

Patris Corde – With a Father's Heart

Session 3: An Obedient Father

Before we begin:

Let us reflect from a verse from Psalm 46:

"Be still, and know that I am God"

Repeat it to yourself in silence dropping a word from the psalm passage until you are left with the word "be."

Opening Prayer

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil.

(Take a quiet moment)

Holy Spirit, we ask that you enter our conversation and give us the grace to share openly and authentically with one another. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mathew (Chapter 1, verses 18 – 25)

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Take a few moments of silence to reflect on the situation Joseph finds himself in:

On the second reading, what part, what phrase(s) stick out to you.

Read the Gospel again.

The First Dream

As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples, were considered a way for him to make his will known. Joseph was deeply troubled by Mary's mysterious pregnancy. He did not want to "expose her to public disgrace" , so he decided to "dismiss her quietly" (Mt 1:19).

In the first dream, an angel helps him resolve his grave dilemma: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21). Joseph's response was immediate: "When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt 1:24). Obedience made it possible for him to surmount his difficulties and spare Mary.

Discussion – Trust and Obedience

1. Describe the relationship between trust and obedience.
2. What is the relationship between knowing someone and trusting someone?
3. How does or can prayer increase our "knowing" and "trusting" in God?

The Second Dream

In the second dream, the angel tells Joseph: Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him (Mt 2:13). Joseph did not hesitate to obey, regardless of the hardship involved: "He got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egiy and remained there until the death Herod" (Mt 2:14-15).

Discussion:

1. Reflect upon one time in your life where you have had to "travel to Egypt" and put your trust in God into action? What did that look like?

The Third Dream

In Egypt, Joseph awaited with pat trust the angel's notice that he can safely return home. In a third dream angel told him that those who sought to kill the child were dead and ordered him to rise, take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel (cf. Mt 2:19-20). Once again, Joseph promptly obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel" (Mt 2:21).

During the return journey, "when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream" - now for the fourth time - "he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth" (Mt 2:22-23).

During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food (cf. Jn 4:34). Even at the most difficult moment of his life, in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to do the Father's will rather than his own, becoming "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The author of the Letter

to the Hebrews thus concludes that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8).

Discussion on faith and fortitude

1. How does St. Joseph's example of faith and fortitude through uncertainty encourage you meet the challenges God puts before you?
2. What are some steps you can take to root your daily actions in faith through prayer?

The Crux

The Gospels tell us that an angel of the Lord visited St. Joseph on three separate occasions: first, when he took Mary into his home (Mt 1:20), second when he brought Jesus and Mary into Egypt (Mt 2:13), lastly, when he led the Holy Family to Nazareth (Mt 2:20). Each time St. Joseph was visited, he was asked to move in faith.

St. Joseph shows us that faith is not passive. Faith is active.

When St. Joseph was asked to take Mary into his home and told that the baby she was carrying was the Son of God, we see a glimpse of the way St. Joseph acted on his faith. Instead of protesting, or asking for clarification, Scripture tells us that he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

There is a necessary distinction between servile obedience and obedience out of love. Joseph did not obey God's commands out of fear of what God would do if he did not obey. Rather, Joseph had a deep trusting love in God, and he knew that God's commands were always for his good, even if he did not fully understand how that could be. In every situation, Joseph had faith and put his faith into clear action.

There will be times in our lives when we are called to "travel to Egypt". God will allow situations in our lives to occur that will leave us questioning and unsure of what direction to take. Those are the moments when St. Joseph's example can be a guiding light. There are times when our trust and faith in God actively pursues and moves in the direction God has called us. There are other times, when our faith and trust lead us to patiently wait for God to move. In both instances, St. Joseph shows us that saying "yes" to God means giving yourself to Him completely, regardless of what that may mean.

Call to Action

When you travel into "Egypt" of your life, place your trust in God through St. Joseph by praying the Memorare to St. Joseph. Make an effort to memorize this prayer and say it frequently for the remainder of this study.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray for the grace to follow St. Joseph's example of masculinity as a walk as our spiritual father.

Litany of Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father in heaven,
God the Son,
Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Spirit,
Holy Trinity, one God,

Holy Mary,
Saint Joseph,
Illustrious son of David,
Light of Patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Guardian of the Redeemer,
Pure Guardian of the Virgin,
Provider for the Son of God,
Zealous defender of Christ,
Servant of Christ,
Minister of salvation,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph, most just,
Joseph, most chaste,
Joseph, most prudent,
Joseph, most brave,
Joseph, most obedient,
Joseph, most loyal,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model for workers,
Glory of family life,
Guardian of virgins,
Cornerstone of families,
Support in difficulties,
Comfort of the sorrowing,
Hope of the sick.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

have mercy on us.

have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.

[illegible]

Patron of exiles,	pray for us.
Patron of the afflicted,	pray for us.
Patron of the poor,	pray for us.
Patron of the dying,	pray for us.
Terror of demons,	pray for us.
Protector of the Holy Church,	pray for us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

He made him master of his house, and ruler of all his possessions.

Let us pray.

O God, who in your inexpressible providence were pleased to choose Saint Joseph as spouse of your most holy Mother, grant, we pray, that we, who revere him as our protector on earth, may be worthy of his heavenly intercession.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. R. Amen.

Act of Consecration to St. Joseph

O dearest St. Joseph, I consecrate myself to your honor and give myself to you, that you may always be my father, my protector, and my guide in the way of salvation.

Obtain for me a greater purity of heart and fervent love of the interior life.

After your example my I do all my actions for the greater glory of God, in union with the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

O Blessed St. Joseph, pray for me, that I may share in the peace and joy of your holy death. Amen

Memorare to Saint 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 were 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.