

SERMON FOR ST. JOSEPH DAY.

Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.—St. Matt. 1: 16.

In these few words the holy Evangelist mentions three names most dear to Catholic piety, three names which the faithful ever bear in their hearts with love, and invoke with confidence; Jesus, our God, our Creator, our Redeemer; Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother full of grace, tenderness and mercy; Joseph, foster-father of Jesus, spouse of Mary, our protector, and patron of the universal Church. That we should have the highest confidence in and the greatest devotion to these three blessed and holy names, I have no need to tell you, who never permit a single day to pass by without invoking them many times, and are striving to honour them in all things. As we celebrate the feast of St. Joseph to-day, and as the promise we give him redounds to the honour of Mary and the glory of Jesus, I shall try to answer the pious wishes of your hearts by choosing for your consideration, and I hope edification, the devotion which is to this glorious patriarch St. Joseph, a devotion as beautiful in itself as it is pleasing to God and advantageous to ourselves.

The first sentiment which the name of St. Joseph should awaken in our hearts is one of profound veneration for him. God has honoured him infinitely by making him the treasury of his power and authority over Jesus and Mary. "Take the Child and His Mother," (Matt. 2: 13, 20). Take them and have in all things a care for them, as a father should have for his household, for his spouse and his child. Thus was St. Joseph raised to the sublime dignity of Head of the Holy Family, holding the place on earth of the Eternal Father in heaven. Mary honours him as her husband and submits all her actions to his judgment. It is St. Joseph who receives the messages from Heaven and makes them known to his holy spouse. Jesus, uncreated wisdom humbly obeys him who holds for Him the place of Father, *He was subject to them.* (Luke 2: 51.) He works with St. Joseph and under his orders in the modest workshop at Nazareth. Therefore, if our Heavenly Father, if our Lord Jesus Christ, if the Blessed Virgin Mary have rendered to St. Joseph the highest honours a man is capable of receiving, is it not our duty to give to this same great and illustrious patriarch all the homage of respect and veneration, which piety enlightened by faith and inflamed by charity can inspire in us? We are children of the Catholic Church, and see our Mother propagating on all sides and everywhere devotion to St. Joseph, erecting churches and altars in his name, celebrating feasts in his honour, and proclaiming him to the world as her glorious patron and protector. Shall not we unite in this universal concert of Catholic souls to honour the foster-father of our Lord, and the spouse of our good and tender Mother Mary? To honour St. Joseph is to unite our dispositions with those of Jesus Christ, to share in the sentiments of His Adorable Heart towards him, whom he venerated and loved as a father on earth. To declare ourselves servants of St. Joseph is to profess ourselves true disciples of the Saviour. The Blessed Virgin has a particular predelection for those souls who are faithful in honouring her holy spouse. You would have been happy to have belonged to the Holy Family as a humble servant. If, then, you are truly devout to this glorious saint, if you make it your duty to render him your homage, you will, indeed, merit to be regarded as a member of the great family of which St. Joseph is the faithful protector.

True devotion to St. Joseph requires that we invoke him with confidence. His credit with God is great, and his intercession all-powerful, for he is a *just man*, and St. James tells us that *the prayer of the just man availeth much.* (Jas. 5: 16.) How many are the claims he has to be graciously heard! What can our Lord Jesus Christ refuse him? During His sojourn on earth he served Him as a father, he provided for His wants, he protected Him against the fury of His enemies, he shared all His sorrows and all the anxieties of Mary in their flight into Egypt, on their return to Nazareth and in her search for the Child in Jerusalem, *Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.* (Luke 11: 8.) The care, the vigilance, the tender solicitude, which St. Joseph always had for Jesus, he has preserved for us, whom he sees exposed on earth to ways of hell, the persecution of the world and the snares of our own passions. From heaven he beholds the danger which surround us in this vale of tears and place of exile, he is the witness of our labours, our fatigues and miseries, and his heart is touched with a tender and fatherly compassion for us. While he is all-powerful with Jesus to obtain for us the succor and graces necessary, we cannot doubt but that he is also disposed to intercede for those whom his beloved Jesus has redeemed at the price of His Blood, and whom Mary, his holy spouse, has received as her children at the foot of the cross. The Church, too, by a solemn decree of the Holy Father, has acknowledged St. Joseph as her protector and patron. This should be for us a new motive of confidence, urging us to invoke him amid the thousand necessities which assail us in this life and in death. And whose death was like unto the death of St. Joseph? When he had fulfilled his days on earth, and accomplished the work God had given him to do, consolation came to him as he lay on his death-bed, such as has been given to none other of God's servants. There stood his holy spouse, the mother of his God, there, too, stood Jesus, whom he watched over from infancy to

manhood, his Saviour and his God. What death could be happier than to die in the blessed arms of Jesus and Mary? With what confidence, therefore, can we ask St. Joseph, patron of the agonizing, to be propitious to us at that dread hour which is to decide our eternity, and obtain for us a happy death.

The best way to procure for ourselves the protection and intercession of St. Joseph, is to take him for our model and imitate him in every virtue in which he has given us an illustrious example. Joseph, the Gospel tells us, *was just*, that is to say, faithful in all his duties to God, to his neighbour and to himself. Let the will of God be for us the only rule of conduct, as it was for St. Joseph in all the circumstances of his varied life. It is not without reason that in these our days devotion to this great patriarch has obtained an ever increasing extension. It is a remedy truly applicable to our present social state, which is being destroyed by insubordination, for it teaches the rights of authority and the duty of obedience. We should, however, love our neighbour, as St. Joseph loved him, supporting him with patience, assisting him with charity, and ever watchful for his welfare. We should also imitate St. Joseph in prayer, in work, and in the faithful accomplishment of all the duties of our stations in life. The Sacred Text relates no miracle done by the august foster-father of Jesus, but it does tell us that he was humble, a carpenter, a workman who earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. His whole life was passed in solitude, recollection and prayer, in the company of Jesus and Mary, where he fulfilled perfectly all the duties of his state. This it is that we must imitate in him in order to merit his paternal protection and wonderful intercession with Jesus. In our thoughts, words, actions, in all our conduct let us propose to ourselves St. Joseph as the model we are to follow. Let us recommend ourselves to him with confidence at all times. If we are faithful in our devotion to St. Joseph, he will ever be our support and succour in life, and we shall have the happiness of his protection when that hour shall come for us to leave this world, and through his intercession be received into the glory of heaven, where, with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we hope to reign forever. *Amen.* D. J. C.

A VISIT TO CARDINAL GIBBONS.

The Cardinal's House stands back to back with the Cathedral and fronts on North Charles Street, the fashionable thoroughfare of Baltimore. It is a square-shaped, three story structure of marble, innocent of any attempt at architectural adornment. A low wall of brick, surrounded by an iron fence, guards the house and the narrow strip of grass land that surrounds it. Four and twenty marble steps lead from the steps to the door, and a few half grown elm-trees shade the inclosure. To gain an audience with the Cardinal is not a difficult task.

You climb the steps and ring the bell, the plated handle of which is tarnished from over use. A fresh-faced maid from Kerry answers the summons and in a delicious brogue asks your business. In her hands is a silver tray, and on it you lay your card. When this is done she bids you enter. You find yourself in a broad and gloomily-lighted hall. At the further end is a staircase leading to the upper floors; on either side, near the entrance, is a door. Both stand ajar and through the crevice you gain a glimpse of goodly-sized and meagerly furnished rooms. The open door of the hall is innocent of carpet or rugs.

As the maid ascends the stair, and with her your card, you take a look about you and a mental inventory of your surroundings. Two straight backed oak chairs—suggestive of discomfort—and an antiquated table comprise the furniture. Hung from the walls, in frames of tarnished gilt, are two paintings in oil. The one on the right reveals the face of the Virgin Mary, evidently very old, for the colours are sadly faded. Opposite the familiar features of Pope Leo look down upon you. In the dim religious light that steals through the narrow transom above the door the pictures look gray and positively ghostlike.

Presently the patter of slippered feet sound on the stair, and a moment later a slender little man in black is standing before you. He takes you by the hand and in slow and measured tones tells you how pleased he is at meeting you. Then he guides you out of the shadow of the passage into the sunlit office, and affords an opportunity for closer inspection.

One's first impressions of the Cardinal are apt to prove disappointing. He is undersized, thin-featured and pale of face; the fringe of hair that peeps beneath the red skull cap is iron gray as to colour and thin in quantity. He is dressed, as he is always dressed, in a suit of sombre black. The only visible tokens of his priestly rank are a cravat of crimson velvet and a cap of kindred tint. All in all, the man, from a physical point of view, is small, fragile and wonderfully unlike the Cardinal of your imagination. But as he intones the conversational words of greeting with such kindly emphasis your disappointment fades as the night shades fade before the light of dawn. The Cardinal is a clever conversationalist. He can talk and talk brightly, on almost any topic.—*Washington Post.*