

Life Sunday Material

For the protection of human life

"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10.10)

We hear not a word from the lips of St Joseph in the Gospels and yet his sanctity shines through his silence. His total fidelity to God can be seen in his actions as he accompanies the Blessed Virgin Mary to Bethlehem and becomes the first man to see the Christ-child; as he leads his family to safety into exile and ultimately brings them home to Nazareth; as he searches with Mary for his young charge and finds him in the temple after which, Scripture tells us, Jesus lived under his parent's authority.

It is because of the grace given him by God as a member of the Holy Family and the virtues that he exercised that St Joseph holds an understandably high place in the affections of the faithful. The Sacred Liturgy praises St Joseph in thanksgiving to the heavenly Father as "that just man, that wise and loyal servant, whom you placed at the head of your family. With a husband's love he cherished Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. With fatherly care he watched over Jesus Christ your Son, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit". Pope Paul VI once said, "St



Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies ... he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need for great things — it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic" (19 March 1969).

St. John Henry Newman's devotion to St Joseph encapsulates the thoughts and words of many when he wrote, "He was the true and worthy Spouse of Mary, supplying in a visible manner the place of Mary's Invisible Spouse, the Holy Ghost.... He was the Cherub, placed to guard the new terrestrial Paradise from the intrusion of every foe.... He is Holy Joseph, because his office, of being spouse and protector of Mary, specially demanded sanctity. He is Holy Joseph, because no other Saint but he lived in such and so long intimacy and familiarity with the source of all holiness, Jesus, God Incarnate, and Mary, the holiest of creatures".

St Bernardine of Siena reflected that St Joseph "is verily the key which unlocked the treasures of the Church of the Old Testament, for in his person all the excellence of Patriarchs and Prophets comes to the completion of achievement, seeing that he alone enjoyed in this life the full fruition of what God had been pleased to promise aforesaid to them. It is therefore with good reason that we see a type of him in that Patriarch Joseph who stored up corn for the people. But the second Joseph has a more excellent dignity than the first, seeing that the first gave to the Egyptians bread only for the body, but the second was, on behalf of all the elect, the watchful guardian of that Living Bread which came down from Heaven, of which whosoever eats will never die" (Sermon on St Joseph).

In our own day, Pope Benedict XVI has reflected a number of times on the virtues of the very saint's name given to him at Baptism — Joseph. He gave the following message on 18 December 2005, highlighting the silence of St. Joseph:

"St Joseph's silence does not express an inner emptiness but, on the contrary, the fullness of the faith he bears in his heart and which guides his every thought and action. It is a silence thanks to which Joseph, in unison with Mary, watches over the Word of God, known through the Sacred Scriptures, continuously comparing it with the events of the life of Jesus; a silence woven of constant prayer, a prayer of blessing of the Lord, of the adoration of his holy will and of unreserved entrustment to his providence...

It is no exaggeration to think that it was precisely from his 'father' Joseph that Jesus learned — at the human level — that steadfast interiority which is a presupposition of authentic justice, the 'superior justice' which he was one day to teach his disciples (cf. Mt 5: 20). Let us allow ourselves to be 'filled' with St Joseph's silence! In a world that is often too noisy, that encourages neither recollection nor listening to God's voice, we are in such deep need of it".

At the same time, we are called to support everyone who are suffering silently. In his Circular on Life Sunday, our Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath exhorts us to stand for them:

"There are so many hidden lives around us; which includes every unborn, elderly, or dying person. Pope Francis says "Saint Joseph is invoked as protector of the unfortunate, the needy, exiles, the afflicted, the poor and the dying. Consequently, the Church cannot fail to show a special love for the least of our brothers and sisters, for Jesus showed a particular concern for them and personally identified with them." So, I urge you to love, respect, protect and serve every human life- from conception to natural death and do not neglect to take care of the weak and elderly in our homes and in the community. Let's follow the exemplary life of St. Joseph and ask his intercession for obtaining the grace and courage to stand for life."

Discussion Questions

1. "Man must make a choice: God or nothing, silence or noise" - Cardinal Sarah in the book "The Power of Silence". Discuss on this theme in the group.
2. 'Action speaks louder than words': How did St. Joseph silently followed God's will and became the protector of the Holy Family?
3. How can we respond to the Church's call to love, respect, protect and serve the hidden lives around us?

St. Joseph, the protector of Life by Fr. Angelo Anthony,

<https://youtu.be/TLznAeG7bqk>

St Joseph the silent: by Scott Hahn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0tZNz8xJq8>

Entering Silence with St. Joseph by Fr. Mike Ackerman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4oVRBQCrxI>



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