



S S P X

Letter to Friends and Benefactors

Chair of St. Peter, Apostle
February, 22nd, 2013

Dear Faithful,

The teaching that Saint Joseph is the greatest of the saints after Our Lady is daily becoming more commonly held in the Church. Yet how can this humble carpenter be higher in grace and eternal glory than all the patriarchs and prophets, higher than Saint John the Baptist, than the apostles, martyrs, and great doctors of the Church? Pope Leo XIII can help us understand this truth. On August 15th, 1899, he published the encyclical *Quamquam pluries* on devotion to Saint Joseph, and here he explains why Saint Joseph holds an eminent place above all the other saints.

Place above the other saints

Leo XIII first notes, “The dignity of the Mother of God is so elevated that there can be no higher created one. But since Saint Joseph was united to the Blessed Virgin by the conjugal bond, there is no doubt that he approached nearer than any other to that super-eminent dignity of hers by which the Mother of God surpasses all created natures.” The pope goes on to posit that no one was closer to the Virgin Mary and to her Son than Saint Joseph, and thus no one lived more intimately, more lovingly, and more persistently in their presence than Joseph did. Assuredly, then, Joseph profited greatly from this sanctifying proximity and is thus raised above all the other saints. Saint Bernard, for his part, neatly summarizes this teaching: “He [Joseph] is the faithful and prudent servant whom the Lord made the support of His Mother, the foster-father of His flesh, and the sole most faithful co-operator on earth in His great design.”

Exceptional mission

Saint Thomas, while discussing the fullness of grace in Jesus and His incomparable holiness, establishes the following principle: “An exceptional divine mission calls for a corresponding degree of grace.” Jesus is the Redeemer of all men, and consequently He receives the fullness of grace to accomplish His mission. In the same treatise, Saint Thomas also applies this principle to Mary. Since she was called to be the Mother of God, from the first moment of her existence she received a fullness of grace which was superior to all the graces received by all the other saints put together. She was destined to be the Mother of the Son of God, the source of grace, and thus she received grace more abundantly.

The very same principle can help elucidate Joseph’s outstanding place above all the other saints. God chose him to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster-father of His Son. Since Joseph was thus called to participate in a distinctive and elevated way in the work of redemption, then God must have also given him a proportionate fullness of grace. This, in fact, is the very teaching of Saint Bernardine of Siena, who explains: “When God chooses a person by grace for an elevated mission, He gives all the graces required for it. This is verified in an especially outstanding manner in the case of Saint Joseph, foster-father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and spouse of Mary.”

Nature of Saint Joseph’s mission

In order to understand the nature and extent of Joseph’s mission and its concomitant graces, we should recall that the Holy Family was a genuine human family. The members of this family were not three independent and autonomous individuals merely living under the same roof; rather they were all members of the same, real, human family, constantly interacting with one another. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were all essential parts of an integral whole, each playing a crucial role. Jesus, the Son of God, was, without doubt, the most important and dignified person within this family. Moreover, the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, obviously received many more graces than did Saint Joseph. Nevertheless, in accordance with God’s will, Joseph was given the leading role of husband and father. Mary was “subject to her husband, as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife,” (Eph. 5:22) and Jesus “was subject to them” both (Luke 2:51).

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Spouse of the Blessed Virgin

Guided by the will of God, Joseph and Mary entered into a holy marriage, uniting their hearts in a most profound, upright, and mutual love. Leo XIII explains in *Quamquam plurimes* that, “Marriage is the most intimate of all unions, which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those who by it are joined together. Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life’s companion, the witness of her maidenhood, and the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity.” As husband and wife, Joseph and Mary shared their lives. They spent their time on earth working, praying, and talking together in this holy union. They shared joys and sorrows, revealing the intimate movements of their souls to one another while together striving to do the will of God in all things. Truly the hearts of Mary and Joseph were joined as one. This is not just pious speculation; it is the sublime reality of God’s plan for their lives! It is impossible for us to fathom the abundance of graces which Saint Joseph received by being the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Foster-father of the Son of God

It is obvious that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus; nevertheless, the Christ Child was really given to him as a son. The title “foster-father” does not fully explain the mysterious, supernatural relation between the two. On the purely human level, a foster-father chooses the child which he will adopt as his own. The foster-father himself makes this decision, according to his own dispositions. Joseph, however, did not choose. He was chosen! God created Joseph with the specific mission of being the foster-father of the Redeemer. Bossuet expresses this well: “Here we must recognize the action of God. It is by the power of God that Joseph has a father’s heart ... He gave Joseph the heart of a father and Jesus the heart of a son ... That is why Jesus obeys and Joseph does not fear to command. How has he the courage to command his Creator? Because the true Father of Jesus Christ, the God Who gives Him birth from all eternity, having chosen Joseph to be the father of His only Son in time, sent down into his bosom some ray or some spark of His own infinite love for His Son; that is what changed his heart, that is what gave him a father’s love, and Joseph, the just man who feels that father’s heart within him, feels also that God wishes him to use his paternal authority so that he dares to command Him Whom he knows is his Master.”

Protector of the Church

Leo XIII, building on all the arguments presented above, concludes his encyclical *Quamquam plurimes* by stressing that Joseph’s mission is not limited to the care of the Holy Family alone. The pope insists, “And for such reasons the Blessed Patriarch [Joseph] looks upon the multitude of Christians who make up the Church as confided specially to his trust – this limitless family spread over the earth, over which, because he is the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ, he holds, as it were, a paternal authority. It is, then, natural and worthy that as Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, so he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Consecration of the SSPX to Saint Joseph

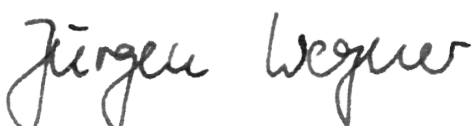
Perhaps Joseph’s most striking quality is his mysterious balance between lowliness and greatness. A poor carpenter, he was called to lead the Holy Family. Model and guide of the humble workman, Joseph nevertheless defends everyone who turns to him, for he is the glorious protector of the entire body of Christ, the Church. His action originates on the spiritual level, yet it extends to temporal affairs. He has great influence over the universal Church, yet his care embraces the least detail. He watches over Christians of all conditions, of all countries. He guides fathers of families, husbands and wives, consecrated virgins, children and youth, the rich and the poor. He is attentive to the needs both of great sinners and of those far advanced in virtue. Biologically he is the father of none, but spiritually he is the father of all.

Here we find the reasons why our little Society, in these difficult days for the Church, wants to consecrate itself entirely – priests, brothers, sisters, faithful, priories, schools, spiritual and material goods – to the protection of Saint Joseph. This is nothing but the expression of our fidelity to the Church, nothing but childlike obedience to God’s plan and the wishes of the Church. Thus Leo XIII notes, “[since] it is of high importance that the devotion to Saint Joseph should engraft itself upon the daily pious practices of Catholics, we desire that the Christian people should be urged to it above all by our words and authority.”

This consecration will take place in all our priories and in as many chapels as possible on the feast day of Saint Joseph, March 19th. We will recite, before the Blessed Sacrament, a prayer of consecration published by the General House. Moreover, in preparation for this important moment, we will start a novena – comprised of the litany of Saint Joseph and other similar prayers – on Sunday, March 10th.

Please join us and entrust all your works and desires to the fatherly care of good Saint Joseph!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Father Jürgen Wegner