

THE BULLETIN

"So the faith was planted: so must it be restored"

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We believe that the message contained in this article, originally published in 1996, is as relevant today as it was then. For that reason we repeat it in this issue of THE BULLETIN.

THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH AND HIS WONDROUS MISSION

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Some Background

The first verse of Sacred Scripture says: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Thus God created light and divided it from the darkness. He called the darkness night and the light day. He made the firmament and called it heaven. He gathered the waters together and the dry land appeared. He called the dry land Earth and the waters He called the Seas. He created the green herb and the fruit tree. He made the sun and the moon, the fowls that fly in the air and great whales that swim in the sea. He brought forth beasts and cattle "and creeping things." (*Genesis 1:24*) And He created man. He created Adam in His image and likeness and gave him dominion over all living things. He gave him "dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." (*Genesis 1:26*) Adam was made lord of all living creatures. He was the ruler of the earth and all things were subject to him. In addition to these things God bestowed on him sanctifying grace and gave him a supernatural destiny. One day he would see God face to face in the Beatific Vision. Nor would it even be necessary for him to die to attain this. But this was not sufficient for our first parents. For they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and were cast out of paradise.

The Descendants Of Adam

Among the descendants of Adam and Eve there were the good and the bad. Eventually the bad prevailed so that only one just man remained with his family. Noe was his name and God prevailed on him to build an Ark. Noe obeyed and worked on it for a hundred years, during which time he preached repentance to the wicked. But they would not heed his word. When the Ark was built Noe and his wife and his three sons and their wives entered into the Ark. A great flood covered the earth. Even the highest mountains were covered. Only those aboard the Ark survived. After one hundred and fifty days God

caused the waters to recede. The family of Noe survived and prospered upon the face of the earth. In time, however, men became corrupt. In their pride, they sought to build a great tower so as to reach the heavens. But God confounded them. He sent among them the confusion of tongues so that the people dispersed throughout Asia, Africa and Europe.

Two thousand years before the birth of Christ God called Abraham. His grandson Jacob and his family settled in Egypt. There they grew and prospered till they were enslaved. God sent Moses to deliver them from Egypt and to conduct them to the promised land. When, forty years later, they arrived at the promised land the authority of Moses was transferred to Josue who led the people across the River Jordan. As the Red Sea opened before Moses so the River Jordan dried up before Josue and the people. It was Josue who commanded the sun and the moon to stop; and they obeyed him. He said: "Move not, O sun, ... nor thou, O moon. ... And the sun and the moon stood still. ... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down the space of one day." (*Josue 10:12,13*)

After Josue the Judges ruled the children of Israel. Then came Saul and David and the Kings of Juda and of Israel. The Kingdom of Israel in the north was destroyed by the Assyrians. The Kingdom of Juda was captured by the Babylonians. The Temple of Solomon was destroyed and the people were taken into exile. Babylon was conquered by Persia and Cyrus the ruler of the Persian Empire allowed the Hebrews to return home. In the fourth century B.C. Palestine was captured by Alexander the Great. Until 198 B.C. it was ruled by Egyptian Kings. Then came the terrible persecution of the Syrians, the rise of the Machabees, and the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey. Palestine thus became a part of the Roman province of Syria. In 48 B.C. Herod the Great came to power in Judea under Roman authority. It was he who re-built the second Temple and thus unwittingly prepared the way for the Infant he would seek to kill.

The Wondrous Authority Of St. Joseph

To Adam God gave authority over all living things. To Moses He subjected the King of Egypt and the chosen people. To Josue He gave authority to command the sun and the moon. These are wondrous things. We stand in awe of them. Yet the authority bestowed on these holy men of the Old Testament is small in comparison with the authority that was bestowed on St. Joseph. Living things, the King of Egypt, the chosen people, the sun and the moon were made subject to men. But in the case of St. Joseph the Son of God was made subject to a man. Adam commanded all living things and they obeyed. Moses commanded the King of Egypt and the children of Israel and they obeyed. Josue commanded the sun and the moon and they stood still. But St. Joseph commanded the Son of God and He obeyed over the course of many years. St. Alphonsus says: "Josue excited the admiration of the whole world when he commanded the sun to stop in its course, that he might have time to conquer his enemies; and it obeyed." But what comparison is there between the sun and the moon and the Creator of the sun and the moon? The subjection of the Son of God to a creature is infinitely more wondrous than the subjection of creatures, nations and natural elements.

Thus the Gospel says: "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (Luke 2:51) The "He" in this passage is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The "them" referred to are Joseph and Mary. St. Alphonsus says: "As long as St. Joseph lived Jesus Christ respected him as a father, and until his death always obeyed him as such: **He was subject to them.**" During all the years that St. Joseph was alive Our Lord obeyed him. During all that time he respected St. Joseph as the head of the Holy Family. He saw in Joseph the image of His Heavenly Father. When He grew into a Man He would say: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work." (John 4:34) His meat was to do His Father's will. It was His whole purpose. It was His life, His love, His consolation. But the selection of St. Joseph to be His foster father was the will of His Father. St. Joseph was a manifestation of the will of His Eternal Father and an extension of His authority. In St. Joseph He saw His Eternal Father's will. From all eternity St. Joseph was selected by the Eternal Father. From all eternity the Son of God concurred in that choice. Thus after the Incarnation, as the Son of God made Man burned with desire to do the will of His Heavenly Father, so too did He burn with holy desire to do the will of His earthly foster father. Thus He listened attentively to St. Joseph and obeyed him. It was His delight to do so.

The Mission Of St. Joseph

St. Joseph was a faithful and prudent servant. To him was given a wondrous mission. It was to be the protector of the Son of God and the chaste guardian of the Mother of God. Thus did he support and sustain the Sacred Humanity of Christ as he comforted the Mother of God in her trials, tribulations and sorrows. He cooperated in a most singular fashion in the redemption of the world.

He accompanied the Mother of God and her unborn Son to Bethlehem. He prepared the cave for them. He stood watch over them. He was the first after the Blessed Mother and the angels to see the Son of God made Man. He was there when the shepherds came. He met the three kings. He took Our Lady and the Infant Jesus to the Temple. He heard the great and terrible prophecy of Simeon. He fled into Egypt with Jesus and Mary and protected them. And when Herod died, he received the command of the angel: "Saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel." (Matthew 2:20) When Christ was twelve St. Joseph took Him to Jerusalem. When He was lost he searched for Him for three days, during which time he suffered terribly. St. Alphonsus says:

During three days Joseph constantly wept, for he was separated from Jesus, the love of his heart; but that which caused him the greatest affliction was the fear that Jesus had left him on account of some displeasure he might have caused Him, and that, therefore, God no longer considered him worthy to have charge of so great a treasure.

St. Joseph returned to Nazareth with Jesus and Mary. And there he attended to "Jesus until his death, when it was his happy lot," as St. Alphonsus says, "to expire in the arms of Jesus and Mary, who attended upon him in that last moment". And of what did St. Joseph die? St. Francis de Sales says that he died of love. He says that "it is certain that ... he died of love." It is no wonder then that he is called the glorious St. Joseph. St. Basil says: "What Angel or Saint ... ever merited to be called the father of the Son of God? Joseph alone was thus called." And St. Alphonsus says: "St. Joseph was more honored by God, in this name of father, than all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Pontiffs; for all these have the name of servants, Joseph alone that of father."

When Adam spoke all living things obeyed. When Moses spoke the King of Egypt and the chosen people obeyed. When Josue spoke the sun and the moon obeyed. But when St. Joseph spoke, Jesus, the Son of God, and Mary, the Mother of God, obeyed. The Mother of God and the Son of God obeyed him and delighted to do so. They waited on him and did his will. And now in heaven it is the delight of Our Lord and Our Lady to continue to do the will of St. Joseph. What an advocate we have in him! Let us take him for our advocate. Let us commend our lives and our families into his care. He will not fail us. He will assist us and deliver us. He will guard us and protect us as he did the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother. He will mightily assist us to save our souls. He will be attentive to our every request. St. Teresa of Avila said it well in her autobiography when she wrote:

I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph and commended

myself earnestly to him. ... I do not remember even now that I have ever asked anything of him which he has failed to grant. I am astonished at the great favors which God has bestowed on me through this blessed saint, and at the perils from which He has freed me, both in body and in soul. To other saints the Lord seems to have given grace to succour us in some of our necessities but of this glorious saint my experience is that he succours us in them all and that the Lord wishes to teach us that as He was Himself subject to him on earth (for, being His guardian and being called His father, he could command Him) just so in Heaven He still does all that he asks. ... I wish I could persuade everyone to be devoted to this glorious saint, for I have great experience of the blessings which he can obtain from God. I have never known anyone to be truly devoted to him and render him particular services who did not notably advance in virtue, for he gives very real help to souls who commend themselves to him. ... I only beg, for the love of God, that anyone who does not believe me will put what I say to the test, and he will see by experience what great advantages come from his commending himself to this glorious patriarch and having devotion to him. [*The Life of Teresa Of Jesus* (Garden City, NY: IMAGE BOOKS, 1960), pp. 93,94.]

In the Sacred Heart,

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