

and the Blessed Virgin Mother of God. If a good earthly king were to consign his only son to the care of a man, he would be extremely solicitous in selecting that man. But if that king were not an earthly king, but rather the Creator of heaven and of earth, and if being omniscient, omnipotent, all-wise and all-good, then how perfect would be the selection he would pick? And so it was with God the Father.

From all eternity God knew St. Joseph. From all eternity He prepared St. Joseph. He created him for this purpose. He fashioned him in mind and soul for this mission. He selected him because He knew exactly what he would be and what he would do. What must have been his estimation of St. Joseph? How much He must have loved this man into whose care He would place Jesus and Mary. How holy He must have made St. Joseph! And because He loved St. Joseph with such a great love, He prepared great sufferings for him.

The cross is a sign of divine favor, for it is by the cross that God bestows glory. It is a sign of Divine disfavor not to have a cross. Thus, St. Joseph was no stranger to the cross. St. Joseph would drink deeply from the chalice of suffering and sorrow. From the beginning he had his great trials. First, there was the Incarnation after he was espoused to the Blessed Virgin. We know that espousal among the Jews was in fact the actual marriage even though a common household was not established—as a rule—until a later time, so Joseph and Mary were legally man and wife. After their espousal the Incarnation took place, but Joseph was not told about it before it happened. When he found out that Mary was with Child, he endured an unspeakable torment. His trouble and anguish of heart were so great because he did not know that the Child was conceived of the Holy Ghost. What pain he experienced when he was minded to put Mary away privately. There was the journey to Bethlehem in the middle of winter and the accompanying sorrow at seeing the Child Jesus born in such poverty. Then came the prophecy of Simeon. The Child was destined for a sign of

contradiction—the cross—and his beloved spouse was to have a sword of sorrow driven into her very soul. After this, there were the threats of death against the Divine Child and the flight into a strange, pagan land. Even the return was marked with fear and sorrow, for the son of Herod ruled in the place of his father and was a threat to life of the Child. At the age of twelve, Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and Joseph and Mary sought Him sorrowing. And then of course, St. Joseph was to die before seeing the triumph of Christ. He was to go into exile in the Limbo of the Just, anxiously awaiting the day when Christ, after dying on the cross, would descend there to preach to the souls of just.

With what awe and reverence the saints of the Old Testament received St. Joseph in Limbo! How they must have wondered at the sight of this man! As Fr. Butler writes, St. Joseph had the privilege, “not only to see Jesus Christ, but also to hear Him, to carry Him in his arms, to lead Him from place to place, to embrace and caress Him, to feed Him, and to be privy to all the great secrets which were concealed from the princes of this world!”

March is the month of St. Joseph, and March 19<sup>th</sup> is the day dedicated by the Church to honor this great saint in his role as the Protector of the Universal Church. Because God loved His foster-father, He shared with Him many crosses, all of which St. Joseph bore with patience and resignation. Mindful of his dignity and power over the Heart of Christ, go to St. Joseph in your trials and difficulties, and you will see the truth of what St. Teresa of Avila says: “To other saints the Lord seems to have given grace to succor us in some of our necessities but of this glorious saint, my experience is that he succors us in them all, and that the Lord wishes to teach us that as He was Himself subject to him on earth, just so in Heaven, He still does all that he asks. I do not remember that I have ever asked anything of [St. Joseph] that he has failed to grant.” (*The Life of St. Teresa*, Image, pp. 93-94)