

St. Joseph's Perfect Obedience to the Divine Will and to His Jewish Faith Lived Out in the Obscurity of Nazareth

I bring to souls the purity of my life and the obedience that crowned it.

All fatherhood is blest in me whom the Eternal Father chose as His representative on earth, the Virgin-Father of His own Divine Son. Through me the Heavenly Father has blessed all fatherhood, and through me He continues and will continue to do so till the end of time. My spiritual fatherhood extends to all God's children, and together with my Virgin Spouse I watch over them with great love and solicitude.

Fathers must come to me, small one, to learn obedience to authority: to the Church always, as the mouthpiece of God, to the laws of the country in which they live, insofar as these do not go against God and their neighbor. Mine was perfect obedience to the Divine Will, as it was shown and made known to me by the Jewish law and religion. To be careless in this is most displeasing to God and will be severely punished in the next world.

(St. Joseph's words to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, pgs. 26-27, on his appearance to her on the eve of his feast day, March 18, 1958.)

This great wisdom from St. Joseph regarding his perfect obedience to the Divine Will is but an echo of our dear Lady's words to Sister Mildred on the feast of the Immaculate Heart, August 22, 1957:

The Will of the Father must be dearer to you than all else. This is the lesson every soul desiring intimate union with my Son must strive to learn. (Diary, Pg. 19.)

It is the same divine wisdom Jesus Himself gives us in the Scriptures:

I tell you most solemnly, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing; and whatever the Father does the Son does also....For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me....For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. ... [And in Gethsemane] Not my will but thine be done. (THE JERUSALEM BIBLE, John 5:19; 6:38; and 12:49 and Luke 22:42.)

In his encyclical *Custos Redemptoris (Guardian of the Redeemer)*, Pope John Paul II references **Adam and Eve's sin of pride, which led to disobedience**, whereby evil was unleashed upon the world. That original sin and its consequences could only be reversed by the complete opposite, **the humility and the obedience of the New Adam and the New Eve, Jesus and Mary**, who, together with Joseph, Mary's inseparable human spouse and the third person of that "**earthly trinity**" in the Hypostatic Order of grace, unleashed in turn the super abundance of God's goodness, His grace and merciful love, upon all mankind.

Mary modeled for us a humble, obedient faith when she said "**fiat**" to God's Will as announced by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and, all throughout her life, as she submitted herself to Joseph's headship in the family, according to the law God established with His chosen people. After the Annunciation, it was Joseph who was visited in dreams by the angel who gave him God's directives for the Holy Family. Though higher than Joseph in the order of grace, Mary humbly deferred to Joseph in all these directives from heaven. We see Joseph counseled in that initial dream not to fear the marvelous deed God had brought to fruition in Mary, his betrothed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for Joseph had sensed God's awesome Presence within her and he felt most unworthy, with a reverential fear, to take her for his wife, lest he interfere or intrude upon God's handiwork. He was going to quietly leave her, divorce her, when the angel of God assured him it was indeed God's Presence within her and that God, Who had chosen Mary to be the Virgin-Mother of the Messiah, **had also chosen him to be her virgin spouse and the earthly father of her Son, for he was to name her Child Jesus, Savior of His people, and was to stand over Jesus in place of the heavenly Father.**

Joseph did not question God but immediately obeyed and took Mary for His wife and in so doing united his own "**fiat**" with hers in the awesome mission that was theirs together in God's plan of salvation for His people. Obedient to the laws of His Jewish faith, eight days after Jesus' birth Joseph had Jesus circumcised and gave Him the name "**Jesus**" which the angel had commanded, an act which made Joseph the legal father, for to name someone is to assume authority over him. "**Trust and obey**" was the spirit of Joseph's life. He trusted God for all that he would need to fulfill every demand of this great mission. **He had received an abundance of grace from the moment after his conception, with his cleansing from original sin, that destined him to be the very shadow of God the Father dwelling in that sanctuary of Nazareth where Jesus was the lamp that lit up their days with a continual foretaste of the glory of heaven.** Joseph became for Jesus the Face and embodiment of the heavenly Father's love for His beloved Son, and as father to Jesus, Joseph is the Face of Abba for all of us, his other spiritual children born of the same Mother and Holy Spirit as Jesus was.

Jean Jacques Olier, founder of the Community of St Sulpice, a fraternity of priests dedicated to the formation of candidates for holy orders, spoke of the Holy Family as a kind of heaven on earth where all the opposites came together.

There it was a heaven, a paradise on earth, endless delights in this place of grief; it was a glory already begun in the vileness, abjection and lowliness of their life. [He said,] Jesus, I am not surprised that you remained thirty whole years in this house without leaving St. Joseph. I am not surprised that you are inseparable from his person. His house alone is a paradise for you and his house is for you the bosom of your Father from whom you are inseparable and in whom you take your eternal delights. Outside this house, you find only deadly objects, only sinners, these unfortunate causes of your death. (Andrew Doze, SAINT JOSEPH – SHADOW OF THE FATHER, Alba House, Pg. 52)

How like the words of St. Joseph himself to Sr. Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil on March 19, 1958.

Dear child, I was king in the little home of Nazareth, for I sheltered within it the Prince of Peace and the Queen of heaven. To me they looked for protection and sustenance, and I did not fail them. I received from them the deepest love and reverence, for in me they saw Him whose place I took over them. So the head of the family must be loved, obeyed, and respected, and in return be a true father and protector to those under his care.

In honoring in a special way my fatherhood, you also honor Jesus and Mary. The Divine Trinity has placed into our keeping the peace of the world. The imitation of the Holy Family, my child, of the virtues we practiced in our little home at Nazareth is the way for all souls to that peace which comes from God alone and which none other can give. (Diary, Pg. 29)

Surely the imitation of the **“trinity on earth,”** particularly in those most essential virtues of humility and obedience, is the Will of God for all of us, or God would not have sent His Mother and St. Joseph to earth in our day to exhort us to do so for the renewal of the Christian Family. Did Our Lady not make that clear to us when she stated the following in a locution to Sister Mildred on November 8, 1954? Must we not obey such divine command?

It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men. As in our

little home no sin was to be found, so it is the wish of the Heart of my Son and my Immaculate Heart that sin should, as far as possible, be unheard of in the homes of our children.

The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, you also will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace. (Diary, Pg. 8.)

As head of the Holy Family, Joseph repeatedly models for us such perfect obedience to God's Will. When Herod's edict threatened the life of Jesus, Joseph again had a dream and immediately obeyed the angel's warning to flee into Egypt. He asked no questions but trusted the Father to be with them through all that journey's hardships. When the angel announced it was safe to return, he again immediately obeyed and took his family home to Nazareth to shield them from the world's malice, hiding Jesus' divine sonship from the public under the veil of the most humble and ordinary life. We can easily envision Joseph making trips to the Temple in Jerusalem whenever the Jewish law prescribed them for he saw God's Will so clearly in the laws of his Jewish Faith.

We know well that trip to the temple when Jesus was twelve, an age when boys become independent and move more freely away from their parents' company. What anguish for him and Mary to have traveled so far on the way home before realizing that Jesus was not with them, nor with any other relative in the caravan who had also made the trip with them. Like any mother and father, they rushed back to Jerusalem with great sorrow in their hearts and found Jesus in the temple. A sword of realization must have pierced their hearts when Jesus reminded them that He must be about His [heavenly] Father's business, for both Mary and Joseph knew the Scriptures about their Child as the child of the ancient promise, the Messiah. But Jesus, likewise model of perfect obedience to the Father's Will, submitted to his parents and descended from the temple, as it were, with its glory and its learned men, back down into the obscurity and anonymity of Nazareth. It was not yet God's time for Him to be known in His divinity. For nearly eighteen more years Jesus would be obedient to his parents, surrendering His will to theirs, waiting for the Father's Divine Will to dictate his debut into public ministry. **Ah, is not holiness always more about *waiting on God* than on our doing? Must not every ministry be preceded by a time in *the desert of obscurity and preparation* if it is to bear fruit in the Spirit of God?**

St. Charles de Foucauld was fascinated with the idea of **the obscurity of Nazareth** and spoke thus on the meaning of **that hidden life**, seeing it as a state of self-annihilation, without dignity, which Jesus embraced. In contrast, he saw in the most cruel torments of the Passion an enormous dignity in Jesus' determination and endurance. What does this saint mean by referring to this **self-annihilation of Nazareth** as though Jesus were abusive to Himself in accepting it? And is not

everything he says about Jesus' annihilation necessarily so as well about Joseph and Mary who are inextricably bound together, by the Will of the Father, as co-redeemers with Jesus' work of redemption?

He is abusive to himself because he seems to be doing nothing and is useless to the world. But he does not reject this ignominy, he really wants this injury to be added to all the others he has borne, provided that by hiding himself with Joseph and with the blessed Mary, he may teach us by this great example that if some light is brought forth in the world, it will come from the wish to be of benefit to us, and to obey his Father; that, in fact, all greatness consists in conforming ourselves to God's commands, in whatever way he may wish to dispose of us, and finally that this obscurity we fear so much is so illustrious and glorious, that it can be chosen even by a God. (Andrew Doze, Pg. 55.)

“This obscurity we fear so much is so illustrious and glorious, that it can be chosen even by a God.”

Can we fathom the seeming contradiction but truth in these words? In the anonymity of their little home in Nazareth Joseph and Mary lived a most glorious exaltation of union with Jesus and with the Living God. They knew well that being hidden in obscurity in accord with the Will of God was a far greater holiness than all the wonders and miracles of public ministry one might perform, too often misguidedly in pursuit of one's own will and glory. **What is most illustrious to God is most hidden to the eyes of men.** We are reminded of St. Louis de Montfort's words in his **True Devotion to Mary** on the hidden life of the Holy Family and the glory that it gave to God.

Jesus gave more glory to God his Father by submitting to his Mother for thirty years than he would have given him had he converted the whole world by working the greatest miracles.

What does St. Louis mean? **Obedience to God, not great works, is the mark of true holiness.** Like Jesus, we must do only what the Father tells us to do, and lay aside our own wills. For Jesus, Mary and Joseph, that was a quiet, prayerful and hidden life for the greater part of their lives, with only a small period of their lives engaged with the larger public. Even in the larger public, they wore the veil of **“hiddenness, of humility,** never seeking the limelight nor the approval of men, never seeking their own will nor their own glory, nor personal gain but only the favor of God. They teach us that the prayer and sacrifice of a hidden life is public ministry of the most desirable kind. We are reminded here how Sr. Mildred, the visionary for this devotion to **Our Lady of America®**, Sr. Florecita Bidart, foundress of their little cloister, and Sister Joseph Therese Fuller, the remaining sister of the group, chose that same kind of

“cloistered obscurity” to wait on God and His plan for their lives. Oh what we have to re-learn about the interior life and the primacy of prayer, without which we have no guarantee we are doing God’s Will in our ministry instead of our own, or are being as fruitful as we would be if we were truly aligned with God’s Will. All our work for God’s glory and the good of others must be **“contemplation in action,”** not the endless consuming activity that hopes there will be time left for sitting at the feet of the Lord to listen to Him in search of His Will for us. St. Therese, the Little Flower, became Patron of the Missions, not because of great exterior activity but because of a great interior life of prayer and sacrifice offered for the salvation of souls, all from behind her cloistered walls.

The home of Nazareth is best described as a cloister, a sanctuary, a house of prayer and sacrifice in fulfilling the ordinary duties of life. Joseph understood God’s Will is expressed not only in the laws of our religious Faith but in the duties of our life as well. We can only imagine how Mary and Joseph spent the Sabbath in contemplating the Face of God in their midst, spending a good part of the day in silence and prayer, pondering the Word of God. **As Joseph models so well for us, God’s Will is made manifest to us in obedience to all legitimate authority over us, to the Church as the mouthpiece of God, and to *the laws of our country, insofar as they do not go against God and their neighbor.***

Those words necessitate a look at civil disobedience, what it is, do we have a right to it, and do we even have an obligation to disobey those laws of our country that contradict the laws of God? **The Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 2242, states:**

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. Refusing obedience to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **We must obey God rather than men.**

The obligation to conscience here implies a **correct conscience**, one correctly formed by God’s Law, by the Natural and the Moral Law and the teachings of the Church and the Gospel, objective Divine Truth as it has been revealed to us. Many use **“following their conscience”** as a rationalization to do whatever they think instead of doing what is objectively and morally correct. In #2244-2246, the **Catechism** further states:

Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognized man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer. The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man: Societies not recognizing this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows.

The Church, because of her commission and competence is not to be confused in any way with the political community. She is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. ...It is part of the Church's mission "to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it. The means, the only means, she may use are those which are in accord with the Gospel and the welfare of all men according to the diversity of times and circumstances.

Today in America and in many other nations we see a denial of man's origin in God and God's supreme authority over all His creatures as the powers of darkness attempt to destroy us from within and without, in our country and in our Church. The result is the surrender of true freedom to totalitarian and dictatorial powers of government and/or powerful political and economic entities that, denying this objective truth about man and about God, enslave us with their self deifications and idolatries that oppress the many with the corruption, greed and tyranny of an elite few. These "towers of Babel," like the one of old, will all tumble at the Word of God who has a predilection for the poor and the humble who live by God's Truth. **God's Word is like the pebble in the slingshot of a poor shepherd boy that destroys the giant of the enemy.** Never before has it been so urgent that the children of God wake up to the Will of God and the ways of God and submit obediently and humbly to His Will and His Ways, His Divine Law, lest this Nation fall into that deep abyss without God and without the maternal protection of our Patroness under whose merciful mantle we have been placed.

It is one thing to face the contradiction of God's Truth in our secular governments that reverse the Natural and the Moral Law, but what are we to do when disobedience

to God's Law and Truth afflicts the Body of Christ through an incorrect conscience and expresses itself in disobedience to Christ's Vicar on earth?

Beloved daughter, sweet child, there are those in high places in the Church who disobey and refuse respect to my Son's Vicar on earth. These betray the teachings inspired by the Divine Spirit sent by my Son to be with the Church 'til the end of time.

There are those who teach false doctrines, and those who repudiate the Holy Sacraments. They are filled with intellectual pride. And so refusing to follow my humble Son, they are being destroyed together with those who misguidedly follow them down the path of error and falsehood. Pray for these poor ones who do not realize the misery and wretchedness they are in and to which they have and are leading others. (Diary, words of Our Lady, Pg. 43.)

Many unnatural acts are being committed in the name of love. This evil is being disguised and tolerated as an intrinsic right like any other. Even some of My priests and consecrated virgins are being caught up into this web of evil, not realizing its terrible consequences.

My dearest one, many false doctrines are being taught and for many the true Christ is never made known. The false prophets and self-proclaimed messiahs are drawing many away from Me, the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the true Messiah who was sent and the only one proclaimed as such by My Father. Seek Me for I only am truth, I only am the Christ. (Diary, words of Our Lord, Pg. 40.)

As in days past throughout the Scriptures and with Jesus Himself, the prophet is never accepted in his own town, never accepted by his own. Seeing how strong are these prophetic words from Jesus and Mary that attest to the existence of these errors within our Church and within our society, we can see how we have failed to form our consciences correctly. **No one, we dare say, will ever be able to promote this message of Our Lady of America® until he or she has first been chastised and purified by it.** Such is the Will and the way of God, the way of all holiness.

Sister Mildred suffered terribly for this cause. She was indeed a victim soul chosen by God. Jesus Himself laid her on "the altar of sacrifice" so all of us might be purified with this urgent message of reform and spiritual renewal of Our Lady of America®, which Mary herself told Sister would crush the head of the ancient serpent through the power of this awesome truth and central doctrine of our Faith, the sanctifying grace of the Divine Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity within our souls, which would renew the face of the earth. Let us seek God's Will and humbly obey it in imitation of St. Joseph and The Holy Family, God's "trinity on earth," that sure entrance into God's kingdom both on earth and in heaven! Let us pray

the prayer Sister Mildred wrote on Trinity Sunday in 1947 and prayed with her whole life:

Aspirations to the Divine Will

**Will of God, I adore You.
Will of God, I love You.
Will of God, I dedicate myself to You.
Will of God, let me lose myself in You.
Will of God, rule my life.
Will of God, teach me.
Will of God, sanctify me.
Will of God, be my peace.
Will of God, be the light of my life.
Will of God, be my refuge in trouble.
Will of God, may You always be accomplished in me.
Will of God, uphold my frailty.
Will of God, transform me.
Will of God, be my joy in life and my consolation in death.
Will of God, I offer myself as Your victim.
Will of God, bear me to heaven.
Will of God, I embrace You as Jesus did in the Garden
and in union with Him I offer my life for souls.**

O Holy Trinity, One God, I beseech You, deprive me of all things if it be Your Will but deprive me not of Yourself. For You are my Life, and if You are lost to me, death will be my portion. For without You, O Divine Presence, there can be no life, only death. For You are the true Life of the soul. How can there be any life without You, the Author of life? When You make known, in a special manner, Your Divine Presence within me I become so enraptured as to forget all things of earth, being completely carried away by the sweetness and strength of Your love. Continue then, to live in me, O Trinity Divine, as You lived in the burning Heart of Christ, Your Son, the God-man, that my heart too, like His, may be consumed in the fires of Eternal Charity. Amen

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March, 2010, Month of St. Joseph.
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Revised December 2010.**