

March 19

SAINT JOSEPH

110.1 First Point

Because Saint Joseph was made responsible by God for the care and external guidance of Jesus Christ, it was important that he have the qualities and virtues necessary to fulfill worthily so holy and exalted a ministry. The Gospel tells us about three, all very fitting for the responsibility entrusted to him: he was just; he was very submissive to God's orders,¹ and he had a very special solicitude for the education and the protection of Jesus Christ.²

The first quality that the Gospel attributes to Saint Joseph is that he is just. This is also the main virtue he needed in order to be able to provide guidance to Jesus Christ. Because our Lord is God and holy, it would not be fitting that the person in charge of guiding him not be holy and just before God.

It is even entirely proper that Saint Joseph be, after the Most Blessed Virgin, one of the holiest people to be found in the world at that time, so that he might have some conformity with Jesus Christ, who was entrusted to him and confided to his care. The Gospel also says of him that he is just before God, that is, holy in every way. We even have grounds to believe that Saint Joseph, thanks to a special privilege, was entirely exempted from sin.

You also have been charged, very much like Saint Joseph, with a holy work, a work that is very similar to his and requires that your piety and your virtue be more than ordinary. Take Saint Joseph as your model, for he is your patron, and strive to be worthy of your ministry and to excel in virtue by following the example of this great saint.

110.2 Second Point

The second virtue that the Gospel points out to us in Saint Joseph is his holy and entire submission to God's orders. God instructed him by an angel to remain with the Blessed Virgin when he was questioning whether he ought to leave her; at once he banished the thought of leaving her from his mind. After the birth of the Child Jesus, God warned Joseph during the night to take the Child to Egypt to save him from the persecution of Herod; at once he arose and departed to bring the Child and his virgin mother to Egypt.³ After Herod's death, God told Joseph to come back to Judea, and he returned there without delay.⁴

Oh, how admirable is this prompt and simple obedience in this great saint! He does not hesitate a single instant to carry out what God desires of him! Do you have as much at heart to do God's will as this saint did?

If you want God to bestow many graces on you, both for you and for the Christian education of the children you have to protect and to guide, you must imitate this saint in his love for and in his fidelity to obedience, which of all the virtues is the one most appropriate for you in your state and in your work and the one that will bring you the most grace.

110.3 Third Point

The Gospel also makes us admire in Saint Joseph the care he has for the holy Child Jesus, which he showed in the promptness with which he took him to Egypt⁵ when God told him to do so; in the precaution he took, on leaving Egypt, not to take him to Judea, for fear of Archelaus, who then occupied the throne of his father, Herod,⁶ and in the sorrow he felt at having lost Jesus when they were returning from Jerusalem, as the Most Blessed Virgin testified in these words: Your father and I have been searching for you in great sorrow and in great affliction.⁷ Two things inspired the great solicitude that Saint Joseph felt for Jesus: the commission that the eternal Father had given him and the tender love Saint Joseph had for Jesus.

You must have a similarly great attention and affection for preserving or procuring the innocence of the children entrusted to your guidance and for keeping them away from whatever might interfere with their education or prevent them from acquiring piety, just as Saint Joseph had for all that could contribute to the welfare of the Child Jesus. For you have been made responsible for these children, just as Saint Joseph was made responsible by God for the Savior of the world. This is also the first care you ought to have in your work if you wish to imitate Saint Joseph, who had nothing more at heart than to provide for the needs of the Child Jesus.

De La Salle had a special love for Saint Joseph, developed undoubtedly as part of his training in the seminary of Saint Sulpice. The first seal of the Institute, of which we have samples on obediences as early as 1707, depicts Saint Joseph with the Child Jesus, and this special devotion to the Infant Jesus and Saint Joseph is mentioned in the Bull of Approbation. This meditation explains the several reasons why such a devotion was considered by the Founder as most appropriate for the Brothers. The original morning and evening prayers of the Brothers included a special prayer to Saint Joseph, also a litany to

Saint Joseph after the midday recreation, before returning to school. The Rule of 1705 states: “At one o’clock the Brothers will assemble in the oratory to recite the Litany of Saint Joseph, Patron and Protector of the Community, to ask for his spirit and his assistance in the Christian education of children” (CL 25:100). *Pratique du Règlement Journalier*, the original text for the order of the Brothers’ day, lists the feast of the Great Saint Joseph as one of the special days for a holiday. On this day in 1719, De La Salle was able to say his last Mass with the Brothers at Saint Yon, an event that was regarded as a special favor from Saint Joseph. The Founder died less than three weeks later, on April 7.

1. Mt 1:19

2. Mt 1:20–24

3. Mt 2:13–14

4. Mt 2:19–21

5. Mt 2:14

6. Mt 2:22

7. Lk 2:48