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Introduction

In 1962, Pope St. John XXIII added the name of St. Joseph to the Roman Canon, which is now the first Eucharistic Prayer used at Mass. In 2013, Pope Francis inserted St. Joseph's name into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV. Now, at every celebration, immediately after naming the Blessed Virgin Mary, the priest mentions "Blessed Joseph, her spouse."

Some may not have realized that this is an addition. Others may simply think that adding a saint's name is a small matter. But, in light of the Church's faith, it was an extremely important change. Even more so since the Roman Canon had remained basically unaltered for 1362 years. The addition of St. Joseph to the Eucharistic Prayer is significant. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. The way we pray reveals what we believe.

Our redemption is "the mystery of [God's] will...that he had predetermined in Christ to be realized when the fullness of time had been achieved" (Eph 1:9-10). At the Incarnation, when the fullness of time had come (Gal 4:4), God made that mystery known to Mary by an angel and to Joseph

in a dream. He chose to work with them in a unique way to bring His only-begotten Son into the world. Mary and Joseph were the guardians of the mystery of our salvation in Christ from the very beginning.

The Incarnation and Redemption are one mystery: God redeeming us in Christ. The purpose for which the Son of God became man Jesus accomplishes by His suffering, death, and resurrection. He makes us sharers in the very life of God. This mystery of our redemption is celebrated and made present in its entirety in the Mass. For this reason, two Popes have directed Joseph to be mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer. He belongs in the Mass, the memorial of our redemption, because he belongs to the very mystery of our redemption. Even before the apostles and martyrs, Joseph was given a most special place in the unfolding of God's plan for our salvation.

Along with Mary, Joseph plays a major role in receiving the Son of God into the human family. It is through Joseph that Jesus becomes the Son of David, bringing to fulfillment the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Joseph accepts this role because of his great faith.

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.

Pope St. John Paul II,
Redemptoris Custos, 5

As head of the Holy Family, Joseph cherished with constant care and sacrificial love both Mary and Jesus. He provided for their needs and protected them. He found a proper place for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, to live in exile in Egypt, and to grow to manhood in Nazareth. He guarded the child Jesus from falling into the jealous hands of Herod, bent on killing Him. He kept Him safe within the arms of Mary. He guided Him as a wise and prudent father.

Fourth Day

Joseph the Humble Man

4

“He guides the humble in what is right.”

Ps 25:9

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

V. O God, come to my assistance.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

O God, in your divine providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the Spouse of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and the Guardian of your only-begotten Son made man. In your mercy, you have given us St. Joseph as an example of holiness and a protector during our earthly pilgrimage. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pray, open our minds to understand the depth of your love for us. Look kindly on our prayer and, through the powerful intercession of St. Joseph, grant us all the graces we need to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

AT THE birth of Jesus, heaven and earth were joined together. No surprise, therefore, that angels played an important role in the Nativity. To the priest Zechariah offering incense in the Temple, the angel of the Lord appeared. The angel's first words to Zechariah, terrified and trembling at the sight of a heavenly messenger, were words of comfort: "Do not be afraid" (Lk 1:13). Then the angel informed him that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a son who would prepare the people for the ministry of Jesus.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young girl in Nazareth. He announced that she would be the mother of Jesus, the long-expected Messiah. The angel assured her of God's favor. To Mary, who is troubled by this message, the angel says, "Do not be afraid..." (Lk 1:30).

The night when Jesus was born, an angel appeared to shepherds. They were startled as the night sky became resplendent with the glory of God. To these terrified shepherds, the angel repeats the same greeting. "Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy for all the people" (Lk 2:10).

The angel came to Zechariah. He came to Mary and to the shepherds. They beheld

him with their eyes and were in awe. But to Joseph, the angel only appears in a dream. However, the angel also tells Joseph not to fear. The angel says, “Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to receive Mary into your home as your wife” (Mt 1:20). Although the birth of Jesus is a moment of great joy, it is an event enveloped in fear.

Sacred Scripture often speaks of fear. In fact, “do not be afraid” is the most frequent command in Scripture. It appears about 100 times in the Old Testament and about 40 times in the New Testament. In many instances, Sacred Scripture speaks of fear in a way much different than we do. It is when we unlock this biblical meaning of fear, we come to understand more deeply the reason why Joseph contemplates divorcing Mary when she is found with child.

Luke narrates Jesus’ birth from the view of Mary. But Matthew records it from the perspective of Joseph. On the first page of his gospel, he introduces Mary as engaged to Joseph. According to the Jewish custom of their day, they were legally married. They are not yet living together as husband and wife when Mary is already with child. When Joseph becomes aware of this, “he resolved to divorce her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

CLOSING PRAYERS

Faithful imitator of Jesus and Mary, humble Joseph, you who were as lowly in your eyes and in the opinion of men as you are great before God; teach me to be, like you, lowly and humble of heart. Alas, you know it, my sins, after having made me ungrateful to my God, have filled me again with a foolish pride, which is my soul's greatest wound. O kind Saint, my protector, my Patron and my Father, on this day I ask you for a virtue which is the foundation of all Christian perfection. Obtain for me humility, the grace to know myself and to despise me; obtain for me the grace to seek to please God alone in all my actions. May I, like you, love silence and the hidden life; may I, like you, be forgotten and despised by creatures; may the humiliations and the Cross of Jesus Christ be my share in this world, as they have been yours. O Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I now wish to put all my glory and my delights into humbling myself following your example. Amen.

The Monastery of the Magnificat,
Quebec, Canada

Prayer for a Special Intention

O Blessed St. Joseph, tenderhearted Father,
faithful guardian of Jesus, chaste spouse of
the Mother of God,

I pray and beseech thee to offer to God the
Father,

His Divine Son, bathed in Blood on the
Cross for sinners,

and through the Holy Name of Jesus,
obtain for us from the Eternal Father, the
favor I implore . . . Amen.

Memorare to St. Joseph

Remember, O most chaste spouse of the
Virgin Mary, that never was it known that
anyone who implored your help and sought
your intercession was left unassisted. Full
of confidence in your power I fly unto
you and beg your protection. Despise not
O Guardian of the Redeemer my humble
supplication, but in your bounty, hear and
answer me. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

For additional prayers to St. Joseph see p. 87