

The Life Of Saint Joseph



As manifested by

Our Lord, Jesus Christ to

Maria Cecilia Baij, O.S.B.,

Abbess of the Benedictine Convent of St. Peter in
Montefiascone, Italy, from 1743-1766

Translated from the German
of the Rev. Ferdinand Kröpfl, O.F.M., Cap.
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Notes translated from the Italian of the Sac. Dr.
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Introduction to the German Edition by the
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(Permission for this translation was granted to the
translator by Rev. Ferdinand Kröpfl in 1953)

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In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII concerning
the publication of private revelations, I herewith declare that,

1) While the works of Maria Cecilia Baij have been published
with the approval of learned theologians and with the initial support
of Pope Benedict XV, and although this work has had the permission
of ordinaries of dioceses of other countries, I submit all that
is contained herein to the judgment of the Holy See.

2) Any implication of sanctity in the seer are in
no way intended to anticipate the final decisions of the Church.

3) For the private revelations and apparently
supernatural events recounted herein, insofar as they
have not received the attestation of the Church, no claim is
made to more than the assent of simple human
credence, according to the dictates of prudence and the principles
of mystical theology.

H. J. Mark, Translator



Dedication:

To Our Lady, Queen Of Heaven And Earth,
And Spiritual Mother Of Souls,
And To Her Spouse,
Saint Joseph, Ever The Intimate Sharer
And Protector Of All Her Interests.

"It is possible to be great and highly favored without publicity, and to attain true nobility without being well known, one's sole witness being a good conscience."

Bossuet, *First Panegyric on St. Joseph*

"To hasten the advent of that peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ so ardently desired by all, We place the vast campaign of the Church against World Communism under the standard of St. Joseph, Her mighty protector."

Pope Pius XI, *On Atheistic Communism*

(Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur obtained for this book:)

Original Italian edition: Bishop Emidio Trenta,
Bishop of Viterbo, Italy, 1921

First German edition: Episcopal Ordinariate of Linz,
Austria, September 11, 1939

Second German edition: Bishop Dr. Wechner of Feldkrich,
Varalberg, Austria, April 21, 1961

English edition: Nihil Obstat
Mr. Michael Cameron, Censor Deputatus,
Archdiocese of Chicago, February 10, 1997

English edition: Imprimatur
Most Reverend Raymond E. Goedert, M.A., S.T.L., J.C.L.
Vicar General, Archdiocese of Chicago, February 10, 1997

(The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that a book is free of doctrinal and moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur agree with the content, opinions, or statements expressed.)

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The discovery and publication, at the beginning of the twentieth century, of the spiritual writings of Mother Maria Cecilia Baij, O.S.B., erstwhile abbess of the Benedictine convent of St. Peter in Montefiascone, are generally recognized as being a major contribution to our Catholic heritage of ascetical and mystical literature.

Among the various manuscript works of Mother Baij there was also found her autobiography and, as a consequence, it eventually developed that a burning and shining light which had been mysteriously eclipsed and finally extinguished on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1766, was revealed to an entirely new generation in a new epiphany or manifestation of the spirit.

This all began during the month of July of the year 1900, when a Benedictine monk, Dom Willibrord van Heteren, of the abbey of Maredsous, visited the archives of St. Peter's convent in Montefiascone. From the very beginning his attention became focused on an assemblage of manuscripts, the works of Mother Baij, which no one apparently had ever regarded as worthy of special consideration.

His keen interest in these manuscripts became manifest when, a year later, in 1901, he began to publish a summary account of the life of Mother Baij and of some of her works. It was the first publicized announcement of the discovery of her manuscripts. However, it presented therewith merely a fragmentary selection from some of her works.

Twenty years later, completely unaware of this discovery and of what Dom Willibrord had published in France concerning it, the Rev. Dr. Peter Bergamaschi, spiritual director of the regional seminary in Montefiascone, visited the archives of St. Peter's convent in search of documents bearing on the life of a former local Ordinary, Cardinal Marcantonio Barbarigo. The manuscripts of Mother Baij also attracted this scholar's attention and won all his interest. On March 17, 1920, the Rev. Bergamaschi had a lengthy private audience with Pope Benedict XV in which he reported

his discovery of the manuscripts and gave the pope a detailed account of their nature and value. The Holy Father encouraged him to proceed to publish them.

The first works to appear in their original Italian language were: *Vita Interna di Gesu Cristo* (*The Interior Life of Jesus Christ*), in seven volumes, and the *Vita di S. Giuseppe* (the present *Life of St. Joseph*), followed by the *Vita di S. Giovanni Battista*. In 1923 the same Rev. Bergamaschi published in two large volumes the very interesting life of Mother Baij under the title: *Vita della Serva di Dio Donna Maria Cecilia Baij* (Viterbo, G. Agnesotti). However, a large collection of letters by Mother Baij still remain to be published.

Notably, it was during the month of St. Joseph (March, 1920) that Pope Benedict XV urged the Rev. Bergamaschi to publish the writings of Mother Baij. It would seem from this and from what then transpired, that St. Joseph himself, though the saint of the hidden life, had a hand in promoting not only the publication of the *Interior Life of Jesus Christ*, but with it also the account of his own life, hidden heretofore behind the major lights of the other members of the Holy Family.

The Rev. Bergamaschi was fully convinced that this transmission of the interior life of Our Lord and of the life of St. Joseph was a truly supernatural phenomenon, and consequently, thought the text of both works was unquestionably to be regarded as being entirely of divine origin. On the other hand, Father J. de Guibert S.J., referring to what Fr. Fonck, the well known Scripture scholar, had written in *Biblica* (1922, pp. 97-100), deemed such an opinion as untenable (see *Dictionaire e Spiritualite*, Vol. 1, p. 1191).

Fr. Fonck pointed out some seeming contradictions between certain statements of Mother Baij and the corresponding Gospel narrative. For example, he points out that in *The Interior Life of Jesus* and in *The Life of St. Joseph*, Mother Baij presents the boy Jesus, on the occasion that He was found in the temple, in an attitude of expounding the Scriptures and giving proof that the Messiah had arrived. She writes: "The Divine Youth, meanwhile, had concluded His exposition, and everyone applauded" (*Life of St. Joseph*, chap. 53).

This, it is claimed, is a substantial departure from the Gospel which states: "They found Him in the temple,

sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). Actually, however, in the verse immediately following, St. Luke also writes: "And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers," which evidently implies that the doctors of the Law must also have asked Him questions, in the answering of which, Jesus must have referred to Messianic prophecies or must have presented conclusions of His own which caused admiration among the doctors and prompted the audience to applaud. Therefore, what Mother Baij here wrote, though it be not *explicitly* contained in the Gospel account, is nevertheless *implied* in it, and hence one should not thus speak of an existing contradiction. Though Our Lord during His public Life many times brought forth some of the great truths which He wished to emphasize by first merely putting questions to His enemies, this being a sort of Socratic method of teaching, He often followed this up with profound and authoritative statements of His own in regard to these questions.

This account of St. Joseph's life, moreover, was not intended essentially to provide exegetical or historical instruction but rather to serve as a means of edification. In this respect it has succeeded marvelously. It reveals the most loving and lovable head of the Holy Family in a new light which cannot fail to impress both the mind and the heart of the reader, thereby making him a partaker of the heavenly peace and harmony that reigned in the Holy Family at Nazareth.

Pascal P. Parente

INTRODUCTION TO THE GERMAN EDITION ¹

(Presenting Some Important Facts and Considerations Concerning Private Revelations in General, and Some Pertinent Details and Observations Regarding the *Life and Work of Maria Cecilia Baij*.)

Mary Cecilia Baij is no longer an unknown personage in Catholic Germany. Her *Inner Life of Jesus Christ*, a counterpart of the visions of Anna Catherine Emmerich, has found recognition among the simple people, among scholars, and in the most eminent of Church circles. The success attending the publication of the German edition² encouraged us to also present to the public her *Life of St. Joseph*.

Mary Cecilia lived as a daughter of St. Benedict in Montefiascone. She entered the convent there on the feast of St. Peter, April 12, 1713. In 1743 she became Abbess and remained as such until her death on January 6, 1766. Her soul life was interspersed with molestations of the devil and comfortless spiritual dryness, as well as with interior graces and joys.

She possessed the gift of contemplation, and an amazing power of recollection, which often raised her to an ecstatic state. In May 1729, Jesus palpably and effectually impressed His Sacred Wounds upon her heart. He also commanded her to inform the people about all those things which He would reveal to her. She had to do violence to herself to comply with this request. If her spiritual director had not expressly ordered it, she would never have committed those things to writing.

When she asked Jesus not to make any further revelations to her, He informed her that she would have to write not only the treatise on His *Interior Life*—which then was still uncompleted—but another one thereafter. In reference to this, Mary Cecilia then goes on to say the following: "After Holy Communion, I felt how dear St. Joseph placed his hand upon my head, as a token of the protection and love that he was bestowing upon me.

"I then saw him in eminent glory, upon a very lofty throne, from which he said to me: 'Daughter, you have indeed been exceptionally favored by Jesus, by Mary and by me. Jesus has selected you to reveal to the world things concerning His *Interior Life*. His holy Mother and I, together with Jesus, have chosen you to portray my own life as well. What a great reward will be yours for doing this! Moreover, you may rest assured that you will be writing most truthfully, describing everything as it really was.'"

Mary Cecilia stated that she had also objected strenuously to the recording of the facts dealing with the life of the Saint. However, fortified by divine grace, and because of the promise of assistance which was given to her, she began, under obedience, to commit these things to writing. This occurred on the 23 of January, 1736, the feast of Mary's espousal to Joseph.

Saint Joseph obtained for Mary Cecilia the favor of being relieved of a serious heart ailment. On the other hand, she was often oppressed by an intense fear while writing about his life. However, the Savior repeatedly gave her the assurance that she was writing things correctly.

One day, after Holy Communion, she saw Jesus with the imprints of His Sacred Wounds, and He said to her: "See My Hands, My Feet, and My Side! Do not fear, for it is I Who am speaking to you. In view of the Hands, consider the extensive narrative which I am requesting you to write. In view of the Feet, consider the way along which I am leading you. In view of My open Side, consider the favors and graces which I am bestowing upon you. Therefore fear not, for it is I."

By mid-December of 1736, she had already completed the account of St. Joseph's life. She declared that she had never read any work about the Saint, but had merely assimilated what Jesus in His goodness had revealed to her. She said Jesus did this in the same manner that He had previously revealed to her the things concerning His own *Interior Life*, i.e., He dictated to her by means of an interior voice, and she was able to understand everything.

She declared that it all happened in a most wonderful and extraordinary manner, and that it consisted of an articulate, but at the same time

truly spiritual communication, which she perceived not through the medium of her bodily ears, but by a perception of words somehow resounding within her. Various passages in her letters lead one to conclude that these communications which she received acted first upon her imagination, and subsequently impressed themselves also upon her understanding.

There may be differences of opinion as to whether everything that is recorded in the *Inner Life of Jesus*, or in the *Life of St. Joseph*, is comprised only of what was revealed to Mary Cecilia, without any accretions due to the activity of her own imagination. Many passages in her works favor the opinion that personal considerations and elaborations, abetted by a very lively power of the imagination, are also involved. Consequently, the same rule should be applied here as for private revelations in general, namely, not to seek in them the historical background of biblical facts, not even historical certainty in all the events and statements that are recounted.

For this reason we have eliminated the word "revelation" from the title page, though it is to be found there in the Italian original. In the lives of saints and mystics there are plenty of instances of unpremeditated, unwitting deceptions connected with private revelations. The Jesuit, August Poulain, in his *Handbook of Mysticism*, lists five basic causes to which these errors can be traced. He contends that "a heavenly revelation can occasionally be misunderstood by the one who receives it. When visions depict historical scenes such as the life and death of Christ, they often present them only in broad outline, giving mere approximate representations without going into detail. Consequently, whoever attributes to them a manifestly absolute accuracy, deceives himself."

Similarly, in regard to the contradictions in the visions of various saints, he says: "The human intellect may very well be active at the same time that a vision is being regarded, and thereby contribute something of its own to the divine revelation. Whoever then would nevertheless attribute everything to God, would be mistaken. Occasionally the memory and the imagination also play a part...and a true revelation can be altered by the seer himself without his realizing it." For instance, the Lord actually commented to St.

Bridget about such an alteration of His revelations either because she did not understand things properly, or had failed to express herself clearly.

In regard to the objection often raised, namely, that private revelations contradict each other on many points, P. Schmoger, C.S.S.R., the publisher of the *Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, by A. C. Emmerich declares: "These contradictions are frequently only apparent. If one would understand the particular passages in question correctly, the contradiction would in most instances disappear." Thus, among the older revelations, some say that the Savior was fastened to the cross with three nails, while others say with four. For centuries scholars racked their brains over this in an endeavor to decide which was true, and books were written on the matter.

Now, however, any reasonable critic must admit that the revelations of Catherine Emmerich eliminate the conflict between these earlier revelations and resolve this notable item of contention. She speaks of a fourth nail, which was actually not a large nail like the other three, but rather a narrow peg, a sort of gimlet or awl, whereby the left foot of the Divine Savior was fastened over His right foot, before the large nail was driven through both. In the light of such a consideration, both of the seemingly contradictory declarations could claim to be true, and all conflict, therewith, be resolved.

To the above-mentioned objection we further reply: "If contradictions are found in private revelations, this does not constitute a valid ground for declaring that either the one or the other of the revelations is false, or for declaring that all revelations are unworthy of credence. The contradictions are often easily explained.

Theologians teach that a true prophet can occasionally be mistaken, and that by reason of the fact that he makes constant use of his prophetic gifts (*ex magno uso prophetandi*), he may bring forth something from his mind which he truly (but erroneously) deems to be prophetic. In a similar manner, it can easily happen, declares Pope Benedict XIV, that a saint in considering his previous experiences, observations, or judgments, considers something to have been revealed, when actually it was not. It is, therefore, possible for a genuine

visionary sometimes to err, and precisely because of this fact, contradictions may also occur between different revelations."

Most instructive in this regard, moreover, is what the Lord Himself on one occasion said to St. Bridget, when her communications were labeled as being false: "No untruth has ever come from My mouth, nor can such ever proceed therefrom, since I am Truth Itself. Consequently, everything that I have announced through the prophets or through other friends will either spiritually or materially be accomplished, as I had then intended it to be.

"The fact that I said one thing on one occasion, another thing on another occasion, some things clearly and some things obscurely, in no way detracts from the truth of what I have stated; for in order to prove the steadfastness of faith and the solicitude of My friends, I have revealed many things, which according to the diverse operations of My spirit could be understood in different ways, i.e., either good or bad, by those who are good and by those who are evil.³

"In this way different persons, in their various prevailing circumstances were able to actively promote what is good. And so, though calumniators and the ignorant saw only contradictions, My words were nevertheless true. Nor was it unreasonable that I transmitted some things obscurely, for it was proper this way, so that some of the things which I have decreed may remain hidden from those who are evil, while those who are good may fervently await My grace, and be rewarded for this expectation, and lest at any given time My purpose would become known, and everyone would desist from expectation and from charity because of the long duration" (Rev. 1, 2, Chap. 28).⁴

It would, therefore, obviously be a mistake to cast aside in their entirety all private revelations, simply because of certain errors. Poulain remarks in this regard: "Prudence here lies in the middle: not to accept or discard anything without good grounds, and where these grounds are lacking, to withhold one's judgment." As Dom Gueranger has also pointed out: "...God permits this admixture with error, lest we be tempted to esteem private revelations to the same degree as Sacred Scripture."

An expert in mysticism, the Rev. Aloysius Mager, O.S.B., declared in one of his retreat conferences: "Our Faith is not based on private revelations, but such revelations, nevertheless, are so constituted, that they serve to revitalize pious living, to give us new impetus, and to spur us on to a more fervent love, greater fidelity, and above all to a greater humility."

To Sr. Consolata Betrone (died 1946), Our Lord said: "I do not force any one, through miracles, to believe in My merciful revelations. Even during my earthy sojourn, as you read in the Gospel, the condition for receiving My grace was always this: 'Do you have faith?' To him who believes, all things are possible. For this reason I communicate to little souls, having simple but strong faith, many things which I do not reveal to more eminent souls. These are not necessarily at fault because of their attitude, for I have given them freedom of will, but they deprive themselves of considerable light. Do you understand Me?"

Furthermore, in the book, *The Way of Divine Love*, which contains many private revelations, and which Pope Pius XII had already blessed while he was still Cardinal Pacelli, and to which he later as Pope again affixed his personal signature, we read that the Savior said: "What I am now telling you is nothing new. But just as the flame requires continual nourishment if it is not to be extinguished, so do souls need new impetus to propel them forward, and a new ardor to re-animate them!"

Perhaps the most important indicator of the genuineness of mystical phenomena is the matter of obedience to ecclesiastical authority. Carl Feckes, in his treatise *The Doctrine of the Christian Struggle for Perfection* (*Die Lehre van Chrislichen Vollkommenheitstreben*, p. 448), says: "There is perhaps no sign so decisive as this. Centuries of experience have proved that genuine visionaries are intent, first and foremost, upon conforming themselves completely to the demand that they be obedient, and do not claim any exemptions for themselves.

"False visionaries, on the other hand, are inclined to seek privileges and exceptional assignments, and to this purpose have recourse to their visions, to alleged commands of God, etc. They adhere with great obstinacy to their own judgment or to the alleged commands

of God, whereas the true visionaries conduct themselves in exactly the reverse manner. For, inasmuch, as they are truly not advocating their own cause, but that of God, they realize that God is quite capable of bringing His plans to fruition even against the attempted opposition of men.

"We know from genuine visionaries that God's wishes for submissiveness and obedience is so far-reaching, that even when the authorities concerned did not wish to submit to the instructions issued to them, Christ, nevertheless, directed the privileged souls to follow first of all the conflicting prescriptions of the superiors, for He Himself would see to it that, at the appointed time, the insight and will of the superiors would change."

To summarize: it is quite evident that obedience, submissiveness to the Church, humility, retirement, and zealously in virtue guarantee genuineness, while self-will, insubordination, pride, and tepidity, indicate the contrary.⁵ Mary Cecilia gave the following explanation to her confessor in regard to her revelations: "Your Reverence wishes to know about something that I have already repeatedly described, i.e., concerning the manner in which I see and hear the things that I am putting into writing. I propose to speak very simply about this, but nevertheless, I do not know whether I shall find the proper words to do so.

"First of all I wish to declare that I see nothing or hear nothing with my corporal eyes and ears, nor do I determine anything through my physical sense of smell. Everything takes place in the innermost part of the soul in a most remarkable manner. After Holy Communion I recognize the presence of Jesus, by virtue of the extraordinary recollection and consolation that I experience.

"I hear His Voice, somewhat like a light aspiration. I perceive It in a very subdued fashion, and I feel It within me not as the enunciation of a human being, but rather as the delightful murmur of a gentle breeze.

"I converse with this interior Voice without any lengthy reflection and with such firm conviction that I could not answer any question suggesting anything to the contrary. Since these communications with Christ have already been going on for 18 to 20

years, I feel so confident that I submit myself to Him without further consideration."

Her letter closes with a graphic comparison which the Lord had used to convince her (Mary Cecilia) of the verity of the revelations: "If the gutter did not receive its nourishment from the roof, it could provide no water. If your thoughts were not made fruitful from above, they would not contain anything of value."

Whenever this interior Voice ceased speaking, the consciousness of God's sensible presence immediately also disappeared, and there remained for her only a certainty intermingled with fear and doubt. It was just at such moments that the devil sought to assail her and bewilder her.

She had even requested that her writings be destroyed, but her confessor, Bernardine Merzy, relieved her of her concern with respect to the origin of these revelations. "They are from God," he declared, "for His infinite goodness would not tolerate such a dreadful and persistent misconception in a soul completely dedicated to His service. Moreover, you do not manifest any proud assurance, as is always the case with misguided souls, but instead, are persevering in a state of humility and of holy fear."

One of her previous spiritual directors, Father Bazarri, was at first not fully convinced of the supernatural origin of her revelations. He wanted some visible sign, some unquestionable proof of their verity. His demand was justified, because the matter involved a transmission to the public of something which was privately disclosed. Mary Cecilia, therefore, informed the Lord Jesus of this wish of her spiritual father.

The reply of Jesus to this request came on May 13, 1738, at which time He gave Mary Cecilia the following solemn assurance: "The day will come when My Divine Heart shall also be extolled in the militant Church, and a feast to honor this Sacred Heart will be established."

Now it was in 1675 that Jesus had appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and had expressed the desire to have established in the Church a feast to honor His most Sacred Heart, on the Friday following the octave of Corpus Christi. As a result of this, constant requests had been transmitted to Rome, from many countries throughout Christendom, asking that

this wish of the Savior be fulfilled. Nevertheless, neither Innocent XII, nor Benedict XIII, nor Clement XII conceded to these requests. This, then, was the status of things as the Lord made the above prediction to Mary Cecilia.

She immediately conveyed this information to her spiritual director. However, the promised development was very much delayed in its realization, and consequently, Mary Cecilia had to bear with a great deal of unpleasantness and to endure many afflictions. Shortly after Clement XIII ascended the throne, a marked change was effected in the Roman tribunal, more favoring the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which the scholarly Benedict XIV still had designated "a new discovery."

For the third time the Congregation of Rites was besieged with petitions for the inauguration of the feast of the Sacred Heart, and on the 6 of February, 1765, it was approved. In January of the year following, God called his faithful spouse Mary Cecilia to Himself. The feast of the Sacred Heart had been instituted. Her spiritual director, Boncompagni, saw in this development the desired proof for the authenticity of her revelations. For this reason, the writings of Mary Cecilia Baij can be considered to be most trustworthy, and can be read with considerable profit.

This holds true also for this compilation on the life of St. Joseph. This lovable, silent Saint is already enjoying a continually increasing veneration in the Church. It will be remembered that he was designated (in 1870) as "Patron of the Universal Church," and that his feast-day Mass received a preface of its own.

Pope Benedict XV, on July 25, 1920, in part declared: "When we look back over the last fifty years, we observe a remarkable flourishing of pious associations, which are indicative of how the veneration for this most holy patriarch has gradually developed among the faithful. On the other hand, when we consider the evils which beset mankind today, it seems to us all the more evident that veneration of St. Joseph should be intensified, and propagated to an ever greater extent among our Christian people." This book may perhaps contribute to such an increased veneration of the Saint. The sublime dignity with which the Saint is here portrayed is most captivating and

inspiring, and indeed fills one with love and devotion to the Holy Family.

This biography will undoubtedly be profitable to scholars, for in it they will discover what a sound theology has told us about the Saint; yes, and much more, especially with regard to Joseph as the head of the Holy Family, as the spouse of Mary, and as the virginal and lawful father of Jesus. Much has been written by many authors about St. Joseph, but they have hardly succeeded in writing about him in such a simple, straightforward, and sublime manner as we find in this account.

This biography will be appreciated by all simple and pious souls, and by religious congregations. The latter will perhaps derive a very special satisfaction from it. It will certainly be of value to every Christian family because in it are recounted the things that pertain to any ordinary family, for alternations of joy and sorrow have their place in them all. This narrative shows us precisely how joy and sorrow are to be received and sanctified.

This biography could be most beneficial for our present-day human society, in that, it tends to alienate itself from all that which is contributing to its dissolution; or better still, it could actually help to lead it back to God, from Whom it has so extensively separated itself.

In the year 1746, St. Joseph revealed himself in all his glory to Mary Cecilia after her reception of Holy Communion. She then spoke to him thus: "Oh my dear Saint Joseph, have pity on me! If I have written well about you, then please remember me. If I have written poorly about you, then punish me." St. Joseph, however, said to her: "Oh, daughter, you have written well about me."

Our dear Savior on one occasion told her that through her instrumentality a large number of people would come to an understanding of His Heart and would give It the devoted veneration It deserved. We hope therefore, that this book will contribute to a greater appreciation, love, and veneration for the Son of God, as well as for His faithful, humble, and chaste foster-father. To this purpose—take up and read!

P. Odo Staudinger, O.S.B.

FOREWORD OF THE TRANSLATOR

It has undoubtedly been frequently lamented that so little is to be found in Holy Scripture concerning the life of St. Joseph. However, the situation has been much the same with regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary, though to a somewhat lesser degree. According to God's arrangements, there unquestionably was a purpose in this, and one could reasonably expect that both Mary and Joseph actually wished to have it so.

But, be that as it may, there seems also to be a prevailing opinion that Holy Mother Church Herself at first contributed a great deal towards this situation, deeming it advisable to keep Mary in the background during the early centuries so as to prevent the likelihood of her being "adored" as a "goddess" by pagan converts, and favoring as well a limitation upon the attention to be given to St. Joseph, in order to counteract certain tenets then prevalent, which tended to depreciate Mary's virginal status, and questioned or misrepresented Joseph's *merely putative*, though true and sublime fatherhood.

Eventually, however, details concerning Mary's life were transmitted to various visionaries, and through them to the Church at large (after proper examination by Church authorities), and it seems quite proper and fitting that the same should have occurred with regard to St. Joseph. Nevertheless, immeasurably more important than the mere transmission to Maria Cecilia Baij of unknown matter concerning St. Joseph's life, is whether her account of what was revealed to her shall serve to inculcate a greater appreciation of his virtuous life and inherent greatness, shall increase devotion to him, and shall further the imitation of his virtues.

"Some people," wrote Pere Rondet (*Life of St. Joseph*, 1950), "are tempted to think that increasing devotion has unduly magnified St. Joseph's part in the economy

of salvation. This temptation must be resisted. We must try to make St. Joseph known, understood, and loved. As time goes on, devotion to St. Joseph will gain in depth, and Marian theology, so flourishing today, will acquire a new chapter."

It is by no means fully clear just why this work of Maria C. Baij remained hidden and practically unknown for so long a time. Whatever the reasons may be for this fact, it apparently was in the designs of Providence that her writings were eventually brought out of their obscurity during this century, aided by the initial approval and encouraging support of Pope Benedict XV.

It was duly recognized before this translation was initiated, that a rendition from the Italian original (published in Viterbo by G. Agnesotti in 1921) would have been preferable. However, after full appraisal of existing circumstances, weighing of alternatives, and consultation with others, it was decided to make this translation from the German. The fact that the other, more voluminous work of Maria Cecilia Baij, *The Inner Life of Jesus Christ*, is also presently being translated into English from the German, greatly influenced this decision.

It was most fortunate, however, that before this work on St. Joseph was completed, I was able to enlist the services of Mrs. Alba Rigoni, former professor of foreign languages, to undertake the translation of the notes which were present in the Italian edition, but which were omitted with a few exceptions, from the German edition. Mrs. Rigoni was at the same time most helpful in checking the English translation with the original Italian, wherever this seemed to be warranted. As a result of this comparison, it seemed to be necessary that some changes be made, including the re-incorporation of certain deleted passages.

These alterations were made only where the deviations or omissions were considered to be significant enough to be taken into account. Most of them were made directly in the translated text itself; others were entered as notations which were combined with the original notes of the book. Since these original notes were to a great extent in the nature of a somewhat scholarly and lengthy commentary, all the notes were assembled and placed as an

appendix to the narrative itself, instead of leaving them dispersed throughout the text. In the endeavor to make the English edition more easily readable, it was necessary to deviate somewhat from the strictly literal presentations as found in both the German and Italian.

Some of the most glaringly repetitious phrases or sentences were deleted where this seemed to have no adverse effect upon the actual matter of the text. Transpositions of sentences and paragraphs were made in several instances to attain a better continuity. No doubt much more could have been changed or deleted without seriously affecting the context as a whole, but other arguments favoring as close an adherence as possible to the original in a work of this kind prevailed. However, most of the Latin quotations used by Fr. Bergamaschi and interspersed throughout his Italian notes, were rendered into their English counterpart, in the belief that this would prove to be more useful to the average reader.

Some restrictions were also made in the use of capitals, eliminating their use in those terms which referred mainly to one or another of the divine *attributes*, while retaining them for similar terms which indicated rather a reference to the divinity as a *person*.

In addition to making these changes, and a few deletions, which were deemed justifiable as well as expedient, the translator has also taken the liberty of adding a few notes of his own, and these, whether included in the text itself or among the assembled notes, have been designated as being comments of the translator.

Moreover, since the publisher of this English translation wished to capitalize all references to the Blessed Mother as a sign of special deference to Her (which St. Joseph also certainly did, according to the revelations), a concession was made in this regard.

May the inaccuracies and other deficiencies of this English translation be ascribed to the deficiencies and limitations of the translator, and whatever is commendatory be ascribed to the kind suggestions, criticisms, and other help that was received as well as to the merciful, condescending action of the Heavenly Queen, of Her holy spouse, St. Joseph, and of the Holy Child, Jesus.

Acknowledgements:

I am deeply grateful to *everyone* who has contributed *in any way* to the preparation and publication of this book, but am particularly indebted to a fellow Franciscan, Mr. Raphael Brown, who, being a religious writer, gave me most valuable help and suggestions and other assistance in his capacity as research librarian at the Library of Congress when this work was being initiated, and to the Rev. Authur F. Krueger S.T.D. for his assistance in Latin translations and his evaluation and commentary on certain difficult and/or questionable theological passages of the Notes.

Hubert Joseph Mark



FOR YEARS
SAINT JOSEPH
LIVED ^{IN} THE AWFUL SANCTITY
OF THAT WHICH ^{TO} THE PRIEST
IS BUT A MOMENT

FATHER FABEC

PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

There is much to be derived by reading this book. Exercises in piety will come to mind as you share these intimate moments with St. Joseph and the Holy Family. An example (inspired by page 13) is to repeat this phrase many time during the day regarding various thoughts and actions:

“My God, I love You. Help me with the grace to (start this day) according to Your divine good pleasure.”

“My God, I love You. Help me with the grace to eat this food according to Your divine good pleasure.”

“My God, I love You. Help me with the grace to ...”

As you immerse yourself in this book, you will discover that you will be inspired to try to grow in holiness. Meditating upon these writings, you will come away with some ideas as to how to imitate Joseph and come closer to God, and to love God, Our Lady, and St. Joseph more. Upon reading this treasure, one understands more clearly the great humility of dear St. Joseph. He was constantly aware of the goodness of God and the nothingness of himself. And always, he was filled with an intense gratitude to God.

Prayer:

Dear good St. Joseph, please help me to grow in love, humility, and gratitude to God. Help me to learn how to love God more and to be more appreciative of His great goodness toward me. I ask your intercession in these and all my needs, through your merits and those of your most holy Spouse, the Blessed, Sorrowful, and Immaculate Virgin Mary, and in the name of Our Dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

†††

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Chapter 1.

Joseph's Home And Parentage. Remarkable Events Before His Birth



Since God had destined¹ glorious St. Joseph to be the spouse of the Mother of His Only-Begotten Son, He also wanted him to have many characteristics in common with Her, such as lineage and place of birth; but most of all He wanted him to resemble Her in the realm of virtue. Indeed, the Most High God deigned to fashion Joseph as was befitting² for the one who was to become the worthy consort of the Mother of God.

Joseph's father was born in Nazareth, his mother in Bethlehem. After their marriage, they remained for the rest of their lifetime in Nazareth.³ His father's name was Jacob,⁴ his mother's name was Rachel.⁵ Both distinguished themselves by leading very holy lives; they had in common nobility of birth (both were of the family of David)⁶ as well as the practice of virtue.

God permitted that their marriage should, for a time, prove to be unfruitful, for He wished Joseph to be a child obtained through prayerful entreaty. To this purpose, his parents generously bestowed alms upon the poor and for the temple in Jerusalem. They also made many pilgrimages to beg God for the desired offspring! God, before long, provided consolation.

It was on one of these occasions, as they rendered homage in the temple and made their generous donations, that Joseph's mother experienced an inner conviction that God had heard her prayer and would comfort her, and indeed, upon their return to Nazareth she conceived St. Joseph.⁷ At this time, three unusually bright stars, surpassing one another in beauty and splendor, could be seen directly above their abode. By this sign, God wished to indicate that Joseph was destined to establish the terrestrial Trinity, and become the head of the Holy Family. God arranged it so that this prodigy was not generally observed; the mystery

surrounding this coming child, and his special destiny, was to remain a secret.

As the expectant mother carried Joseph beneath her heart, she experienced great consolation; she occupied herself ever more assiduously in the practice of every virtue. Joseph drew unto himself not only physical nourishment, but also her virtuous dispositions. The happiness and piety of the parents were increased even more, when an angel came to reveal to them certain mysterious and secret facts concerning this child. The angel spoke to each of them in a dream. It was disclosed to the mother that the child resting beneath her heart would have the happy privilege of seeing the promised Messiah and associating with Him, and it was incumbent upon her to rear him with special foresight and diligence. She was to call him "Joseph."⁸ He would be great in the sight of God.

The revelations made by the angel to Joseph's father were much in the same vein. Both father and mother were commissioned not to divulge this "secret of the king," not even to their child, but were to speak about it only between themselves, for their own spiritual consolation, for the preservation of a greater harmony in their dispositions, and for the purpose of giving thanks to Almighty God. It was intended that the child should be properly trained, and instructed in the Sacred Scriptures.

The parents were filled with joy over these confidential dream-revelations. As they discussed them between themselves, and discovered that each had been vouchsafed the same secrets, they gave fervent thanks to God and animated themselves to the practice of virtue in an heroic spirit. Being wise and prudent, they kept their secret, and thus fulfilled the request of the angel.

Joseph's mother engaged herself during this blessed time, with fasting, prayer, and the generous bestowal of alms, thanking God over and over again for the conception of the desired child, and imploring the divine aid so that he would safely come to see the light of day. Nor was she afflicted much with the distress so common to expectant mothers.⁹ She recognized in all this the divine condescension, and gave thanks to God for everything.

Joseph's father was imbued with a similar spirit. He was particularly happy over the grace which had been given his spouse, enabling her to carry her child with such lightness of spirit and so much inner consolation. At times he would join his wife in prayer, giving thanks to God together with her.

Chapter 2.

Birth Of Joseph. His Circumcision. He Already Receives The Use Of Reason



As the time of Joseph's birth approached, his mother prepared for the occasion with great ardor in prayer. At length the momentous day arrived. Joseph's mother gave birth to her child with ease. This birth proved to be not only for her, but also for the assisting women, a source of great consolation. The tiny babe had a most angelic, venerable, and serene expression. Although generally the features of infants are barely distinguishable at this stage, in Joseph they were clearly defined, and the mere sight of him even now was an occasion of spiritual stimulation for everyone.¹

As the parents beheld in their child so lofty a mien, they became more firmly convinced of the truths revealed to them by the angel. The mother, once the necessary functions attendant upon the birth were completed, took her little infant in her arms, gave thanks to God for the happy delivery, and offered him to God, with the intention of dedicating him to the sacred service of the temple in Jerusalem. God, however, already decreed that Joseph was to be the guardian of the living temple of the Holy Spirit, namely, the Mother of the Divine Word.

To be sure, the most High accepted the mother's desire, and her offering, and though He did not grant her the wish of eventually seeing Joseph as a priest of the temple, He only did so in order to vouchsafe to assign Joseph to a still higher function. The news of the birth of this child, and the unusual circumstances connected with it, spread throughout the whole of Nazareth. As rumor had it, this child

seemed to be a veritable angel of paradise,² and all were elated over what they heard.³ The three stars again appeared over the abode where Joseph was being born, and were observed with astonishment; however, they disappeared rather soon. Joseph, upon opening his little eyes, directed them heavenwards, and for a while kept them fixed upon these stars, endeavoring to express his wonderment concerning this eminent sign which God gave to the world in conjunction with his birth.

The child comported himself quietly. This was a blessing to his parents, especially the mother, who nursed him with joy and care. Even at these earliest stages of his earthly existence, Joseph could not bear to have anyone approach him and bestow caresses so customarily given to little ones. He demonstrated, even at this tender age, how he was to preserve undiminished later on the luster of his purity and innocence. Only his parents were permitted some demonstration of their heartfelt love; but even they were inclined to be very reserved in this regard, since they observed how the infant tended to avoid caresses.

On the octave day of his birth, the parents had Joseph circumcised in accordance with the prescriptions of the Law and the custom of the Jews, and he was given the name of "Joseph." At first the infant cried as the circumcision was being performed, but eventually he became quiet, for among the many gifts⁴ which God now bestowed upon him was that of accelerating within him the power of the use of reason.⁵ He was able to receive these gifts inasmuch as he was already in the grace and friendship of God, having been previously freed of the stain of original sin which by its presence would have made him radically displeasing to God.⁶ Joseph adored God with greatest reverence, making inclinations of his little head, and his face assumed a blissful expression.

A dignified smile tended to play over his cheeks. In this way Joseph gave exterior evidence of the joy and exultation of his spirit. He was conscious of God-given blessings and favors, thanked fervently for them, and offered himself up entirely to his Lord. In addition to his regular "guardian" angel,⁷ Joseph had another angel assigned to him by God, who was to speak to

him often in his dreams, and who was also to instruct him in all those things which would be required of him, in order that he might become ever more pleasing to God.

Thus, already at this most tender age, Joseph had the use of reason, and he used it to further the knowledge and praise of God. He was grateful to God for having so greatly favored him, and bore with great patience the embarrassing and disagreeable features of his present state. The angel often exhorted him to offer to God the distress he experienced while in this diaper⁸ stage, and he would do so, in thanksgiving for the mercies God had shown to him. God, in turn, was very pleased by these offerings of Joseph.

Presently the child began to perceive how seriously God was being offended by His creatures; hence, he would often cry, though unobtrusively so as not to distress his parents. Through the offering of his innocent tears he obtained from God greater graces and illuminations, in return for which he would subsequently again render thanks to the most generous God.

Whenever his mother came to change his diapers, Joseph's eyes closed and his face would flush, thus giving evidence of his distress at being thus exposed. In view of these observations, the mother was especially considerate and careful not to cause her little son any more of such distress, for she perceived only too well how remarkably divine grace was active in him. After all, she herself was also a very enlightened, virtuous soul. Joseph was particularly affectionate towards his mother, and happy and joyful in his attitude towards her because of the rare piety that he saw was hers.

Joseph had the best of dispositions; he was endowed with natural gifts, but even more remarkably, with supernatural ones. He matured in a most outstanding manner, both physically and spiritually; he developed so well physically because of the precious nourishment which he received from his mother who was blessed with the best of health; his soul's growth was derived from the graces he obtained from the divine bounty and generosity. God fashioned him according to His own heart and spirit, in order to eventually make him

a worthy bridegroom for the Mother of the Divine Word.⁹ The child gratefully acknowledged these gifts which he was receiving from God.

Chapter 3.

Joseph's Presentation In The Temple



When the period of time had elapsed which was prescribed by the Law¹ concerning women who had become mothers, the parents set out for Jerusalem. Joseph's mother went to the temple for the rite of her purification, and to present her son,² to offer him up, and to redeem him again, all according to the legal prescriptions. They brought substantial gifts for the temple, considerably more than was customary, as a token of their gratitude for this God-given blessing of such a child.

Joseph's facial expression was exceptionally happy and joyous throughout the whole journey, and this was a source of consolation to both parents. They perceived very clearly how divine grace was diffusing itself in the soul of their son. If it was manifesting itself to such a degree already at this early age, how much more could be expected as he grew older? This was for them a stimulus toward arousing in themselves an ever greater love for and gratitude to God.

During the rite of her purification, Joseph's mother received many illuminations concerning her son's gifts. In the temple she entrusted him into the care of the priest. As the latter took Joseph into his arms and presented and offered him to God, he experienced an extraordinary sensation of joy and consolation of spirit. The priest was interiorly enlightened, and perceived how pleasing this child was in the eyes of God. Joseph's eyes were open and directed towards heaven.

He accompanied the offering of the priest by giving himself whole-heartedly to God. He was completely taken up and absorbed in God during the entire festive ritual. God increased sanctifying grace in him and at

the same time granted him a special illumination. Thereby, he perceived how lofty and sublime the gift was that God so generously meted out to him at the moment of his complete oblation; whereupon he again rendered fervent thanks.

The parents redeemed their son with the usual stipend. As the priest returned the child to his mother, he instructed her to raise him in worthy dispositions of mind and heart, and to bestow special care upon him, for it had been made known to him that this child was particularly pleasing to God, and was destined for great things; moreover, because of his exceptional qualities he would one day be a source of consolation to everyone who would have the privilege of associating with him.

Verily, all this eventually proved to be the case; in fact, Joseph brought consolation not only to those with whom he associated in life, but even to all his future devoted admirers, and since God destined him to be the patron of the dying, he has become for them, too, an efficacious source of consolation and strength in the struggle with death.

Once the child was returned to them, the parents gave thanks to God, amid tears, their hearts profoundly touched and filled with joy. They carried Joseph home as a treasure, as a divinely conferred gift. Little Joseph was very quiet during the trip—totally immersed in God. He rejoiced, and gave thanks for the graces which enabled him to make such progress in the growth of divine love. Although it was not yet possible for him to practice all the virtues which he so loved, he strove nevertheless, to exercise himself in the desire for them. He did this until he attained maturity, and, thereafter, he practiced them with great perfection.³



Chapter 4.

Joseph's Childhood.

His Attitude Towards God And Parents



Joseph's mother faithfully fulfilled the duty of nursing her child, and it proved to be a comfort to her. She observed her child carefully. Very often she found Joseph rather sad, and weeping silently. She was surprised to see such unusual behavior in him, but being prudent, she remained silent and revealed nothing to anyone. It seemed to her it all could be explained only as a prevenient grace. This consideration moved her deeply. She seemed to sense her innocent son already in the role of a penitent. Nor was she mistaken for, after all, Joseph already possessed the gift of the use of reason, together with the gift of sanctifying grace, and as a result had a greater comprehension of God and of the offenses committed by mankind against Him.

He shed copious tears in this regard, and offered them to God with the plea that He might have mercy upon poor sinners, that He would enlighten them, and enable them to see their grievous error. An angel encouraged him in this, telling him that it was pleasing to the Most High, and that he would be manifesting his love for his erring neighbor. So Joseph continued to do so in his fervent desire to please God and help his neighbor.

It can, therefore, be truly said that Joseph, hardly born, was already fulfilling the two commands of the law, namely: to love God above all things and with all his power and strength, and to love his neighbor. Having nothing on his own conscience to reproach himself with, his works of penance were performed as reparation for the sins of others. In return God lavished upon him many favors and graces. As a very special favor, the time for the birth of the Mother of the Divine Word was advanced, so that Joseph might become her guardian and most faithful spouse.

It was most evidently noticeable how this saintly child would be absorbed in God for days on end. On these occasions he had no need for material nourishment; it sufficed for him then to receive that most delightful fare which enriched his spirit, namely: divine consolation. How superabundant this was could be determined from his expression. Joseph's face at such times had a most angelic appearance, and his cheeks would be flushed; a smiling expression would

play over his features, and his eyes would glisten like two stars.

Whenever his mother saw him like this she would leave him alone and not disturb him in any way. To see him in such a heavenly transport served to fill her, as well, with special consolation. Her heart would then burst forth in songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. Quite often, Joseph's father observed these extraordinary conditions in his son, and together with the mother, would be moved to tears.

Oh, what happiness did Joseph's parents experience in rearing their child! How tender was their love! Yet how different their situation was from that of the parents of Joseph, the viceroy of Egypt. The latter, you see, was the prototype of our Joseph.¹ As he had been loved more than all the other children by his father, so our Joseph was loved by God the Father more than any other (male²) creature, since He had predestined him to be the father of His Divine Incarnate Word and the spouse of the Mother of the Son of God. Joseph of Egypt was invested by his father in a costly garment; our Joseph was adorned by the heavenly Father with sanctifying grace.

The former Joseph was hated by his brothers and sold as a slave; our Joseph was unjustly deprived of his inheritance after the death of his parents, which forced him to assume the status of a stranger in Jerusalem in order to learn a trade with which he could earn his livelihood. Joseph of Egypt explained the meaning of dreams; our Joseph possessed an angel companion who instructed him in his dreams and advised him what he should do to please God and accomplish His will.

The one was the representative of the king of Egypt; our Joseph was the representative of God in the Egypt of this world. The one remained faithful to his Lord, in that he left another's spouse untouched; our Joseph remained loyal to the Holy Spirit, in that he never violated the physical integrity of the Latter's spouse and his own—nay more, he even became the guardian of her purity.

The one preserved the harvest of grain for the benefit of the Egyptian people; our Joseph was the protector of that Life which was destined to be the Wheat of the elect, the nourishment and strength of

the faithful. The one was a source of consolation for his parents and for the whole of Egypt; our Joseph was a source of consolation to the Divine Word, Whom he nourished by means of his labors and sweat, and to the Mother of Jesus in all Her journeyings. He was, and still is, a consolation for all faithful souls in their necessities, especially at the hour of death.

The one was loved exceedingly by his master; how much more was our Joseph loved and favored by God, being as he was His representative on earth! No man has lived on earth who could compare with our Joseph, no man has been so favored and exalted by God.³ Only our Joseph's most holy and most pure spouse, as virgin Mother of the Divine Word, was more uniquely privileged.⁴ She was established in a status incomparably far above him.

The period of Joseph's growth was a time of great blessing for his parents. Since at this early age he prayed much for sinners, how much more did he implore God's blessing on his parents, and the Lord surely heard him, for they increased greatly in virtue and in love for God and neighbor.

Whenever Joseph was carried about by his mother, and found himself to be in a place where he could see the open sky, he would gaze steadfastly up at the heavens. His joy and exultation showed that all his happiness and treasure lay up above. As the mother observed this, she would often bring him to a spot from which he could have a clear vision of the sky. She also did it whenever she saw that he was sad, for this would lift up his spirits. At the same time, she herself would contemplate God's grandeur in His wondrous works, and rejoice in spirit.

The hellish fiend was aware of the light that abided in Joseph, and also of the tremendous advances that his parents were making in the path of virtue. Consequently, he feared that this child would arouse others to take up the struggle against him, and by his example lead many souls toward a life of piety. He attempted a number of times to take Joseph's life, but his plans always went awry, for Joseph was protected by the almighty arm of God.

He was guarded by the two angels who had been assigned to him. The enemy fumed with rage because he could not achieve his designs. He devised another

ruse, whereby, he endeavored to instigate strife and confusion between Joseph's parents. This too failed, because they, animated by their virtue and the fear of God, clearly recognized the snares of their common enemy. By means of their prayers, the devil was brought into confusion and was forced to seek refuge in flight.

Satan then attempted an attack upon the domestics of the household, but even this miscarried, for Joseph prayed for them all and God heard his petitions. He would often unite fasting to his prayers, and as a result the enemy found himself deprived of his powers. The devil desisted for a time from his attacks only in order to devise a new plan of action against Joseph, and to wait for an opportune occasion to initiate it. But always he found himself vanquished and beaten, for Joseph's prayers were very powerful.

The angel who had been assigned to speak to Joseph in his dreams⁵ continually advised him as to what was incumbent upon him to do in order to overcome the infernal demon. He would inform Joseph as soon as he saw that the devil was preparing to launch another attack that was destined to create a disturbance in the household, and Joseph never failed to carry out the admonitions of the angel.

When the proper time arrived, Joseph's mother discarded the use of the diapers and dressed her child. Joseph was very happy about this. He raised his hands yearningly to heaven; it seemed as if he wished to take flight, to go up to the place that contained the object of all his desires. He was often seen in this posture. At other times the mother would see him with his little hands crossed, and pressed tightly against his breast, as if to indicate that he was embracing his Lord, Who through grace abided within him.

On another occasion Joseph's parents found him praying with folded hands, completely oblivious to the outer world about him, and so absorbed in contemplation that he seemed to have lost consciousness. In all such instances Joseph's mother was minded to leave him strictly alone. Joseph was inclined to spend whole days in contemplating God and in meditating upon the divine perfections.⁶ He was instructed in prayer by his angel, but even more fully

by God Himself, Who communicated Himself most generously to his soul,⁷ and permeated it with His spirit.

Thus, Joseph advanced daily more and more in the love of God and in the comprehension of the divine perfections. He longed to achieve perfection and holiness in himself, so that he might in some measure resemble his God and make some recompense for His infinite love. For this reason he wished that he would soon be able to walk, for then he would be better able to render to God, by means of his body as well, the homage that was due Him; he could then give external demonstration on his knees of his sentiments of love and submission. God was pleased with these desires of Joseph, and granted his petition, enabling him to walk in a very short time.

Chapter 5.

Joseph Begins To Walk And To Speak



Joseph was privileged to talk very early as well as to walk. The first words that he lisped were "My God!" That is what the angel had taught him, and upon his sudden awakening, this expression burst forth from his lips. His parents heard it with amazement and deep emotion, and were filled with jubilation over their son's first spoken words. They were particularly joyous because his first words were directed to God, and a call upon Him for help. Joseph was destined to use these same words very often, and rightly so, as he had given himself completely to God, Who was his all.

Whenever he heard his parents refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he would add, "and the God of Joseph." He would say this with such amenity for his tender age that his parents were delighted. In order to hear him express himself thus, and in order to give him the consolation he derived therefrom, they would frequently make reverential reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The little one's responses of "and the God of Joseph," were made with such devotion, that it was

quite evident that to him God was the "only good," the object of all his affections and desires, and that he had no other thoughts and no other love than for Him. Consequently he was always jubilant and exultant whenever the name of God was mentioned.

The first steps that Joseph made were offered to God, with a request for grace that God might thereafter always be served, and never offended by him in his goings and comings. This petition was made in accordance with the instructions he received beforehand from the angel, and God certainly granted these prayers, for Joseph always gave glory to God and never offended or grieved Him by means of his speech or deportment, nor through any other of his activities.

He had the characteristic habit of directing his glance heavenwards, and asking God for help and for grace in all his undertakings, so that they might, at all times, be carried out according to the divine good pleasure. Joseph did this whenever he prepared to eat, sleep, or speak, or to go somewhere. Being unable, while so young, to perform all the virtuous deeds for which he yearned, he offered to God his desires, and with them all these ordinary activities, which were in themselves indifferent and common to everyone for the preservation of life, namely: eating, drinking, sleeping, and recreating.

All these Joseph made valuable by means of the right intention, doing everything for the love of God. Specifically, he would sometimes deny himself out of the motive of love in regard to taste, for this was what the angel had advised him to do, since there was so little else he could do for the love of God at that early age.

He often renewed his donation of himself to God, a repetition of that initial act which he had made at the time of his presentation in the temple. Because Joseph's mother perceived these indications of great spiritual capacities in her child, she began instructing him in the practice of making sundry outpourings of the heart to God, in the manner of the Hebrews. Joseph rejoiced over this, and applied himself so well to this that he really astonished her, together with all the others who happened to hear him.

Once he was able to walk unhampered, Joseph often went and hid himself in order to pray. With uplifted hands he would offer thanks to God for having heaped so many benefits upon him. He would remain on his knees for hours at a time. It was touching to see the child in this posture, but it was even more conducive to wonderment to observe how his spirit found its delight in the contemplation of the divine perfections. This was quite evident even exteriorly; for example, from his flushed face and his shining eyes. Often, as the mother adroitly withdrew out of the sight of her son, she would hear him exclaim: "Oh God of infinite goodness! How generously have You bestowed Your blessings upon me! How much do I owe You in return!"

His words were still somewhat stammering, but came from a heart inflamed with love for God. The mother, hearing him, would feel her own heart being enkindled in union with his by similar sentiments of love and thanksgiving, and she would burst forth into tears—tears of joy at seeing her son in such good favor with God and so richly endowed with His gifts.

Presently Joseph's parents informed him that God had promised to send a Messiah. They told him how He was being awaited with great longing, and how the old patriarchs had yearned for His coming. Joseph's angel also spoke of this to him in one of his dreams. As a result, he too was filled with a lively and glowing desire for the realization of this promise. He sent forth fervent appeals to God, asking Him to deign to shorten the time of waiting. Thenceforward, he applied all his prayers to this intention.

God listened with pleasure and satisfaction to these pleas of the innocent Joseph, and He gave him evident testimony of it, for whenever Joseph made these petitions, He, the Most High God, filled Joseph's heart with joy and consolation. Of course, Joseph was thereby encouraged all the more to continue with his supplications.

Whenever anything occurred in their home whereby God could be offended—and this did happen among the domestics through weakness—oh, then was Joseph to be found most sorrowful and depressed! Since he could not remonstrate with them at this age, he would show his displeasure towards their sin by giving way to tears.

His mother, observing him thus one day, asked him why he was so disconsolate. With considerable anxiety he answered: "You have so often taught me what to do in order to please God, and how we must avoid all sin so as not to displease Him. If then, I see God being offended in our own house do you not wish me to cry?" He said this to his mother because she had so often instructed him concerning this matter of the avoidance of sin, and because she had not yet fully grasped the fact that there had been bestowed upon him those special gifts: the premature development of reason, and a clear apprehension of the offenses committed against God.

It was because he understood so well how much God deserved to be loved and honored, and not offended, that he could become so saddened. He understood how very displeasing sin was to his most beloved Lord. Joseph's mother, henceforth, bore this in mind, and took pains to be vigilant, so that God's anger might not be aroused by any person in her house. She sternly reprimanded those who erred. Thus it came about that this home of Joseph's parents, due to the influence of Joseph's attitude and conduct, eventually merited to be called a school of virtue, with all those residing within being most diligent in their observance of the divine law.

Joseph's mother was very prudent and circumspect in regard to the secrets her son confided to her. She kept to herself what she knew concerning her son's supernatural gifts and graces. She never forgot what the angel had told her: that her son would see the Messiah and live in His company. In view of all this she did not wonder overly much at seeing Joseph so favored by God. She endeavored to give thanks and praise to God for His great generosity to him. She would often gaze at Joseph with great devotion and weep for joy at the thought that her son would be given that happy privilege which was denied to so many patriarchs and prophets: to witness the coming of the Messiah into the world.

Filled with a holy envy over his good fortune she would often remark, "Oh, my blessed child!" Hearing it, Joseph once asked her why she said this. "Because I know that God loves you so very much," she replied. (She never told Joseph, however, the secret revealed

to her by the angel). When Joseph heard this he lifted his hands towards heaven and exclaimed: "Ah yes! I do believe that God loves me exceedingly!" His face now became flushed, and he was exultant in his joy; he gave way to tears at the sweet delight he experienced.

But then he continued: "And how much do I love my God? Oh, how little do I really love Him! But I wish to love Him more in the future than I have loved Him until now. As I increase in age and strength, so also do I desire to increase in my love for Him." And so it turned out to be; Joseph's growth in love for God kept pace with his physical growth and development.

When Joseph's parents saw how intelligent he already was (Joseph was barely three years old at the time), they decided to begin instructing him in reading. This the father took upon himself,¹ inasmuch as he was well versed in the Law. Besides, he did not wish to commit his son to others for instruction for fear that, in the company of strangers, he might lose that lofty spirit which God had bestowed upon him. It was thus, that Joseph began to learn to read, and he managed so remarkably well that his father never found any cause for reproof. To be sure, all this redounded to a great extent to the profit and consolation of his parents.

He soon advanced to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, and especially the Davidic Psalms, all of which his father explained to him. This provided Joseph with much joy. He applied much time and effort to try to understand them, yet he never omitted his regular practice of prayer. All his available time was taken up either by prayer, by reading, or by reflection upon the things he had read, and he set for himself a definite time for each.

In spite of his extreme youthfulness, Joseph was never seen to be angry or impatient. He always maintained a cheerful and peaceful demeanor, although God often permitted him to be mistreated by other people of the house during the absences of his parents. The youngster accepted all with patience and cheerfulness.

The devil often endeavored to stir up the domestics to mistreat him, for the purpose of seeing him fail in the virtue of patience during affliction. But in this the demon never succeeded. Joseph was so submerged

in the thought of God's love, and so joyful over the realization of God's presence in his soul, that nothing could disturb the peace within his heart. The sight of this virtuous child put the devil into a frightful rage. He eventually even became violent, and undertook one day, to cast Joseph down headlong over a flight of stairs. God permitted this so that Joseph would have the opportunity to practice virtue and to make Satan suffer greater confusion. As he was falling, Joseph called to God for help and the Most High prevented him from being harmed. Whereas the devil was now forced to withdraw disconcertedly, Joseph had another opportunity to render praise and thanksgiving to God for all his blessings.

Even though he was still so very young, Joseph was never occupied with childish things. He never asked to be allowed to play with other children of his age, but preferred to remain in seclusion within his own home. He either busied himself with the reading of the Scriptures, or he prayed; never did he squander his time.² To his parents he rendered a prompt obedience. As for recreation, this consisted entirely in glancing frequently heavenwards, where he knew his God resided; to Him he would then dispatch, amid ardent sighs, petitions for an early arrival of the promised Messiah.

Joseph had a great veneration for the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as for the prophet David. He often asked his father to tell him the stories of their lives. His father responded to his pleas and narrated portions of their life histories, for a time devoting himself to one, and then, in like manner, to the others. Joseph had the desire to imitate them when he saw how they were loved and specially privileged by God. After listening attentively through the narrative, he would remark: "Indeed, these were the friends and favorites of God; we must imitate them in their virtues."

When he heard his father relate how Abraham had always lived in the presence of God, as the Most High Himself had commanded him to do if he wished to be perfect, Joseph was determined, insofar as was possible, to imitate him. And verily, Joseph had already acquired by the time he reached the age of seven, a true appreciation of all the virtues that the patriarchs had practiced. To the extent that it lay within his

power, he applied himself to imitate them in their faith, their hope, and their love for God, and so advanced steadily in virtue, and became ever more pleasing to God.

Again, when Joseph heard how King David had rendered praise to God in a special manner, seven times daily, he wanted to do the same. He petitioned his angel to wake him up at night so that he could praise his Creator even during the night hours. Joseph knew by heart various prayers of praise to God. He would repeat these often throughout the day and night, with great joyfulness of spirit. God, in turn, was most generous in granting him additional illuminations, and His gifts, in greater profusion.

While he was reciting these prayers of praise, Joseph was inclined to be so fired with love for God, that he would often open up the window of his room, even during the night, and while standing there gazing upwards toward heaven, he would give full vent to his longing and cry out: "Oh, what joy awaits the man who is destined to see with his own eyes the promised Messiah! Oh, what bliss for those who shall be privileged to serve Him and associate with Him! Oh, what a glorious and happy lot shall be theirs!"

He made these remarks with such an ardor of love that for the longest time he would be completely oblivious to the things of this world. At the same time, he was inspired with an intense yearning to be able to serve the Messiah and render unto Him highest honor and perfect obedience. Joseph's heart contained an ardent love for his fellow-man. He wanted to help everyone.

He frequently expressed to his parents his desire that they bestow alms generously on the poor without giving any thought to the idea of saving anything for him, for he himself preferred to be poor if others could thereby be delivered from want. His parents readily responded to these desires of his, and continued to bestow alms very generously.

Joseph, now seven years of age, continued on in this way, and preserved undiminished the luster of his innocence, so much so, that he never caused the slightest displeasure to his parents. All his actions were exceedingly pleasing to God. He had a special love for holy purity, for God had in a wonderful

manner, infused into his soul the love for this virtue. His angel recommended it to him, telling him how extremely precious it was to God, so that he was all the more drawn to it, and was determined to preserve it all his life.³

In order that he might be better able to accomplish this, he implored God for the necessary graces, and resolved to shun all dangerous occasions, so that the resplendence of this virtue would not be diminished. The success he achieved was largely due to the fact that he made every conceivable effort to maintain a strict guard over his senses, especially his eyes which he generally kept cast down except when directed upward towards heaven.

From the expression in his eyes, one could see how profound his purity of soul and body really was. He gave one the impression of being an angel in mortal flesh. This preternatural appearance was especially noticeable after Joseph came from those intervals of prayer in which he had been all alone with his God, and in intimate communion with Him.

On these occasions the souls of Joseph's parents would abound with extraordinary consolations and with reverential love for their son. They realized more and more what a treasure, what a gift from heaven he was. They did not refrain from exercising their parental authority over him; they tested him often, to see whether he would heed their admonitions. However, Joseph was always perfectly obedient.

Joseph was very much inclined towards fasting and a generally austere way of life. But when his parents forbade anything, he submitted to their will completely. Whenever he wished to fast and make night vigils, he would ask for their permission with such submissiveness that it seemed almost impossible to refuse him. He had a captivating attitude and manner about him! Hence, when they had to deny him these penances, they were not able to do so without experiencing a definite pang, for it was most difficult for them to refuse him anything.

His father often gave Joseph money to distribute as alms to beggars. Joseph would accept the coins with effusive thanks, as if they had been given to him for himself. He would quickly distribute them among the poor, and never kept back anything for

his own use. Whenever he saw a poor man approaching, he would hurriedly go to his mother and beg her for an alms, just as humbly as if he wanted it for himself. His mother marveled at this virtuousness of her son, and was most generous in giving him money.

The mere sight of a poor person was enough to depress Joseph, but just as soon as he was able to render some assistance, he quickly cheered up. Joseph's eagerness to practice this virtue of liberality towards the poor and also all the other virtues, stemmed largely from the fact that his angel had made it clear to him how precious and how pleasing they were in the sight of God.

Chapter 6.

Joseph's Progress In Virtue. Special Favors From God



As has been intimated, by the time Joseph had reached his present age of seven, he already possessed unusual intellectual capacities. He spoke in a serious vein, and all his actions had a certain mature perfection about them, and so, his father could not find a better adviser on important questions than his own son, and his overall success was attributable to this advice which he received from Joseph, who was enlightened by God. Joseph was never mistaken in his opinion, for he first consulted God in prayer concerning all things, and his parents never undertook anything without having previously obtained his approval; they knew from experience that whatever Joseph said would be realized in every detail.

Even so, Joseph's deportment was so humble and obedient that his parents could not help but wonder at it. He would simply give them his opinion and then add: "I only tell you what I consider to be the right thing, and consequently, also the proper thing to do. But think it all over well yourselves, and then do that which seems to you to be better and more pleasing to God." Then he would beg God to enlighten his parents so that they might do only that which