

The Passion of St. Joseph



Let fathers also imitate my great purity of life and the deep respect I held for my Immaculate Spouse. Let them be an example to their children and fellowmen, never willfully doing anything that would cause scandal among God's people. Fatherhood is from God, and it must take once again its rightful place among men.

As St. Joseph ceased speaking I saw his most pure heart. It seemed to be lying on a cross which was of brown color. It appeared to me that at the top of the heart, in the midst of the flames pouring out, was a pure white lily. Then I heard these words: Behold this pure heart so pleasing to Him Who made it....The cross, my little one, upon which my heart rests is the cross of the passion, which was ever present before me, causing me intense suffering.

I desire souls to come to my heart that they may learn true union with the Divine Will.

(Sister Mildred Mary Ephrem Neuzil, Diary, *"Our Lady of America"*, Fostoria, Ohio, pgs. 27-28.)

Sacred Scripture and Tradition have recorded for us the sorrows and passion of Our Lady who shared so intimately in the cruel torments of body and soul that our sins inflicted upon her Son, the Sacred Humanity, ordained from all eternity to be that Perfect Sacrifice to end all sacrifices, and to effect, not merely symbolize, the forgiveness of our sins and the reconciliation of all mankind to God. Can we not picture Mary and John and the other holy women pressing on through the crowd as it moved out of the city of Jerusalem and up that steep path to the hill of Calvary? With every beat of our hearts can we not feel her Immaculate Heart die a "thousand deaths" each time the executioners' whips tore mercilessly at the tender flesh of Jesus, and with every spittle that cursed His Holy Face and fell upon hers as well, and with every wound that opened wider as the weight of the cross dug more deeply into Jesus' shoulder and spread the pain massively throughout His already blood-stained, broken and pain wracked Body? Can we not feel her every gasp for breath with Jesus' every groan for

air that begged to collapse into final surrender? But, oh no, it would not be finished until she had felt Simeon's sword piercing her own heart again and again with every nail that was driven and pounded into His sacred feet and hands, until she felt His Heart break as It begged that accursed old wood to rejuvenate into something new and tender, the Tree of Life! She must walk with Jesus to the bitter end.

“At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last.”

Our dear Joseph, that saint so forgotten for far too long, is now hailed as the pure and humble soul that sought to do naught but the Will of God. That Will was to hide the virginity of Mary from Satan who knew the prophecy of Eden that a Virgin would bear a Son Who would crush his proud serpent head, a Son Who would save God's people precisely by obedience and humility, the opposite of Satan's sins. As the spouse of Joseph, as a married woman, Mary's virginity remained hidden from Satan who did not anticipate nor fear a married woman as the Virgin of the Promise, and would leave Mary at peace until the hour God had chosen to reveal her true identity to the evil one. And Joseph, model for all husbands and for all fathers, in the most humble and ordinariness of life in Nazareth, would hide as well the Messianic Sonship of Jesus from those seeking a great worldly leader until Jesus' hour had come. This Messianic leader would know no lust for fame or glory, for ambition or power or self glorification, for money or the things of the world. He would not be a social reformer but a spiritual Redeemer. No, Jesus, like his father and His Mother, would seek only to do the Will of the Father and to live in communion with the Triune God in whom there is no deceit, no contradiction, no confusion or division, no ill will, no evil of any kind, but only utter Goodness, Purity and Holiness.

Such simplicity is the essence of that hidden life in the quiet of the home, the sanctuary of Nazareth, that humble place from which so many claimed no good could come. Oh the good that came from that humble place! Oh the good that comes with humble souls! Oh the good that comes from God's own **great condescension** from His divinity into our poor, sinful humanity as He seeks to raise us up into His own unimaginable glory! Joseph, whose glory is his silence, his obscurity, his humble state and humble deeds, more glorious than all the angels perform, more glorious than all the great deeds of the world, has simply done the Will of God and that, and that alone, is holiness! Each of us must embrace that lowliness, that humility which is purity of heart like unto Joseph's that is so pleasing to his Son and to the Father! Oh what glory to be so utterly humble that God our Father Himself would feel compelled to stoop even lower to pick us up and press us to His cheek and forever hold us there. Abba, Father! Let your Will be done in us! **“Fatherhood is from God and it must take once again its rightful place among men.”** (Diary, pg. 27) Every man, husband and/or father, must

stand in the shadow of Abba as Joseph did and mirror the heavenly Father to the children of men.

St. Joseph proclaimed the greatness of his mission and its corresponding privilege and grace to Sister Mildred Neuzil in these words:

...I will make known to you how God wishes me to be honored in union with Jesus and Mary to obtain peace among men and nations. ...My child, I desire a day to be set aside to honor my fatherhood. The privilege of being chosen by God to be the Virgin-Father of His Son was mine alone, and no honor, excluding that bestowed upon my Holy Spouse, was ever, or will ever, be as sublime or as high as this. The Holy Trinity desires thus to honor me that in my unique fatherhood all fatherhood might be blessed. (Diary, pg. 28.)

It is true, my daughter, that *immediately* after my conception, I was, through the future merits of Jesus and because of my exceptional role of future Virgin-Father, cleansed from the stain of original sin.

I was from that moment confirmed in grace and never had the slightest stain on my soul. This is my unique privilege among men.

My pure heart also was from the first moment of existence inflamed with love for God. *Immediately*, at the moment when my soul was cleansed from original sin, grace was infused into it in such abundance that, excluding my holy spouse, I surpassed the holiness of the highest angel in the angelic choir. (Diary, pg.13.)

Because Joseph was destined to share so deeply in the lives of Jesus and Mary, as father to Jesus and husband to Mary, he was destined likewise to share in the Passion of The Christ in a way only these two privileged souls could know. Even though St. Joseph had died prior to the physical Passion and Death of Jesus, by an extraordinary grace he endured the Passion during his life by way of fore-knowledge and anticipation as he himself describes. Since the Passion had already begun in the Eternal Mind of God, was addressed in Paradise in the Promise of a Redeemer, was begun concretely in human history with the “fiat” of Mary wherein Jesus took flesh in her womb, it was shared unequivocally with Joseph in the moment he obeyed the angel and took Mary for his wife, uniting his own “fiat” to hers in order that God’s plan of salvation through the family would be made possible. The intimate communion of the heavenly Trinity with the earthly trinity in this plan for our salvation is more stupendous than we can imagine. In St. Joseph is mirrored the silence of the Lamb, led to the slaughter without uttering a word. Scripture does not record one word from St. Joseph, yet he spoke volumes in his silence, too deep for words, for by some divine grace and divine sustenance, he was given a share in Jesus’ passion in advance as he would not be

there in person to share it with Jesus and Mary. Jesus' heavenly Father would have His rightful place overseeing that Final Hour, but we can be sure Joseph, from that place we call Limbo where all the blessed of old awaited the opening of the gates of heaven, was, by the power of the Holy Spirit, still united intimately in the events of that Passion. Let us ponder his own words.

My heart suffered with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Mine was a silent suffering, for it was my special vocation to hide and shield, as long as God willed, the Virgin Mother and Son from the malice and hatred of men.

The most painful of my sorrows was that I knew beforehand of their passion, yet would not be there to console them. Their future suffering was ever present to me and became my daily cross. I became, in union with my holy spouse, co-redemptor of the human race. Through compassion for the sufferings of Jesus and Mary I co-operated, as no other, in the salvation of the world.

(Diary, pg. 13 – locution to Sister in early October, 1956, shortly after Our Lady's first appearance on the feast of the North American martyrs, September 26, 1956.)

Since Faith does not contradict reason, is it not reasonable to assume that those most intimate to the Redeemer in grace and in life would also be most intimate to the Redeemer in His suffering, in His Passion and His death for the salvation of all mankind? Those who receive great favor also bear great responsibility; that is their mission. Just as the Church has approved devotion to the seven sorrows of Mary, so also has the Church approved devotion to the seven sorrows of Joseph. The hour has come for the Church to loudly proclaim the magnificent glory of St. Joseph as a model of faith, of married love, of virginal love, of fatherhood, of work, as patron of the Church for it is the Mystical Body of Christ, and of the home for it is the domestic church, the church in miniature, the cradle of all life. Joseph and Mary are co-redeemers with Christ and model for us the role suffering must play by heaven's decree in the purification of the heart, the mind, the will, our souls and our whole being.

Our Lady spoke so clearly to Sister Mildred on this role of suffering in achieving redemption and holiness of life. God is no giant Bayer aspirin for all of our pains, although He is certainly able and willing to heal us if we have sufficient faith, but He is our **constant companion on the Way of the Cross**, that suffering that is always brought to good in His time. He is the goldsmith Who refines us, the impure metals, in the flaming fire of His Divine Love so we might become so pure and so holy and be made fit to enter into His presence in the Holy of Holies.

My child, nothing is accomplished without pain. Prepare to suffer much. You see the sword in the Heart of your Mother. Suffering completed the work of divine grace in my soul. He who refuses to suffer will never abide in the Spirit of Christ, will never be formed into His image. My sweet child, the Father will never recognize a soul as His own unless He sees in it the likeness of His beloved Son. Souls must attain to the perfection of the Father through the Spirit of the Son. ...There is only one true way to the Father, my child, only one way to eternal union. It is the way of the divine humanity. It is through my Son, the Only-begotten of the Father, that souls attain perfect union with the Divinity, as perfect as human nature is capable of, aided by divine grace.

(Diary, pg. 23.)

Like **Joseph who laid his heart upon the cross of Jesus' Passion and let the fire of divine love blossom forth in him with the purity of God Himself**, so must we lay our hearts upon Christ's cross and unite them with the Heart of our Redeemer, dying with Him so we might rise with Him, too, into glory. Oh the secrets St. Joseph could teach us about living intimately with Jesus and Mary. Is it any wonder then that **St. Joseph is called the "Patron Saint of the Interior Life"**? Is it any wonder then that it was **St. Joseph who taught Sr. Mildred the "Secret of Secrets" of the interior life, the secret of the Divine Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity in every soul?**

In her April 12, 1958 letter to Father Leibold, Sister Mildred Mary Ephrem Neuzil wrote these words from St. Joseph:

"It is time. Kneel my beloved daughter, for God is about to reveal to you a secret of the interior life. Few there are who learn it, and fewer they who live it in its fullness. This SECRET, dear child, is living with Him Who is within you and has made of your soul His Kingdom. There are many who know this Doctrine, but few to whom God reveals its secret operation. Few souls there are who empty themselves of all things that they may possess this SECRET OF SECRETS, this ultimate glory of all living, this union with the Divine, ending in Eternal Vision.

This Secret cannot be written, lovely child. Its deepest meaning will be made known to you in the interior depths of your child-like soul, in your humble heart, where LOVE has found Its resting place, Its palace beautiful. They who would possess for themselves this mysterious workings of the Divine Secret must strive to cultivate in *silence* and *humility* this love for the Eternal Being within them. We lived this life, beloved child, so to attain it, souls must imitate as far as possible the fullness of our union with The Indwelling God."

Oh to ponder these words!

They who would possess for themselves this mysterious workings of the
Divine Secret must strive to cultivate in *silence* and *humility*
this love for the Eternal Being within them.

Thus should he be honored whom the King desires to honor. (Diary, pg. 30.)
St. Joseph, we honor you!

**Copyright © Contemplative Sisters of the Indwelling Trinity,
Fostoria, Ohio, March, 2010.
All rights reserved.**