

Meditation 48

The imitation of Saint Joseph in the interior life

Imagine that you see Saint Joseph in the home at Nazareth, at the stable in Bethlehem and in exile in Egypt.

Point 1. With what virtues did the interior life of Saint Joseph radiate?

Consider that the entire life of Saint Joseph was interior and hidden in God; so little known to the world that but a few holy writers mention him in some few places; and of his death give no information. This was a life of prayer, quiet work, and constant sacrifice, and at the same time, a life shining with the splendor of all virtues.

Ponder only that by having married the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph renounced the dignity of fatherhood -- so dear to the Israelites, and voluntarily lived in lifelong virginity so that he could belong totally to God. This was a life of mortification and chastity.

While a descendant of the royal family, he worked every day for a living in the craftsman's workshop - Jesus being all his wealth. Behold his life of self-denial and poverty.

Saint Joseph, as the highest of the patriarchs and a witness to the mysteries of God, could convert the world, and yet he enclosed himself in a small town, being completely devoted to Jesus. This was a life of humility and prayer.

Saint Joseph was such a great lover of God, but was afflicted by much suffering which he endured with a wonderful fortitude. This was a life of love for the cross and submission to the will of God. Do you have similar virtues?

If you want to know the faith of Saint Joseph, observe in the stable of Bethlehem his worshipping of the Incarnate Word, venerating in him his Lord and God.

If you want to know Saint Joseph's love for Jesus and Mary, behold how he devoted every moment of his life to them.

If you want to know Saint Joseph's obedience, look at how he rose at night at the angel's voice and, giving no care to hunger, hardships or cold, went to Egypt where he led a hard life until the next command of God. Do you have similar virtues?

Consider that God demanded much of Saint Joseph, but he also generously rewarded him on earth and highly exalted him.

For his purity, God made Saint Joseph the spouse, companion and guardian of the Blessed Mother of God.

For his self-denial, he gave him the sweet consolation that with his own eyes he could gaze upon the Savior of the world and take him up in his arms.

For his obedience, he elevated St. Joseph to such an ineffable dignity that he made him guardian and foster father of his Son, Jesus.

For his love for Jesus and Mary, he endowed St. Joseph with the great grace that after his holy life he died peacefully in their arms.

And God demands much from you, but he will favor you generously on this earth, and will exalt you, if you will but imitate Saint Joseph in his virtues. Do you sincerely desire this?

Point 2. Why and how to strive for an interior life.

Consider that yours is a duty to so live in Jesus, according to Jesus, and for Jesus¹ that you could at least repeat the words of St. Paul, *yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20). Only this does God want, and to this end he gives his graces.

As once at Bethlehem so also now, Jesus still walks with Mary and Joseph -- that is, with the treasures of his Heart -- from home to home, from soul to soul, knocking, and asking to take him in: *'Open to me, my soul, my sister and my bride* (cf. Song of Songs 5:2): *open to let me live in you, and bestow on you my light and my love. Behold, I have circled the whole world and knocked at many souls, but they have mercilessly pushed me away; you then, at least, open, and give me shelter within you.'* If the soul opens at once and invites the Lord Jesus in by faithfully keeping his commandments, or if a religious, by fidelity also to the vows, the Lord Jesus showers his graces upon this soul, and sanctifies the soul's inner and exterior life. Have you never rejected Jesus and do you strive to sanctify your inner and exterior life?

It is necessary to do so, since the degree of our exterior life depends upon our interior, that is, upon our virtues and motives, as the prophet has said, *All the glory of the king's daughter [namely, the soul] is within* (cf. Vulgate Ps 44:14). The wisdom, greatness and happiness of the soul come from this inner life. And there is nothing strange in this, for such is the life with Jesus and in Jesus; and Jesus is real wisdom, true good, eternal consolation -- Jesus is heaven itself. *Whoever has found Jesus*, Blessed Henry Suso rightly says, *has found the source of joy and happiness*. Have you never experienced this?

If you desire that the Lord Jesus would live in you and you live in Jesus, strive to grow constantly in love; therefore guard not only against mortal sins, but also against voluntary venial ones; purify your soul of vices, weaknesses and harmful attachments or desires. Do everything out of pure and supernatural motives, so that the Lord Jesus may himself work in you and through you, and you may resemble his Heart in everything. Do you promise this?

Examination of conscience. Act of contrition. Resolutions.

Today after Holy Communion I will ask fervently: Jesus, live and act in me. Mary and Saint Joseph, teach me the interior life.

Spiritual communion. Closing prayer.

Joseph Sebastian Pelczar was born on January 17, 1842 in Korczyn in the diocese of Przemyśl, Poland. Raised in a religious atmosphere, he entered the Seminary and in 1864 was ordained to the holy priesthood. After his studies in Rome, he was a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. As a priest and a professor he was marked by his zeal and a special devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Heart of God, and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, which he expressed in his works and prolific writing. Concerned by the need for care for girls in moral danger, and for the sick and poor, he founded the Congregation of the Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Krakow on April 15, 1894, the day formerly observed as the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph. In 1899 he became Auxiliary Bishop and, in 1900, Ordinary of his diocese of Przemyśl, Poland. After twenty-five years of exemplary service as a bishop he died in the odor of sanctity on March 28, 1924. In 1991, Pope St. John Paul II counted him among the glory of the Blessed, and in Rome on May 18, 2003, proclaimed him a Saint of the universal Church.

¹ Cf. Meditation 17, *Life of the Lord Jesus in Mary and in a soul devoted to him*.