

Life

Joseph was a descendant of King David and was betrothed to Mary. Mary's unimaginable pregnancy troubled him, but after receiving the explanation in a dream that the Virgin Mary became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit, he obeyed the instructions and married her, and became the pure spouse of Mary. The common image of Joseph holding the lily represents his chastity. In compliance with the edict, he led Mary back to Bethlehem for the census, where Jesus was born, and Joseph became Jesus' adoptive father and protector. Forty days later, he and the Virgin Mary went to the Temple to present the Holy Child and met Simeon. When an angel told him in a dream that King Herod was plotting to kill Jesus, Joseph fled with the Holy Family to Egypt on a starry night. Later, he obeyed orders and moved back to Nazareth. When Jesus was twelve years old, he stayed alone in the Temple and Joseph and Mary anxiously searched for him for 3 days. After he was found, Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. There is no record of Joseph in the Bible after that, and scholars agree that he died before Jesus began his ministry.

Saint Joseph played an important role in salvation history. God the Father chose him to be the adoptive father of the Son, and Joseph accepted and assumed the responsibility of protecting and educating Jesus. Just as he protected the infant Jesus, Joseph is our guardian. Joseph is not only the patron of families and fathers, but also of all workers and the patron of the dying. He is the patron saint of many countries, including Canada and China. In 1870, Pope Pius IX named Saint Joseph the Patron of the Holy Church and entrusted him with the protection of the universal Church.

Reflection/Imitation:

The Gospel calls Joseph a righteous man. He was indeed a man who kept the law, had a heart of mercy and trusted in the Lord. Imagine a man's fiancée is pregnant with a child that is not his. What is the usual reaction? Shock, hurt, or even anger? Even before the truth was revealed, Joseph was unwilling to publicly humiliate Mary and intended to send her away quietly. He respects the law and tries his best not to make others suffer, and solves problems in a benevolent way.

The Bible does not record any words spoken by Joseph; it only shows that he was a man who thought carefully and acted quickly. He repeated the following situation several times: ponder, received instructions in a dream, and did what the angel said once he woke up. Joseph would not act rashly when he was unclear but when he understood God's will - even if it went against his own original thoughts - he would immediately obey. Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter "Patris Corde" (Heart of a Father) says: "In our lives many things happen that we do not understand. Our first reaction is usually disappointment or resistance, but Joseph put aside his opinions so that the mystery may be revealed to him, and he accepts it with joy...The spiritual path that Joseph presents to us is not a search for explanation, but one of acceptance. Only starting from this acceptance and reconciliation can we experience a greater history, a deeper meaning."

Prayer

The Bible does not record how Joseph prayed. Pope John Paul II pointed out in the Apostolic Exhortation "Redemptoris Custos" (Guardian of the Saviour) that Joseph's actions had "the breath of deep contemplation." Catechism of The Catholic Church #2715 explains that "contemplation is the gaze of faith with Jesus as the focus." Joseph has been gazing at the incarnate Son of God since Jesus' birth. We can also experience the presence of the Lord in every moment of our lives by learning contemplative prayer, living in a state of being with God in body and mind.

May we learn from St. Joseph to follow the path shown by God and calmly accept things in life that we did not choose. St. Joseph, pray for us.
