

let me remain here to prepare for my first communion."

The child's pleadings are fruitless. Nothing can soften that stern father's heart so true it is that the breath of incredulity transforms even the most affectionate hearts into adamant. Joseph mutely besought the kind Pastor's pity and rose and followed his father.

The following day the exercises of the retreat went on as usual ; but poor Joseph's place was vacant. He dared not openly disobey his father's command while the latter took special care not to let him elude his vigilance for a moment. Meanwhile his little companions were praying to St. Joseph for him, asking the dear Saint to protect him and give him the grace to make his first communion with them.

The day so eagerly desired by those youthful aspirants dawned at last, and was also the feast of St. Joseph. As the Pastor exhorts them a last time to give and consecrate their hearts and lives forever to the divine Jesus, who in a few minutes will come Himself to be their loving guest, his heart grows sad on seeing Joseph's vacant place and with emotion he says : My children, St. Joseph must bring back our little truant, we will say the Memorare for that intention." Clear the childish voices mount heavenwards : Remember, O glorious St. Joseph, etc.

The prayer is hardly finished when a boy dressed in a new black cloth suit, holding a candle in his hand, with a pretty white ribbon fringed with gold hanging from his left arm comes quickly up the aisle. Gladness shines on every face as the whisper goes round : " here is Joseph ! " One could easily see how he had wept and suffered, but all is forgotten now as with angelic piety and beaming countenance he takes his place among his companions and kneels to receive his Jesus for the first time. What had happened ? How had he come there ? Had St. Joseph taken him under his sceptre of lilies, or enveloped him under the same mantle that protected the child Jesus, against the fury of Herod. That is St. Joseph's secret ; but what little Joseph told us, was, that his father had been hastily summoned to the city to attend a dangerous case and he with even more haste profited by the opportunity and was lucky enough to reach the church in time.