

the Mother of Jesus, when not only was Zachary's tongue loosened to praise the Lord, not only did Elizabeth proclaim the divine maternity of Mary, not only was John sanctified in the womb, but Jesus effected this miracle through His Beloved Mother, and she herself proclaimed that all generations should thenceforth call her Blessed. Yet in the fulfilment of this prophecy no voices are more lovingly raised than those of the children of Carmel and of the Rosary, nor may more devout clients of St. Joseph be found than those who thus honor his glorious spouse.

The Nativity of Our Blessed Lord in Bethlehem, the third joyful mystery, presents St. Joseph to our devout meditation in so touching and tender an attitude that we at once realize his place and power as head of the Holy Family. Verily, the Lord "made him master of His house and ruler of all His possessions,"* beginning here, in visible form, that sacred commission of which Pharaoh's to the other Joseph was only a figure. The Egyptian king raised Jacob's son to dignity second only to his own, in all the lands that owned his sway; but the King of Heaven has elevated our Joseph to heights sublime by giving to him the care of His greatest treasures, His Divine Son and the Immaculate Virgin Mary—a thought and truth which at once brings us into the region of divine wonders as we enter Bethlehem's holy cave to venerate Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

An intimate, integral part of this beautiful mystery is St. Joseph. Dogma and devotion, fostered by Christian art, picture the Holy Three, the Earthly Trinity, as Catholic theology permits us, in reverent spirit, to name them.

And thus, by a certain spontaneity Catholic piety links their blessed names, nor yet loses sight of the immense space that intervenes between Creator and creature. That we say lovingly and from our hearts and often through the day, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph I give You my heart and my soul! Jesus, Mary and Joseph be with me in my last agony!" is a tribute to the unerring instinct of Catholic faith enkindling piety into a flame of tender devotion, the divine fires of which are burning in the Incarnation, in the coming of Jesus, born of Mary and fostered by Joseph—a plan designed by the wisdom of Almighty God.

And as no Christmas crib is complete without the image of Joseph, venerable and tender, so no Catholic heart has made fitting habitation for Jesus and Mary that welcomes not her holy spouse.

His place in the Presentation of the Divine Child in the temple is no less clear. "They carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord," is the manner in which St. Luke* tells us that Mary and Joseph began the work prescribed by the law; and further, the Evangelist records that "His parents were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him,"† by holy Simeon. Joseph shared in the sorrow of Mary when the inspired priest foretold the sword that would yet pierce her heart. It was in God's design that he should share in all the joys and griefs affecting Jesus and Mary during the holy childhood. And thus it is becoming that we invoke him, asking that he will teach us the meaning of the blessed mysteries in which he participated and for the profitable learning of this lesson, that

* II., 22.

† II., 33.

* Psalm civ., 21.