

St. Joseph, Our Spiritual Father

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Foreword



St. Joseph is one of the most loved saints because he is the man whom God chose among all others to be the special guardian of the Incarnate Jesus Christ and His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. He had also been chosen by our lovely founder as the spiritual parents of our congregation. He was the human guardian of the Holy Family, and because of this sacred familial bond and divinely-given mission, he is also the foster-father to all Christians, and to a very special, to us - the sisters of DMJ/PMY.

This small book is only a sketch of St. Joseph, but I hope, as we bear his name, we can get to know our spiritual father a bit better.

's-Hertogenbosch,
The feast of St. Joseph 2018



Fr. Philippus OFM.Cap.

Preface



I warmly welcome this book about St. Joseph, not only because he is one of the patrons of the Congregation Sisters of Charity Daughters of Mary and Joseph (DMJ or PMY – in Indonesia), but also because he plays an important role in Christian salvific history. Although he is a main figure, only a few writings are dedicated to him. Moreover, in the Bible, the name of St. Joseph as the spouse of Mary and the foster father of Jesus is only scarcely mentioned.

Fr. Jacobus Antonius Heeren and Anna Catharina van Hees as the founders of our congregation have great estimation for St. Joseph. This is expressed by Fr. Heeren in one of his writings, which states:

“... Because of the name of Daughters of Mary and Joseph, all the members of this assembly recognise and choose the Blessed Virgin Mary –



who is the leading Mother of the Holy Church – as their mother and the supreme Protector, and Saint Joseph – the foster father of Jesus and the fiancée of Mary – as their first and special protector beside Mary. In imitating Jesus Christ, the sisters have to greatly respect and (show their) love for Mary and Joseph as their spiritual parents, and (they have to) respect them in the same way.”

This book invites us to discover St. Joseph, in union with the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. We will see how the name of St. Joseph gradually has become known. Many people started to devote their prayers to St. Joseph. Many people become closer to St. Joseph.

We, the Sisters of DMJ/PMY, do not only honour St. Joseph as the foster father of Jesus and the fiancée of the Blessed Mary, but also as a humble and devout person. Besides, his faith is firm. He helps us to learn about life, which is dedicated to God (c.f. Romans 12: 1-2). He loyally carried out His will, not by his words but by his humble deeds. How can we, as the sisters of DMJ/PMY, try to live and to be like St. Joseph?

I hope that this book will inspire us how to live as faithful as St. Joseph. May he become an important source of inspiration for us, as we are under his name, and may this spiritual heritage



of Fr. Heeren be last forever. Let us try to find God's will and to devote our life by walking together with St. Joseph.

Wonosobo, on Palm Sunday
March 25, 2018

Sr. V. Wahyu Triningsih PMY
The Regional Superior of the Congregation Sisters of
Charity Daughters of Mary and Joseph



Contents



Foreword	3
Preface	5
Contents	9
Introduction	11
In the Historical Records	11
Why had St. Joseph remained invisible for centuries?	16
St. Joseph as the Spiritual Father to the Congregation	28
Pope Francis on St. Joseph	34
Prayer to St. Joseph	37
Bibliography	41





Introduction

We, the Sisters of Charity Daughters of Mary and Joseph (or well-known as *de Zusters van de Choorstraat* or *suster-suster PMY* – in Indonesia) honour the Blessed Virgin and Holy Joseph as our spiritual parents. We also devote St. Vincent de Paul and St. John the Evangelist as the patrons of the Congregation. Hence, the Congregation commemorates four feast days per year: on 7 July, the feast of Our Lady of 's-Hertogenbosch, at the same time the foundation day of the Congregation; on 19 March, the feast of St. Joseph; on 27 September, the feast of St. Vincent de Paul; and on 27 December, the feast of St. John the Evangelist.¹ In this book, therefore, I will display one of the mentioned above, namely St. Joseph.

In the Historical Records

Since 22 September to 26 September 1817, Heeren and Anna Catharina van Hees had

¹ The Constitution of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity Daughters of Mary and Joseph, number 44 and 45.



started four days devotions on prayer in honour to St. Mary for the erection of the Congregation. Some ladies such as Catharina van Grinsven, Magdalena Coppens and Anne-Marie Suys were also joined in the prayer. On 23 September, they (except Heeren) went to Oirschot, in order to pray to the Our Lady of the Sacred Oak (*Onze Lieve Vrouw van de Heilige Eik*). By the night, between 23 and 24 September, Anna Catharina van Hees had dreamed a dream. In her dream she saw Mary, Josef and Vincent de Paul appeared to her. This was the first time for Anna Catharina van Hees to see Joseph in her dream.²

On 21 October 1817, Heeren and Anna Catharina van Hees had again started seven days devotions on prayer, but they did not pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary but they honoured their prayers to St. Joseph. They prayed to beg the blessings from heaven for and about the work of charity. At the end of the devotions, on 27 October, Anna Catharina van Hees benefited other preliminary positive signs due to establishment and progress of the work they would come in: *“The work will be beneficially far*

² AZCH, doos CA1. 24: Handgeschreven dagboek van Pastoor Heeren, September 1814 – Januari 1820. Also from Charles Caspers, *Zacht, doch Krachtdadig: Anna Catharina van Hees en de Oorsprong van de Congregatie Dochters van Maria en Joseph* (Baarn: Adveniat, 2015), 171 - 172.



promoted; I will protect and the enemies will not be able to stop it.”³

From the records above, we must bear this in mind that Heeren, Anna Catharina van Hees and the earliest sisters of the congregation were filling up their religious life with devotions, not only to the Blessed Virgin Mary but also to her spouse, St. Joseph. Yet, during the 19th century the religious life was coloured by devotions and the monastic life was extremely ascetic.⁴ Heeren used to encouraged the sisters to venerate the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph who both of them are the spiritual parents of the congregation. On his letter which was written on 1 April 1826, was addressed to Zr. Catharina van Grinsven and the sisters, we can clearly see that he recommended St. Joseph to be as a special patron beside the Blessed Virgin. Besides he mentioned St. Teresa of Avilla and St. Frances de Sales as well on his letter. He recommended St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis de Sales’ thoughts about St. Joseph to the sisters.⁵

³ Ibid., page 11.

“Het werk zal op gunstige wijze bevorderd worden; ik zal het beschermen en geen vijanden zullen het kunnen verhinderen.”

⁴ Charles Caspers and Kees Waaijman, *Akar, Ranting, dan Buahdari Pohon Kehidupan*, trans. Jo Gunadi, Sr. Ancilla Loe, Pater Roland Tilthaut OFM. Cap, Pater N. Halsema SJ and Fr. André de Veer CMM (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2013), 82.

⁵ *AZCh*, map 7.9: de brief van Fr. Heeren aan mejuffouw C. van Grinsven – Oirschot, 1 April 1826.



“You have to low your tide this week, especially on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The Holy Joseph must be as a special patron beside Maria on Thursday. You always have to celebrate the continuation of the Holy Day as special ceremony, now and in the future. You are not allowed to go outside of your home – you only dress up in your daily clothing: dependent upon my coming over, we would also like to celebrate 6 May, 7 July and 19 July. Please read the remarks of St. Joseph in my French book of St. Francis de Sales from Tuesday afternoon until Thursday – and other comments in other books, especially in Crasset.

If we wholeheartedly surrender to Saint Joseph and we apply our intercession (to him), especially through Saint Teresa, his best friend, we may hope that our sacrifice and request will not be disappointed, and our plea will be heard and granted with all the goodness of his heart.”

“Gijlieden zult deze week Dynsdag, Donderdag en Vrijdag ten hoogtijd gaan. Donderdag zult Gij den H. Jozeph als zijnde Uliedenbijzonderen patroon naast Maria nu en altijd voor 't vervolg met bijzondere plechtigheid vieren en dien dag nu en in het vervolg altijd Heilig-dag houden – zonder dag tog buiten Uw huis te verspreiden – kleet U ook slechts in uw dagelijksch gewaad: bij mijne overkomst zullen wij ook iets dergelijks voor 6 Mey, 7 Juli en 19 Juli bepalen. Leest van Dynsdagsmiddags tor Donderdags de bemerkingen over den H. Joseph in mijn Fransch boek van Franciscus de Sales – ook andere bemerkingen in andere boeken, bijzonder in Crasset.

Indien wij ons met vertrouwen tot de H. Jozef zullen begeven en daarbij bijzonder de voorspraak van de H. Theresia, zijn grote vriendin verzoeken, zullen wij mogen hopen, dat onze opoffering en aanbeveling van onszelve hem niet zal mishagen, maar dat wij met de grootste goedgunstigheid verhoort en aangenomen zullen worden.”



In addition, in the *Bijzondere Regelen Der Zusters van Liefde* which was issued in 1852, Heeren states:⁶

“... Because of the name of Daughters of Mary and Joseph, all the members of this assembly recognise and choose the Blessed Virgin Mary – who is the leading Mother of the Holy Church – as their mother and the supreme Protector, and Saint Joseph – the foster father of Jesus and the fiancée of Mary – as their first and special protector beside Mary. In imitating Jesus Christ, the sisters have to greatly respect and (show their) love for Mary and Joseph as their spiritual parents, and (they have to) respect them in the same way.”

Heeren again took St. Joseph into account in the remarks which was published in the last year of his life (1859).⁷

⁶ *Bijzondere Regelen Der Zusters van Liefde*, Gevestig te 's-Hertogenbosch, Onder de Benaming van Dochters van de H.H. Maria en Joseph, St. Michiels-Gestel 1852, p. 21, no. 3.

“Om de benaming van Dochters van Maria en Joseph, erkennen en verkiezen al de Leden van deze Vergadering de H. Maagd Maria, die de Moeder van het Hoofd der H. Kerk, van Christus is, ook als hare Moeder en opperste beschermster, en den H. Joseph, den voedstervader van Jezus en de Bruidegom van Maria, als haren eersten en bijzonderen Beschermheilige naast Maria: terwijl zij tevens, in navolging van Christus, zich met kindelijken eerbied en liefde onder de zorg en leiding van de H. Maria en Joseph, als hare geestelijke Ouders, stellen, en als dusdanig dezelve zullen vereeren.”

⁷ J. A. Heeren, *Zedelijke bemerkings over verschillende feestdagen door het jaar*, St. Michielgestel 1859, 83 – 99.

“Het is de H. Joseph, beminde dochters, dien gij benevens andere heiligen tot uwen voornamen patroon verkozen hebt; doch, hij is ook, die van God, boven andere heiligen, naast Maria, de meeste gunsten, voorrechten, gaven en liefde heeft genoten; en die bijgevolg, naast Maria, ook de



“It is St. Joseph, (my) beloved daughters, he has been chosen, beside St. Mary, to be the patron above other saints; but, he is also, of God, as the most favoured, privileged, gifted and beloved (saint) over other saints; and consequently, it is worthy for you to love and respect him as the most honoured (saint) beside St. Mary.”

Why had St. Joseph remained invisible for centuries?

From what we have already seen, we can see that Fr. Heeren’s great tribute for St. Joseph was amazing, since at that time, St. Joseph was still not so famously recognized. St. Joseph had remained invisible for centuries. It was because of two reasons. Firstly, the Bible says so little about him. The gospels mention him by name (the name “Joseph” means “God adds” or “God gathers”) only 15 times: He appears briefly in connection with the early life of Jesus, then simply disappears. In addition, the Evangelists did not record a single word spoken by St.

meeste eer en achting, de meeste liefde en het vertrouwen bij u en van u waardig is.”



Joseph, and without a traditional burial place, he did not even leave bodily relics.⁸

We can see on St. Mark's gospel, it gives many details on the Jesus's life, but the name of St. Joseph does not appear on it. One might assume that other evangelists do not give him any importance either, but this is not the case. While the few passages about Joseph in St. Luke's gospel and St. Matthew's gospel are, on the contrary, of extreme importance.⁹ As for John, he devotes a significant verse to the discovery of the Messiah in chapter 1 of his gospel: "We have found him," says Philip triumphantly to Nathanael, speaking of the One foretold by Moses and the prophets, "[he is] Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth" (John 1: 45). Reflecting the fact that Nazareth does not feature in the Scripture in connection to the Messiah, but this fact wants to reflect that Jesus is the incarnation of the Logos. Obviously, John introduces Jesus in his narrative as someone in full solidarity with normal human fleshly existence; Jesus has a father (John 1: 45) and a mother (John 2: 1, 3).¹⁰

⁸ Sandra Misel, *Finding St. Joseph*, Catholic Culture.Org., accessed on 31 August 2016, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=4464>.

⁹ Andrew Doze, *Discovering St. Joseph* (Middlegreen, Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 21.

¹⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Born of A Virgin?: Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition and Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 25.

Everything happens as if the eternal Father had wanted Joseph to play his role completely but not visibly.¹¹ He is the son of David with whom Jesus will legitimately bear his illustrious title designating him as the Messiah (see Matthew 1: 16). Geoffrey Parrinder claims that the first section, of the first chapter, of the first Gospel, Matthew 1: 1-17 is a genealogy, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. This family tree, traces the ancestry of Jesus from the King David and the patriarch Abraham, down to Joseph as his reputed father. It states that there were fourteen plus fourteen plus fourteen generations: 'Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat Judah and his brothers,' and so forth. These would add up to forty two generations in all, symbolically multiple of the sacred number seven.¹² He became the husband of the Blessed Immaculate and nothing is more striking than this evident fact which generally goes unnoticed.

The annunciation is related by St. Luke in such a way that his name appears before that of Mary, "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. "The

¹¹ Andrew Doze, *Discovering St. Joseph*, 21.

¹² Geoffrey Parrinder, *Son of Joseph: the Parentage of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 1.



virgin's name was Mary." Whether Luke's earlier narrative of the annunciation to Mary clearly indicates belief in the virginal conception or not, but that belief is stated plainly in the Matthew, after the genealogical table. Luke may have had Matthew's Gospel before him, or the belief may have been in circulation elsewhere.¹³

Joseph, as it is written in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, presents himself everywhere in the Infancy Narratives of the Gospels. He was active, vigilant, importantly presence through the ministry of the angel of the Lord. He put in charge of specific tasks: he had to go to Bethlehem, to his native city so Mary could give birth to the Child and he had to circumcise the Child 'Jesus.' This is the only name in which there is salvation (cf. Acts 4:12), and its significance had been revealed to Joseph at the moment of his "annunciation": "You shall call the child Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (cf. Mt 1:21).¹⁴ Another task was when the king Herod threatened the Child, Joseph who had been warned by the angel of the Lord in his

¹³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos* [Apostolic Exhortations on the Person and Mission of St. Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church], Vatican Websites, 1989, accessed on 31 August 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_15081989_redemptoris-custos.html.



dream, had suddenly to get up, took the Child and Mary to the night and they went to Egypt.

Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortations convinces that together with Mary, Joseph is the first guardian of Jesus. Together with Mary, and in relation to Mary, he shares in this final phase of God's self-revelation in Christ and he does so from the very beginning. Looking at the gospel texts of both Matthew and Luke, one can also say that Joseph is the first to share in the faith of the Mother of God and that in doing so he supports his spouse in the faith of the divine annunciation. He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary's "pilgrimage of faith." It is a path along which - especially at the time of Calvary and Pentecost - Mary will precede in a perfect way.¹⁵

When his son reached the age of thirty, St. Joseph was discreetly withdrew from the context of the gospel. This is the age when Joseph of ancient times takes his leave from the Pharaoh to begin his brilliant career as prime minister (cf. Genesis 41: 46), and when David becomes king (cf. 2 Sam 5: 4). The reason of this silent disappearance, later imitated by Mary, is

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *RedemptorisCustos*.



because Jesus will speak of the eternal Father as the centre of His whole mission.¹⁶

Secondly, in the Church history, St. Joseph was started to make as a popular saint around the middle ages. Up to that point, Joseph was almost universally under wraps. For this issue, it cannot be denied that the Christians (especially in the West)¹⁷ of the first ages did not display the same ardour in rendering public honour to St. Joseph as they did to many other saints. The Church from the beginning greatly venerated St. Peter and St. Paul, and the glorious Precursor, St. John the Baptist; or to St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, and to the other heroes who shed their blood for Christ. However, they seemed to pass over St. Joseph in comparative silence.¹⁸ It was the Carmelites, then, were the first to honour

¹⁶ Andrew Doze, *Discovering St. Joseph*, 23.

¹⁷ In the book *The Life and Glories of Saint Joseph*, Antonio Vitali and Fr. José Moreno state that in the East, they meet the proofs that the devotion to St. Joseph was cherished from the earliest, that is, from the Apostolic times, and many traditions of him were current in these regions. Papebrock, one of the continuator of the Bollandists, says that St. Joseph was honoured among the Copts, or Egyptians, and his feast kept in the primitive ages of Christianity, even before the time of St. Athanasius, that is, in the beginning of the fourth century. Trombelli, who followed Papebrock, concluded that, from the traditional recollection of the Saint's sojourn in those countries, St. Joseph had been venerated there long before St. Athanasius sent missionaries to instruct the inhabitants in the rite and disciples of the Church of Alexandria.

See Antonio Vitali, and Fr. José Moreno, *The Life and Glories of Saint Joseph: Husband of Mary, Foster-Father of Jesus, and Patron of the Universal Church*, edited by Edward Healy Thompson, M.A., (Charlotte, North Carolina: 2011), 423 - 424.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.



St. Joseph by a special office in Europe. They imported from the East (Syria) to the West. Nevertheless, the devotion had fallen into disuse and been forgotten. It was in after centuries, this devotion to this great saint would be largely increased by the reformer, St. Teresa of Avilla.

It was St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in the first half of the twelfth century, who was a devoted lover of Mary, while he had meditated on the annunciation, he catch sight of Joseph, and through his own experiences, he identified the reasons why Joseph wanted to dismiss his pregnant wife.¹⁹ Joseph retentive himself to be unworthy and sinful to share his intimacy with Mary. He could see with awesome fear that she was bearing the very certain sign of the divine presence; and since he was not able to penetrate the meaning of this mystery he wanted to leave her in a hidden way.²⁰ St. Bernard understands that St. Joseph was God's steward, by the very fact, eminently transcends the Ancient Joseph in the past, who saved the people of God in Egypt. Since the ancient Joseph became the victim of his brethren's envy and was led as a slave into Egypt, so St. Joseph. Through Herod's envy, he was forced to exile to Egypt, flying thither with

¹⁹ Andrew Doze, *Discovering St. Joseph*, 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*



his greatest treasure, Jesus, and with his most holy Spouse. As the former Joseph found grace with Potiphar (or Potifar), the chief captain of Pharaoh's army, even he was being made steward of Potiphar's household and set as the governor over his whole family to order all things at his pleasure, the latter Joseph found his grace by protecting of the Holy family.²¹ The ancient Joseph gave a signal proof of heroic chastity in the house of Potiphar, the second Joseph gave a far more sublime example of all virgins. While the first Joseph receives from God the intelligence in interpreting dreams, to the second Joseph, God gives him both the knowledge and the participation of heavenly mysteries. The former passed from the vagueness of a prison to the splendours of a court; the latter passed from the sorrows of exile to the celestial mansions, with the truly regal dignity of reputed father of the Kings of kings, spouse of the Queen of Heaven, and the most powerful patron of the Universal Church.²²

A couple centuries later, St. Frances of Assisi, whose passionate soul wanted to follow Jesus in every one of his footsteps, instinctively rediscovered Joseph's role when he wanted to

²¹ Antonio Vitali, and Fr. José Moreno, *The Life and Glories of Saint Joseph*, 17.

²² *Ibid.*, 18.



relive the radiant poverty of the Nativity during the night at Greccio on Christmas 1223. After St. Frances of Assisi, two other Franciscans: St. Bonaventura and St. Antony of Padua, showed their devotions to St. Joseph. The first liturgical offices in honour of St. Joseph was then appeared among the Franciscans. A Franciscan pope, Sixtus IV, took a further step and he introduced Joseph into the breviary and set his first liturgical feast in the Church by the Act of 19 November 1480.

By the 16th century, the tribute to St. Joseph was far promoted by St. Teresa of Avilla. Teresa was born on 28 March 1515, in Avila, Spain. St. Teresa was the daughter of a Toledo merchant and his second wife, who died when Teresa was 15. Shortly after this event, Teresa was entrusted to the care of the Augustinian nuns. In 1535, she joined the Carmelite Order. Teresa had from her youth up conceived a tender devotion to St. Joseph. Moreover, Teresa considered St. Joseph as her special patron and protector, and master in prayer: "If anyone cannot find a master to teach him to pray, let him take this glorious saint as his master, and he will not go astray."²³ Teresa had clearly understood a truth that the Church endlessly keeps on learning: Joseph was the way

²³ Andrew Doze, 35.



to the Father, mysteriously established by God, for Mary and Jesus.

After a long spiritual journey, it was to St. Joseph that she entrust a new convent, the convent of St. Joseph of Avila, the first Carmel monastery of the Reform. Her devotion to St. Joseph then spread to others and to other orders within Spain and throughout the Spanish empire afterwards. The first foundation of St. Teresa's nuns in France (1604) planted her spirituality into the French "Century of Saints." In particular, her love of St. Joseph took root in St. Francis de Sales.²⁴

St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622) was a bishop of Geneva. He became the bishop of Geneva during the turbulent years of John Calvin's establishment there of the Reformed Church. Because of this reason, therefore his office had to be places outside Geneva, across the French border at Annecy. His personality and demeanour were warm, courteous, and diplomatic, making him the ideal bishop in the volatile region.²⁵ Along with St. Jane de Chantal, he built Joseph-based piety into the Order of the Visitation. The Order was directed to say a daily chaplet, litany, and meditative prayers to St.

²⁴ Sandra Misel, *Finding St. Joseph*.

²⁵ Bernard Bangley, Introduction to *Treatise on the Love of God*, by St. Frances de Sales (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2011), xii.

Joseph. St. Francis himself preached eloquently to them about his favourite saint. He was also the liveliest advocate of a special resurrection and assumption for St. Joseph, following that of Christ.

At the very start of his *Treatise on the Love of God*, in the Dedicatory Prayer, Francis addresses himself to Mary and Joseph, praying:²⁶

“Most holy Mother of God, vessel of incomparable election, Queen of sovereign dilection, thou art the most lovely, the most loving and beloved of all creatures!...

O great St. Joseph! Most beloved spouse of the well-beloved Mother, ah! How often hast thou borne in thy arms the love of heaven and earth, while, inflamed with the sweet embraces and kisses of this Divine child,...

O Mary and Joseph, Pair without peer! Sacred lilies of incomparable beauty, amongst which the well-beloved feeds himself and feeds all his lovers ...”

He presented the saint as “the glorious father of our life and our love,” a tremendous intercessor and patron of parents, workers, and the dying. From this point, holy Joseph is considered by all Catholics as the tutelary saint

²⁶ St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God* (1884), translated by Dom Henry Benedict Mackey, O.S.B. (North Carolina: TAN Books, 2012), I.



of the dying, and is constantly invoked to obtain for them a happy death.²⁷

Following to St. Frances de Sales steps were St. Leonard of Porto-Maurizio and St. Alphonsus Maria de'Liguori. It was Pius IX who begun to promote St. Joseph officially. At the beginning of his pontificate, he set the feast and Mass for the patronage of St. Joseph as the third Sunday after Easter. Already by 1854, in a vibrant and devout speech, he pointed to St. Joseph as the safest hope of the Church, after the Blessed Virgin, and on 8 December 1870 (it means 50 years after the erection of the Congregation *Zusters van de Choorstraat*), in his decree *Quemadmodum Deus*, at the Vatican, interrupted by political events, he took the happy coincidence of the feast of the Immaculate Conception to solemnly and formally name St. Joseph as "Patron of the Universal Church" and to raise St. Joseph's feast on 19 March to the status of a double first class.²⁸ The first fruits of such a fervour were not slow in coming. One stuck by the fact that all sorts of Fraternities, confraternities, congregations devotions, provincial councils came into

²⁷ Antonio Vitali, and Fr. José Moreno, *The Life and Glories of Saint Joseph*, 383.

²⁸ Pope John XIII, *Le vociche da tutti* [Apostolic Letter for the Protection of St Joseph on the Second Vatican Council], Papal Encyclical Online, accessed on 21 August 2016, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/John23/j23levoci.htm>.



existence during the nineteenth century, all of them dedicated to St. Joseph.²⁹

St. Joseph as the Spiritual Father to the Congregation

God never caused the virtues and singular merit of Joseph to shine with greater splendour than when He said to him by the mouth of the angel, "Get up, take the Child and His mother," (Mat 2: 13, 20); for in them He committed to him His most precious treasures, giving him thus the preference over all the blessed spirits of Heaven; and Joseph received these two sacred persons into his care, to be their protector, their guardian, and defender. If, God made Joseph as the protector of Jesus and Mary, we may then have to believe in Him that He also made Joseph, at the same time, as the protector and patron of all men. As when Jesus Christ was hanging on the Cross, he said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son" (John 19: 26), we believe that we were all entrusted to His Mother in the person of the beloved disciple.

²⁹ Andrew Dove, *Discovering Saint Joseph*, 39.



Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church's Liturgy teaches, he "cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation" and is truly a "minister of salvation." His fatherhood is expressed concretely "in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it; in having used the legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, of his life and work; in having turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house."³⁰

What does it mean for the sisters which bear the name 'Daughters of Mary and Joseph'? On his comments over St. Joseph, Heeren wished to place his congregation under the powerful patronage of the holy patriarch Joseph, declared him as the patron of congregation beside the Blessed Virgin. For Heeren, this was no idle gesture, since by virtue of the sublime dignity which God has granted him as the most faithful servant. Joseph was chosen by God to be Jesus

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*.



and Mary' protector. Joseph has always held his son and the Blessed Virgin in great honour and showered them with praise, having recourse to them amid tribulations.³¹

What are the reasons for such great confidence? Heeren explained it in this way:³²

"... It has given me, as much as I do, that the assembly seem have to venerate St. Joseph, now and forever. He must be considered as the special patron of the Congregation,... and the Congregation in turn draws exceeding hope from his care and patronage, chiefly arise from his having been the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus, and thereby, beside Maria and in union with Jesus, it is best for you to honour and to love him.

... Daughters, for the latter, I must remark in particular, that because Joseph has been chosen as a patron and spiritual father (for our congregation), for this reason, he must been received most respect and love. The more you pray through him, the more you get answers;... honour and trust him with a sincere filial love, and imitate his virtues..."

³¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries* [Encyclical on Devotion to St. Joseph], Papal Encyclical Online, Accessed on 21 August 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15081889_quamquam-pluries.html.

³² J. A. Heeren, *Zedelijke bemerkingen over verschillende feestdagen door het jaar*, 83 – 99.



This patronage must be invoked as ever necessary for the sisters of the congregation, not only as a defence against all dangers, but also, and indeed primarily, as an impetus for the sisters renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and to re-evangelization in those lands and nations, where, as it is written in the Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, "religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and ... are now put to a hard test."³³ In order to bring the first proclamation of Christ, or to bring it anew wherever it has been neglected or forgotten, the sisters have need of special power from on high (cf. Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8): a gift of the Spirit of the Lord, a gift which is not unrelated to the intercession and example of his saints. Besides unquestioning in Joseph's sure protection, the sisters have to trust in his noble example, which transcends all individual states of life and serves as a model for the entire community, whatever the condition and duties of each of its members may be.

As the Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council has said, the basic

³³ Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World], Papal Encyclical Online, accessed on 21 August 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html.

attitude of the entire Church must be that of “hearing the word of God with reverence,”³⁴ an absolute readiness to serve faithfully God’s salvific will revealed in Jesus. Already at the beginning of human redemption, after Mary, the sisters find the model of obedience made incarnate in St. Joseph, the man known for having faithfully carried out God’s commands.

As Pope Paul VI invited us to invoke Joseph’s patronage “as the Church has been accustomed to do in these recent times, for herself in the first place, with a spontaneous theological reflection on the marriage of divine and human action in the great economy of the Redemption, in which economy the first—the divine one—is wholly sufficient unto itself, while the second—the human action which is ours—though capable of nothing (cf. John 15: 5), is never dispensed from a humble but conditional and ennobling collaboration.”³⁵ St. Joseph has been called by Heeren as the protector for the congregation because of a profound and ever present desire to reinvigorate this sisters’ life with true evangelical virtues, such as shine forth in St. Joseph.

³⁴ Second Vatican Council, “*Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (hereafter DG)”, Papal Encyclical Online, accessed on 21 August 2016, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

³⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*.



Therefore, the sisters have to transform these needs into prayer. Recalling that God wished to entrust the beginnings of our redemption to the faithful care of St. Joseph. The sisters, as Heeren had expected, have to humbly ask God to grant that the sisters can faithfully cooperate in the work of salvation; that the sisters may receive the same faithfulness and purity of heart that inspired Joseph in serving the Incarnate World; and that the sisters may walk before God in the ways of holiness and justice, following St. Joseph's example and through his intercession.



Pope Francis on St. Joseph

Pope Francis has great love to St. Joseph. Five years ago, on the Solemnity of St Joseph, Pope Francis celebrated the Mass inaugurating his Petrine ministry. He chose 19 March precisely as he has always seen in St Joseph the strength and the wisdom of God.

Pope Francis in his own words on St Joseph:³⁶

- **19 March 2013: Homily during the Mass inaugurating his Petrine ministry**

Joseph is a “protector” because he is able to hear God’s voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God’s call, readily and willingly.

Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, Saint

³⁶ No-name, “Pope Francis: I love St. Joseph very much because he is a strong and silent man”, Vatican News, accessed on 19 March 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-03/pope-francis-st-joseph-5-anniversary-pontificate.html#play>.



Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

- **16 January 2015: Discourse to families in Manila**

I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church! Yes! We know that he can do that. So when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: pray for this problem!

Next, rising with Jesus and Mary. Those precious moments of repose, of resting with the Lord in prayer, are moments we might wish to prolong. But like Saint Joseph, once we have heard God's voice, we must rise from our slumber; we must get up and act (cf. Rom 13: 11). In our families, we have to get



up and act! Faith does not remove us from the world, but draws us more deeply into it.

Just as the gift of the Holy Family was entrusted to Saint Joseph, so the gift of the family and its place in God's plan is entrusted to us. Like Saint Joseph. The gift of the Holy Family was entrusted to Saint Joseph so that he could care for it. Each of you, each of us – for I too am part of a family – is charged with caring for God's plan. The angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph the dangers which threatened Jesus and Mary, forcing them to flee to Egypt and then to settle in Nazareth. So too, in our time, God calls upon us to recognize the dangers threatening our own families and to protect them from harm.

- **20 March 2017: Morning homily, Casa Santa Marta**

“Today I would like to ask that St Joseph grant all of us the ability to dream because when we dream great things, good things, we draw near to God's dream, what God dreams about us. That he might give to those who are young people – because he was young – the ability to dream, to take risks and to take on the difficult tasks seen in their dreams. And that he might give to all the



fidelity that generally matures in upright behaviour, since he was just, which grows in silence—in few words--and grows in that tenderness which is capable of safeguarding one's own weaknesses and those of others".



Prayer to St. Joseph

Ever blessed and glorious Joseph, kind and loving father, and helpful friend of all in sorrow! You are the good father and protector of orphans, the defender of the defenceless, the patron of those in need and sorrow.

Look kindly on my request. My sins have drawn down on me the just displeasure of my God, and so I am surrounded with unhappiness. To you, loving guardian of the Family of Nazareth, do I go for help and protection. Listen, then, I beg you, with fatherly concern, to my earnest prayers, and obtain for me the favours I ask.

I ask it by the infinite mercy of the eternal Son of God, which moved Him to take our nature and to be born into this world of sorrow.

I ask it by the weariness and suffering you endured when you found no shelter at the inn of Bethlehem for the Holy Virgin, nor a house where the Son of God could be born. Then, being everywhere refused, you had to allow the Queen of Heaven to give birth to the world's Redeemer in a cave.

I ask it by the loveliness and power of that sacred Name, Jesus, which you conferred on the adorable Infant.



I ask it by the painful torture you felt at the prophecy of holy Simeon, which declared the Child Jesus and His holy Mother future victims of our sins and of their great love for us.

I ask it through your sorrow and pain of soul when the angel declared to you that the life of the Child Jesus was sought by His enemies. From their evil plan, you had to flee with Him and His Blessed Mother to Egypt.

I ask it by all the suffering, weariness, and labours of that long and dangerous journey.

I ask it by all your care to protect the Sacred Child and His Immaculate Mother during your second journey, when you were ordered to return to your own country.

I ask it by your peaceful life in Nazareth where you met with so many joys and sorrows. I ask it by your great distress when the adorable Child was lost to you and His mother for three days.

I ask it by your joy at finding Him in the temple, and by the comfort you found at Nazareth, while living in the company of the Child Jesus.

I ask it by the wonderful submission He showed in His obedience to you.

I ask it by the perfect love and conformity you showed in accepting the Divine order to depart from this life, and from the company of Jesus and Mary.



I ask it by the joy which filled your soul, when the Redeemer of the world, triumphant over death and hell, entered into the possession of His kingdom and led you into it with special honours.

I ask it through Mary's glorious Assumption, and through that endless happiness you have with her in the presence of God. O good father! I beg you, by all your sufferings, sorrows, and joys, to hear me and obtain for me what I ask. Obtain for all those who have asked my prayers everything that is useful to them in the plan of God. Finally, my dear patron and father, be with me and all who are dear to me in our last moments, that we may eternally sing the praises of: JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH. "A blameless life, St. Joseph, may we lead, by your kind patronage from danger freed."

Amen.

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