

holy peace, from whose secure shelter Our Lord did not depart, for the conflict and the victory, until the hour had struck in which the law permitted Him to teach, in which He went forth to do His Heavenly Father's will. As standing between the old covenant and the new, as closing the line of Patriarchs, and heading the grand phalanx of the sanctified who would walk after Christ, we behold St. Joseph, the shadow of the Eternal Father, the guardian of Jesus in His infant years, the docile instrument of the Holy Ghost, for the accomplishment of wonders and marvels during the unspeakable period of the hidden life.

It is a happy plan that so attaches the memory of St. Joseph, in his festival of March 19th, to the splendid commemoration of divine power and wisdom and love, in the Incarnation, celebrated in the Feast of the Annunciation. The month of the Son of God become man is the month also, by Catholic piety, of His Foster Father. With faithful devotion, as by a natural law in the spiritual order, our hearts lovingly turn to St. Joseph, for it is a necessary outgrowth of our faith in the Incarnation. This stupendous mystery on which are built humanity's hope and salvation, is the root, the explanation, and, if necessary, the vindication of our love for Our Blessed Mother. It is also the root, the explanation, and, if necessary, the vindication of our love for St. Joseph.

However, in this, the first joyful mystery of the Rosary, St. Joseph takes no prominent part, and yet, as St. Jerome tells us, his place was one, in a manner necessary, assuredly of divine appointment, and for grave and precious reasons—the safe-guarding of the honor of Mary, among men, the

concealing from the evil spirit of the mystery that had been wrought, and the designating of the lowly carpenter of Nazareth as invested with such relationship towards the adorable Trinity, as never before had come to mortal, nor shall they to another.

In the Visitation it is not certain that St. Joseph was the companion of the Blessed Virgin, for not only is St. Luke, who records the beautiful event, silent as to the holy patriarch, but solid reasons are given by eminent theologians showing the probability of his stay in Nazareth, while the Blessed Virgin found protection and an escort in some worthy matron, whose assistance he had secured. The argument that St. Joseph must have accompanied Our Lady during the long, laborious and somewhat perilous journey over the hill country from Nazareth to the home of Zachary and Elizabeth in "a city of Juda,"* is not convincing. The honor of Mary did not require this attention, nor could St. Joseph have well remained for three months absent from his work and duties. Assistance, companionship and protection he becomingly provided, and these sufficed. Had he made that memorable trip and heard the solemn words of Elizabeth, no doubt could have troubled his mind after the return to Nazareth. †

In this view, we may not contemplate St. Joseph sharing in the gladness of that divinely arranged meeting between the mother of the Baptist and

* According to Blessed Albert the Great and St. Bonaventure, this city was Jerusalem; other authorities name the town of Hebron.

† In the "Divine Life of the Most Holy Virgin Mary," written by the Venerable Mary of Agreda, we are told that St. Joseph accompanied Our Lady to Zachary's home, remained a few days, then retired to Nazareth, and in due time returned to escort his Holy spouse to their home. (Chapter IX.) The saintly author of this remarkable book assures us that she received from Our Lady the account narrated in its pages. The difficulties alleged by theology, as given in our text, are not irreconcilable with the statement of the Venerable Mary of Agreda. However, as this is not the place for a discussion of this question, the reader may choose as he will.