*De bono Viduitatis*," chap. xxi.)

may say with the Royal Prophet, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 1).

Most humbly and reverentially we beg our great St. Joseph to accept, and to bless this poor offering of love ; and to obtain for us, from Jesus, the grace of a happy death.

THE END.

M. H. Gill & Son, Printers, Dublin.

