

## 4<sup>th</sup> Day of the 33-Day Preparation for Consecration to St. Joseph

Why Consecrate our parish to St. Joseph?

Dear parishioners of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish,

Each day I am trying to give you some of my thoughts about St. Joseph. We are using the book by Fr. Don Calloway which includes many stories and quotations from the saints who were devoted to St. Joseph. I will try to draw your attention to some of these which I find particularly inspiring. But I do not want to simply provide you with a string of quotations. I want to share my own thoughts and to answer questions which might arise in your hearts.

First of all, I want to say that St. Joseph is a VERY great and exalted saint. And you might ask "How exalted is he?" I will answer, "He is SOOOOO exalted that "no mortal can know it fully" (St. Mary of Ageda).

I have relatives and friend who are not Catholic and who do not believe in religion. I want to try to say things about St. Joseph that would make sense even to them.

Yesterday I said that Joseph had to be "like God" because he took the place of God the Father in raising Jesus. We have an expression in English which says that a boy "looks up to his father." Well, the child Jesus "looked up to" Joseph. The child Jesus looked to Joseph for protection and for an example of how he would want to "advance in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men." (Luke 2:52) Therefore, Joseph had to be a little bit "godlike", in order to give an example to the Son of God!

I think this concept of being "like God" is very important because it is a central theme from the beginning to the end of the Bible. God created Adam and Eve "in his image and likeness". The devil tempted them by saying that God did not want them to become "like God" (the first lie!) The opposite is true, God's plan has always been to transform us and make us "like God" (1John 3:2). God took our human nature so that we could share divine nature (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #460).

Joseph stands in the place of God. This is an astonishing idea. However, each one of us is called to something similar. That is why Joseph can be said to be what each of us is called to be. In a similar way, Mary is a model of what each Christian must become (we must "hear the Word" and allow it to "take flesh" in us and become "temples of God" and "bear him" for others. Cf. Mark 3:35)

So, what is my point? My point is that the little child playing on the floor in Joseph's workshop was God. This is the first point that is central to understanding the exalted position of St. Joseph.

In the coming weeks, I will be emphasizing two other points which will help us understand the role of role of St. Joseph.

The second point is that God loves to become small. From the Bible we learn that God chooses the lowly, and that God became a tiny baby in a poor manger. A third of the angels rebelled because they refused to bow down before him who took such a lowly state "lower than the angels." (Hebrews 2:7,11) God loves to become small. We could say that this is God's "personality." We know him. God likes to remain hidden and to send insignificant men to represent him as his prophets (Amos 7:14). It is "just like God" to "lift up the lowly." We should not be surprised when it seems that St. Joseph performs more miracles than God himself!

The third point that I will be emphasizing in coming weeks is that the Church is the “Body of Christ.” We are baptized into Christ and become sons and daughters of God in the Son. Therefore, Jesus is our brother, and Mary becomes our true mother. It is only logical that Joseph would become our true spiritual father. St. Joseph feels responsible for caring for each one of us who form one Body in Christ. What Joseph is to Jesus, he is also to us.

Jesus is the King of Heaven. He rules as he pleases. We should not object when we see that he wishes to arrange his Kingdom according to the way things ran in his humble home at Nazareth where Mary was the queen of the household and Joseph was the head of the house.

Some of the quotations proposed by Fr. Calloway will help us to reflect on these ideas:

“God chose to make Joseph his most tangible image on earth, the depository of all the rights of his divine paternity, the husband of that noble Virgin who is Mistress of angels and men.”

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

“This holy man [St. Joseph] had such towering dignity and glory that the Eternal Father most generously bestowed on him a likeness of his own primacy.”

— St. Bernardine of Siena

Many Catholics consecrate themselves to Mary because they know that it is pleasing to Jesus that honor his beloved mother. Mary is pleased when we consecrate ourselves to her beloved spouse:

“Love him [St. Joseph], my child, and make him much loved. If you seek to please me, you cannot do anything that makes me happier than to have a filial devotion to him, to give him honor in your home, and to imitate his virtues. Take him as the patron of your interior and spiritual life, and you will advance greatly towards perfection.”

-Words of Mary to Mexican mystic Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida (1862-1937; foundress of the “Religious of the Cross of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”, who have a convent here in Modesto, CA.)

Please pray the Litany of St. Joseph every day at home for the intention of consecrating our parish to St. Joseph on March 19th!