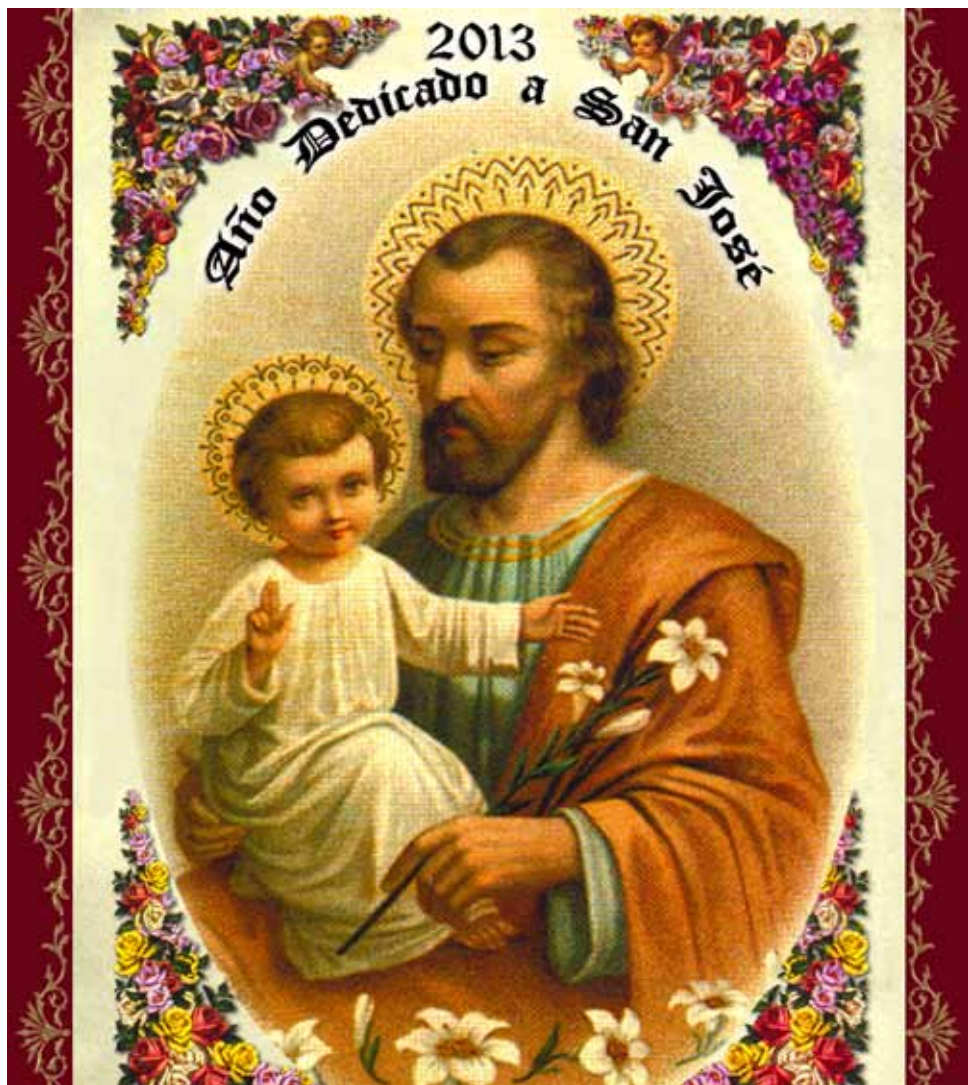




**BULLETIN OF THE ORDER OF THE FRANCISCAN MINIMS
OF THE PERPETUAL HELP OF MARY
MARCH- APRIL 2013**



St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church



In the second year of his pontificate, His Holiness Pius IX extended to the Universal Church, by spe-

cial indult of the Holy See, the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, already celebrated in certain places.

Then, in answer to innumerable petitions which came to him from all over the world, on December 8, 1870, exactly twelve years after the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate

Conception of Mary, he solemnly declared St. Joseph to be the Patron of the Universal Church. The decree reads:

“As God established the Patriarch Joseph, son of Jacob, as governor over all Egypt to guarantee wheat to preserve the lives of the people, so at the time appointed for the redemption of the world, He chose another Joseph of whom the former was a figure. He named him prince and lord over His house and His possessions and to him entrusted His most precious treasures.”





La Pasión de San José

When we meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord, it is essential to keep in mind that His physical Passion did not begin at the Last Supper or in the Garden of Olives, but from the moment of His Incarnation in the virginal womb of most Holy Mary. After Our Lady, no one was more intimately united to the sufferings of Our Savior than St. Joseph.

With good reason the feast of this glorious Saint always falls in the heart of Lent. The passion of St. Joseph includes a long and painful chain of events, so ignored by the majority of Catholics, as he is considered the most silent and hidden of saints. And even though it was not the will of God that he witness the bloody sacrifice of the Divine Victim on Calvary, as soon as the mystery of the Incarnation took place, the passion of St. Joseph began...

The Incarnation and St. Joseph's Trial

Once the nuptials of Our Lady and St. Joseph had taken place, they established themselves in Nazareth where the Blessed Virgin owned a

small house, inherited from her parents. Immediately after their marriage they divided what they possessed into three portions, one of which they gave to the Temple, one to the poor and the third remained in the hands of St. Joseph for his administration. In his humility, he esteemed himself all unworthy of the Treasure which had been committed to his charge; and so great was his veneration for Mary that he would have desired to take the place of her servant, seeking only to know and obey her will in everything.

The Lord prepared both of these holy spouses a high destiny, a grace and a dignity never granted to any creature, earthly or heavenly. According to the Doctors of the Church, it was the year 4000 of the creation of the world on March 25th when God sent the Archangel Gabriel to announce to Our Lady the coming of the Desired of Nations. From the moment that She consented, the work of the Incarnation was accomplished and she conceived the Divine Word by the power of the Holy Ghost. And St. Gabriel, having fulfilled his mission, after making a profound



genuflection, returned to the courts of Heaven.

St. Joseph felt the nearness of God in his holy Spouse and a strange mystery surrounded Her. But one day the fact of Her pregnancy flashed upon him unmistakably. He was well acquainted with the inviolable virginity of Mary. He also knew well her unapproachable sanctity. He knew that she lived an angel's life on earth. What wonder, then, if what he beheld should have suggested to him the thought that possibly she was the destined mother of the Messiah, the Virgin foretold by the prophet Isaias, who was to bring forth the Emmanuel! St. Joseph was deeply versed in the Divine Scriptures and, according to St. Francis de Sales, was wiser than Solomon.

A thought which in other men might have awakened feelings of self-complacency, pride and exultation, in the most humble Joseph caused such confusion, that we may imagine him repeating to himself words such as these: "The Mother of God my spouse! The Son of the Most High born in my house!" No, such an honor was not for him. His place was not there. Could he in the face of the world continue to accept, recognize and treat Mary as his wife, who had conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost? Could he appear to claim as his son the Holy One who was to be born of Her? Joseph could not have repudiated Mary by a private bill of divorce, or any other form, without its becoming known, and therefore without defaming or pub-

licly exposing her, the very thing which, it is said, he was not willing to do.

But how could he forsake a wife so tenderly beloved and in such a condition, leaving her without a companion and without aid amidst all her trials? He thought of the grief which he would cause Her, but the awe and reverence he felt at the presence of the Incarnate God was more powerful in him than the love and tenderness he bore his Spouse.

This separation was a great sacrifice to him, and caused him

unutterable pain, but it seemed to him to be necessary. And St. Bernard says that St. Joseph reasoned thus within himself: "It were better that I should secretly leave Her on account of my unworthiness, and not live any longer in her company." Tomorrow, before the sunrise, Joseph planned on crossing the threshold of his home, to never return...

The Anguish of St. Joseph at Bethlehem

Time flowed on and the nine months of Mary's pregnancy were drawing towards their close. Already her blessed hand had prepared the swaddling bands in which she was to envelop the Infant God-Man; and Joseph had lovingly fashioned the cradle in which He was to rest. But what did Scripture say? "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."



God, Who disposes human events in order to the accomplishment of His high purposes, brought about the fulfillment of His word to the prophet by an edict of the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, that "...the whole world," subject to him, "should be enrolled". Joseph and Mary were of the house and family of David. Bethlehem, consequently, was

or disturb him, but through his solicitude for Mary, and the pain he felt at her having to make this journey of ninety miles in her present state, and in the depth of winter.

There was no delay; they set out at once. A small supply of provisions to meet probable deficiencies on the crowded roads was laid upon the ass that was to carry the Mother of God and the Incarnate God Him-

self. Joseph and Mary, carrying all the riches of Heaven and earth, traveled in the vestment of poverty, and were humble, modest and silent. The five days they are believed to have spent



their city. Therefore, they must go there to be inscribed.

It was just a few days before the time of Mary's divine delivery when Joseph heard the Imperial decree proclaimed with sound of trumpet in Nazareth. It must have deeply concerned him, not for himself, for nothing which only personally affected him could either grieve

on the way to Bethlehem were days of privation, fatigue and discomfort of every kind.

On the evening of the fifth day they drew near to Bethlehem, and the crowd thickened as they approached the town. We can imagine St. Joseph leading the meek ass, and making way with difficulty for the animal and its Divine burden,

no one giving them the slightest heed or scruple to push rudely by; Mary calmly seated with her veil drawn around her. What an entry into His regal city of the inheritor of David's throne, or, rather, of Him who was the sovereign of Heaven and earth! Joseph was solicitous to secure at once accommodation for Mary, were it only a night's shelter, for darkness was closing in. But the guesthouse was full. "There was no room for them in the inn."

They were turned away from the door, and had to seek a lodging elsewhere. Hard, indeed, is it to explain how Joseph in his own native place could find no kind friend and no shelter for Mary, in a condition that called for sympathy and compassion from all. Fatigued and exposed to the chilling December blast, she had to pass from door to door, but far more than the wintry wind, did these cold denials pain her. But at the same time we must turn a look of tender compassion on Joseph, whose soul was filled with such anguish as no words could tell.

At no great distance from the houses, there was a cave or grotto, hewn in the rock on which stood the inhospitable city. It served as an occasional stable, of which travelers availed themselves for their beasts, as well as a place of refuge for shepherds on cold and tempestuous nights. Joseph, who had lived at Bethlehem, must have known its surroundings well and have been

acquainted with the existence of this rough excavation. Therefore he directed his steps, leading the ass that bore the Redeemer of the world and His august Mother. The cave was unoccupied; how poor and uninviting it must have been is proved from this very fact. Bethlehem was full to overflowing, yet no one had stopped to profit by this rude stable. He who came to take the lowest place had reserved it for Himself.

Jesus was born outside of Bethlehem, beyond the walls, even as He willed to suffer outside the gate of Jerusalem. A miserable receptacle was this cave, with the neglected stall and manger of beasts. We may imagine the confusion and sorrow of St. Joseph at having nothing better to offer to his august Spouse and that once born, the Divine Word of God would have to be laid in a manger and shiver with cold on that icy winter night...

The Circumcision

When the eighth day after the birth of Our Divine Savior had come, the time had arrived for His circumcision. It was prescribed by God to be performed on that day. That Jesus was in no way bound by the law of circumcision is evident, inasmuch as that rite was a remedy for sin, and He was essentially Holiness itself, and had come to cancel sin in others. Nevertheless, as



His name. On him we may believe devolved this solemn and painful duty. Jesus was circumcised by Joseph on Mary's knees, no other eyes beholding the first drops of the Precious Blood flow except those of the holy angels, and no other ears save theirs hearing the wail of the Divine Infant. In this act Joseph accomplished three sacrifices in one: the sacrifice of Jesus, who began the great work of our redemption by

He had come, not to destroy but to fulfill the Law, He willed to submit Himself to this painful and humiliating rite in order to give to all a sublime example of obedience, mortification, humility and purity.

The opinion of those Doctors of the Church who believe that the minister of the circumcision of Jesus was Joseph appears to be the most probable. St. Ephrem the Syrian says expressly that it was Joseph who circumcised Jesus, because he who circumcised an infant was the same also who imposed the name; and it was Joseph who gave Jesus

suffering in His innocent members; the sacrifice of Mary, who with indescribable sorrow, but with perfect resignation, offered her Son to the Eternal Father, and held, as it were, the victim bound; and the sacrifice of himself, who had to control his hand to perform an act so painful and repugnant to his tender heart. It was an act of heroic obedience and fortitude on his part, greater, St. Bernard says, than was that of Abraham in sacrificing his son Isaac; for Joseph loved Jesus incomparably more than Abraham did his son Isaac, and well knew

the difference between the son of any mortal man and the Son of the Eternal God. Thus the knife which cut the flesh of Jesus wounded the heart and pierced the soul of Joseph. Here there was no angel to stay his hand. The act must be accomplished, and in performing it Joseph was more than a martyr...

The Sorrowful Prophecy at the Presentation

The morning of the fortieth day after Jesus' birth saw the Holy Family preparing to leave the grotto, which had become a place sacred in their eyes. Mary and Joseph went forth, Mary bearing in her arms her Divine Son, and Joseph leading the ass laden with the few things they carried with them, including the gifts of the Magi for

the Temple. As they cannot have been ignorant that they had become objects of search to the suspicious Herod, there was the more merit in this act of obedience to the Law, as fear might have suggested a speedy return into Galilee.

Among the devout Israelites who were waiting at that time for the Redeemer's advent was a holy old man named Simeon. His longing desire and heart's prayer was that he should behold that day. His prayer had been granted and he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that "he should not see death before he had seen the Christ the Lord".

His parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him according to the custom of the Law. Simeon at once knew Him and took Him into his arms and blessed God.



He then blessed both Mary and Joseph, but to Mary alone did he speak of the sign of contradiction that her Child was to become, and of the sword which was to pierce her soul, for Joseph was not to live to behold the Passion and Death of Jesus. When, indeed, the lance of the centurion pierced His side and penetrated the agonized soul of the mother, Joseph was with Him in the Limbo of the Fathers. We may be certain that the holy Patriarch deeply shared her sorrow when this prophecy, which, no doubt, brought into still more vivid light the pre-

monition she already had of her Son's sufferings, was addressed to her. This sad omen embittered the soul of Mary, and was to her a continual martyrdom, which the tender soul of Joseph shared, though his eyes were to be closed in death before their accomplishment began to manifest itself in the hatred and hostility of the Jews against Our Lord. Indeed, it must have been a source of additional poignant grief to his generous and loving heart to know that when this prophecy was verified he, the protector of Jesus and Mary, would not be there to defend and console them...

The Flight into Egypt

It is most probable that Joseph, after the Presentation, returned to Bethlehem, and with the purpose of settling there, believing that all the signs which had accompanied the Nativity of the Divine Infant marked it as the place befitting Him and agreeable to the will of God. If not on that very night, probably on the next, the Archangel Gabriel again visited Joseph in sleep. St. Matthew says: "And after they," that is, the Magi, "were departed, behold





an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: 'Arise and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him'."

To Joseph alone was to belong the glory of preserving a life whose every instant was of incomparably more value than the united lives of all created beings. All men contributed to the death of the Savior, one alone saved Him from death in His infancy; so that, as to one alone among women, Mary, was He indebted for His life as man, so to one alone among men did He owe its preservation. Thus St. Joseph has been called the savior of the Savior, seeing that he saved Him from death by murder and by starvation.

To Joseph alone did God entrust His Son and the charge of conducting Him to a place of safety. Joseph did not make his journey from Bethlehem to Egypt as rapidly or as easily as did the angel



who bore Habacuc from Judea to Babylon, because the journey cost him so dear, being full of labors, fatigue, suffering and peril to his own liberty and even life, undergone to save that of Jesus. More glory had he in carrying the Son of God into Egypt than had the great legislator Moses in delivering the Israelites from that house of bondage.

Joseph is bid to fly, no help is promised to him, no directions

Exile in Egypt

are given to him, and he says not a word upon receiving this unexpected commission. Alone, ignorant of the way; exposed to danger from wild beasts and robbers; in the winter season, unprovided with means, to have to pass into foreign lands, not knowing what reception they would meet; all this might have prompted much anxious enquiry. But Joseph was silent. This journey was so arduous that the very angels were struck with wonder when they beheld the Savior required to make it.

Joseph, then, woke up Mary. As She was always prepared for suffering, she never complained and soon collected the few things they would carry with them. Joseph laid them on the meek ass along with some of the necessary implements of his trade. Then he besought Mary to place the Divine Infant in his arms, and pressing Him to his bosom, and folding his mantle over Him to shield and conceal Him and at the same time to protect Him from the inclement blast, he went forth with his august spouse in the darkness and silence of the night. They directed their steps, as is commonly believed, to Heliopolis. The holy travelers would have to traverse full one hundred and fifty miles of which about fifty were solitary and desert. They could not have done so in less than two weeks, amidst continual perils of traveling through so desolate a region...

Heliopolis seems to have been the goal of the Holy Family's journey. On arriving, when Joseph with the Holy Virgin and the Divine Infant entered the city and paused a while in front of the Temple of the Sun, all the images of those lying gods which it contained were shaken and fell to the ground. They took up their abode in the village of Matarieh.

As the Eternal Father engenders the Son of His own substance it was meet that Joseph, who He had called to a participation of His Paternity, should maintain the life of Jesus through himself personally and that he should employ all his diligence, devote all his labors and consume his whole strength in supplying the Savior's needs. The Mother of the Incarnate Word was exempted from the pains of childbirth, but Joseph was to suffer much by his continual toil in preserving the Divine Child's life. He was subjected to great fatigues for many years in order to relieve the extreme poverty of his Foster Son. To increase His strength he weakened his own. The adorable Infant would stretch forth His little hands to ask bread of Joseph. Mary and Joseph had to suffer much in Egypt; but to suffer for and with Jesus is the portion and delight of the saints. They suffered the privations and sadness



Far removed as they were from the reach of the fury of Herod, it did not cease to be a subject of deepest pain to them. The thought of the unhappy mothers, sprinkled with the blood of their babes butchered in their very arms, must have filled the tender hearts of Mary and Joseph with indescribable sorrow.

The general tradition of the Church allots seven years to their stay in Egypt. Now was the time for the Holy Fam-

ily to be recalled from exile, completely isolated in a foreign land, never hearing the accents of their own native tongue, separated from every friend and relative whom they loved. Once banished from Palestine they found themselves not only among foreigners, but among heathens, strangers not to themselves alone but to the God whom they adored, and deprived of all participation in the rites offered to Him in Jerusalem, and this desolation became even tenfold greater.

One night as Joseph was taking repose after his labors, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him once more, and bade him arise and take the Child and His Mother and go into the land of Israel; for they were dead who had sought the Child's life. Jesus was now old enough to speak but said not a word, and interfered no more than an ordinary child of His age.

Joseph and Mary, always full of benign courtesy and gratitude,

bid farewell to their kind neighbors and set out for the Holy Land, returning by the way they had come. Joseph's intention was to settle at Bethlehem, but when he heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go hither. He was aware of the character of Archelaus and that he did not think that Jesus would be safe in his vicinity. While Joseph hesitated and prayed for guidance, the angel appeared to him for the fourth time to direct him how to act. Being warned in sleep he retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets, that He shall be called a Nazarite...

The Loss of the Child Jesus

All the males in Israel were bound by the Mosaic Law to appear three times yearly before the



Lord in the Temple which Solomon built: at the feasts of the Pasch, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles. Boys were obliged to keep all these precepts when they had completed thirteen years of age.

Jesus went up for the first time to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. It was sufficient, in order to fulfill the precept, to be present one day only in the Temple, but the Holy Family remained the whole week. After finishing their thanksgiving, Mary and Joseph prepared to return to Nazareth. On leaving the Holy City the men should assemble by themselves in

bands, and the women in like manner. Thus they each set out separately, and remained separate until they all reached the resting point for the night. It was optional for children to accompany either of their parents. Jesus was in the Temple with Mary and Joseph until the close of their act of thanksgiving; but when this was concluded and the Virgin was leaving on one side with the women and Joseph on the other with the men, He by a marvelous act of His power withdrew Himself from their sight, Joseph being persuaded that He had remained with His Mother, and Mary supposing that He had gone with Joseph.

When the sun was setting the caravans were approaching the walls of Machmas, the first station of those who were returning from Jerusalem into Galilee. Soon the terrible truth disclosed itself – Jesus was not with Joseph nor with Mary! Was ever sorrow, indeed, like unto her sorrow? Yet Joseph's might well bear some comparison therewith, since his soul was, according to its measure, filled to overflowing with unutterable grief. The love and tenderness of Joseph for the Divine Child were inexpressible; his sorrow, too, was therefore like to that of Mary, a very ocean, unfathomable to us, whose shallow hearts are, in comparison with his, so cold and insensible. He had a poignant sense of grief peculiarly his own, in

that he had received from above the special charge of Jesus; and what account could he now give of that precious deposit?

They sought for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, and not finding Him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. Joseph and Mary, cognizant also, as they were, of the perils that had beset His infancy, would not acquiesce tranquility for a whole day in the absence of Jesus without ascertaining that He was in safe keeping.

The glorious St. Joseph suffered incomparable affliction and grief, going from one place to another, sometimes with his holy Spouse, sometimes alone, while She made search in another direction. His life would have been in grievous peril if the hand of the Lord had not fortified and supported him, and if the Virgin most prudent had not herself in the midst of her own sorrow consoled her spouse and entreated him to take some brief repose. For the love he bore the Divine Child was so intense that it urged him to seek for his lost Treasure with an anxiety and a vehemence that made him forget either to eat or to sleep. The pain which both Mary and Joseph suffered was so great that without God's secret assistance they could not have survived....





O Blessed Joseph, who didst yield thy last breath in the fond embrace of Jesus and of Mary, when the seal of death shall close my career of life, come, holy father, with Jesus and Mary, to aid me. Obtain for me this only solace which I ask for in that hour, to die encircled by their holy arms. Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I commend my soul. Amen.

;May it be for the glory of God