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### Mary and Joseph in the Apostolic Exhortation: Redemptoris Custos

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**MARY AND JOSEPH  
IN THE  
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS***

**INTRODUCTION**

It is always an honor to be asked to prepare a research paper for a scholarly organization. I am honored, and grateful to the Mariological Society of America, for the invitation to present some reflections on the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* of Pope John Paul II, 15 August 1989—particularly the document's relation to Mariology and mariologists. My presentation will include the following:

- A. The occasion of this Apostolic Exhortation
- B. Its purposes
- C. An outline of the document
- D. Some of its teachings in reference to Mary, the wife of St. Joseph
- E. Conclusions.

**A. THE OCCASION**

The occasion of *Redemptoris Custos* was the centenary of the first encyclical on St. Joseph, *Quamquam Pluries*, of Pope Leo XIII, 15 August 1889. His predecessor, Pius IX, 8 December 1870, had already declared Joseph "Patron of the Universal Church," after citing Joseph's "most powerful patronage" (*potentissimo patrocinio*). Furthermore, the following year, 7 July 1871, after noting that God had filled St. Joseph "with entirely unique graces," he had directed that Joseph's feast of March 19 be celebrated under the rite of a "double of the first class, yet without an octave, on account of Lent."

*Quamquam Pluries* is a relatively brief (four and one-half pages!) but most important document, considered by many to be the theological Magna Carta of the grandeurs and supernatural privileges of St. Joseph. In it, Pope Leo lays down the theological basis of Joseph's unique and eminent supernatural mission over the Church, as decreed by divine providence:

There are special reasons why Blessed Joseph should be explicitly named Patron of the Church and why the Church in turn should expect much from his patronage and guardianship. *For he, indeed, was the husband of Mary and the father, as was supposed, of Jesus Christ. Whence arise all his dignity, grace, holiness and glory.* The dignity of the Mother of God is certainly so sublime that nothing can surpass it; but nonetheless, *since the bond of marriage existed between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, there can be no doubt that more than any other person he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God is raised far above all created natures.*<sup>1</sup> For marriage is the closest possible union and relationship, whereby each spouse mutually participates in the goods of the other. *Consequently, if God gave Joseph as spouse to the Virgin, he assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity because he was the guardian of the Son of God by divine appointment,* and in the opinion of people was His father. As a consequence, the Word of God was modestly obedient to Joseph, was attentive to his commands, and paid him every honor that children should render their *parents*. [italics mine]

## B. THE PURPOSES

The purposes of the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* are several:

<sup>1</sup>Sed tamen quia intercessit Iosepho cum Virgine beatissima maritalis vinculum, ad illam praestantissimam dignitatem, qua naturis creatis omnibus longissime Deipara antecellit, non est dubium quin accesserit ipse, ut nemo magis. For the entire encyclical in Latin, see *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 22 (1889-90): 65-69.

1. To treat of "the person and mission of Saint Joseph in the life of Christ and of the Church"—as the subtitle states.

2. To commemorate Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Quamquam Pluries*—"and, in line with the veneration given to Saint Joseph over the centuries, . . . to offer for your consideration, dear brothers and sisters, some reflections concerning him 'to whose custody God entrusted his most precious treasures.' " (Here Pope John Paul II is quoting Pope Pius IX.)

3. To continue the "pastoral duty" (of his papal predecessors) of writing and teaching about Saint Joseph—"so that all may grow in devotion to the Patron of the Universal Church and in love for the Saviour whom he served in such an exemplary manner."

4. To renew and strengthen the self-image of the Church. In the fourth paragraph of the introduction, John Paul II writes, "I am convinced that by reflecting upon the way that Mary's spouse shared in the divine mystery, the Church—on the road towards the future with all of humanity—will be enabled to discover ever anew her own identity within this redemptive plan, *which is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation*." Many have noted that this Pope's encyclical on Jesus was titled *Redemptor Hominis*, his encyclical on Mary *Redemptoris Mater*, and now we have *Redemptoris Custos*. (He has since written *Redemptoris Missio*, on the Church's missionary mandate.) He thus places St. Joseph in the heart of our redemption. In fact, he adds in the next paragraph, "This is precisely the mystery in which Joseph of Nazareth 'shared' like no other human being except Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word."

5. To compensate for past omission. A final purpose, not explicitly stated by Pope John Paul, but which may be seen in this document, is to rectify a misunderstanding derived from Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II, where Mary's role in the history of salvation is developed in such a manner as to give the impression, especially to Bible-literate non-Catholics, that Mary was not a married woman. For by *failing even to mention St. Joseph* the Council may have

risked dehumanizing Mary, while exalting her prerogatives, privileges and importance. (It might be added, also, that in the long encyclical on Mary, *Redemptoris Mater*, Joseph is mentioned only five times and *never* explicitly as her husband nor she as his wife.) I shall come back to this point at the end of this paper.

### C. OUTLINE OF *REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS*

#### Introduction (1)

- I. The Gospel Portrait: His Marriage to Mary (2-3)
- II. The Guardian of the Mystery of God (4-16)
  - The Service of Fatherhood (7-8)
  - The Census (9)
  - The Birth at Bethlehem (10)
  - The Circumcision (11)
  - Conferral of the Name (12)
  - The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (13)
  - The Flight into Egypt (14)
  - Jesus' Stay in the Temple (15)
  - The Support and Education of Jesus of Nazareth (16)
- III. A Just Man—A Husband (17-21)
- IV. Work as an Expression of Love (22-24)
- V. The Primacy of the Interior Life (25-27)
- VI. Patron of the Church in our Day (28-32).<sup>2</sup>

### D. *REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS* ON MARY

Turning to the text itself, the subtitle, introduction, and parts I, II, and III would seem to be of chief interest to mariologists.

<sup>2</sup>A note on procedure and footnotes: since some readers may not have the text of *Redemptoris Custos* conveniently available, I will give the entire pertinent text of the document and then offer my own comments, so that the reader may compare text and context. I will not ordinarily present any footnotes of the document itself, unless there is some relation to my own comments. The raised number-with-letter indicators enclosed in parentheses in the text will refer to my comments.

The *subtitle* indicates clearly that the Exhortation is "on the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church."

COMMENT: Note that there is no specific mention of St. Joseph in the life of Mary, his wife. Yet much of this document does indeed treat of Joseph in her life—and of her in his.

The Latin text reads "de persona sancti Ioseph *et opera* . . ." <sup>3</sup>

### *Introduction* (No. 1)

The introduction begins with a quote from Matthew, followed by the Pope's own comment:

1. Called to be the Guardian of the Redeemer, "*Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took his wife*" (cf. Mt 1:24). <sup>4</sup>

Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as Saint Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model. <sup>(1a)</sup>

On the occasion of the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical Epistle *Quamquam Pluries*, and in line with the veneration given to Saint Joseph over the centuries, I wish to offer for your consideration, dear brothers and sisters, some reflections concerning him "to whose custody God entrusted his most precious treasures." I gladly fulfil this pastoral duty so that all may grow in devotion to the Patron of the Universal Church and in love for the Saviour whom he served in such an exemplary manner. <sup>(1b)</sup>

In this way the whole Christian people not only will turn to Saint Joseph with greater fervor and invoke his patronage with

<sup>3</sup>This and all future references to the Latin text of *Redemptoris Custos* are from *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 82 (1990): 5-34 (hereafter cited as *AAS*).

<sup>4</sup>Italics here, as in all citations of this document, are as they appear in the original.

trust, but also will always keep before their eyes his humble, mature way of serving and of "taking part" in the plan of salvation.

I am convinced that by reflecting upon the way that Mary's spouse shared in the divine mystery, the Church—on the road towards the future with all of humanity—will be enabled to discover ever anew her own identity within this redemptive plan, *which is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation.*<sup>(1c)</sup>

This is precisely the mystery in which Joseph of Nazareth "shared" like no other human being except Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word. He shared in it with her; he was involved in the same salvific event; he was the guardian of the same love, through the power of which the eternal Father "destined us to be his sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:5).<sup>(1d)</sup>

#### COMMENTS ON THE INTRODUCTION (No. 1)

(1a) Right at the beginning we see the papal teaching on the order of Joseph's duties: first is his loving care of Mary, then the rearing of Jesus.

(1b) Obviously the "most precious treasures" of the Father are Jesus and Mary. It should also be obvious that, since Joseph and Mary shared the bond of marriage, all who grow in devotion to St. Joseph will also grow in love for Mary, whom Joseph served so lovingly. And should not the converse apply to all who grow in devotion to Mary?

(1c) In the fifth paragraph of Number 1, the Pope seems, by using italics, to allude to a major theme of his own pastoral teaching of the past thirteen years, namely, the Redeemer and his redemption of us all. He places Joseph, with his wife Mary, as part, so to speak, of the identity of the Church.

(1d) The final paragraph is one of the greatest papal testimonies of the greatness of St. Joseph and his intimate relationship to Mary: "... *sharing* like no other ... sharing *with* her ... guardian of the *same* love. . . ."

#### *I. The Gospel Portrait, His Marriage to Mary* (Nos. 2 and 3)

This is the Pope's interpretation of the Infancy Gospel texts:

2. "Joseph, Son of David, *do not fear to take Mary* your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21).

In these words we find the core of biblical truth about Saint Joseph; they refer to that moment in his life to which the Fathers of the Church make special reference.<sup>(2a)</sup>

The Evangelist Matthew explains the significance of this moment while also describing how Joseph lived it.<sup>(2b)</sup> However, in order to understand fully both its content and context, it is important to keep in mind the parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke. In Matthew we read: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18). However, the origin of Mary's pregnancy "of the Holy Spirit" is described more fully and explicitly in *what Luke tells us about the annunciation of Jesus' birth*: "The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1:26-27). The Angel's greeting, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1:28) created an inner turmoil in Mary and also moved her to reflect. Then the messenger reassured the Virgin and at the same time revealed God's special plan for her: "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David*" (Lk 1:30-32).

A little earlier the Gospel writer had stated that at the moment of the Annunciation, Mary was "betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David." The nature of this "*marriage*" is explained indirectly when Mary, after hearing what the messenger says about the birth of the child, asks, "How can this be, *since I do not know man?*" (Lk 1:34). The Angel responds: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). Although Mary is already "wedded" [*desponsata*] to Joseph, she will remain a virgin, because the child conceived in her at the Annunciation was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>(2c)</sup>



At this point Luke's text coincides with Matthew 1:18 and serves to explain what we read there. If, after her marriage [*conubium*] to Joseph, Mary "is found to be with child of the Holy Spirit," this fact corresponds to all that the Annunciation means, in particular to Mary's final words: "*Let this be [done] to me according to your word*" (Lk 1:38). In response to what is clearly the plan of God, with the passing of days and weeks Mary's "pregnancy" is visible to the people and to Joseph;<sup>(2d)</sup> she appears before them as one who must give birth and carry within herself the mystery of motherhood.

3. In these circumstances, "her husband [*vir ejus*] Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, *resolved to send her away quietly*" (Mt 1:19). He did not know how to deal with Mary's "astonishing" motherhood. He certainly sought an answer to this unsettling question, but above all he sought a way out of what was for him a difficult situation.<sup>(3a)</sup> "*But as he considered this*, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, *do not fear to take Mary your wife*, for what which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' " (Mt 1:20-21).

There is a strict parallel between the "annunciation" in Matthew's text and the one in Luke.<sup>(3b)</sup> *The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary's motherhood.* While remaining a virgin, she who by law is his "spouse" [*sponsa*] has become a mother through the power of the Holy Spirit. And when the Son in Mary's womb comes into the world, he must receive the name Jesus. This was a name known among the Israelites and sometimes given to their sons. In this case, however, *it is the Son who*, in accordance with the divine promise, *will bring to perfect fulfilment the meaning of the name Jesus—Yehošua'*—which means "*God saves*."

Joseph is visited by *the messenger* as "Mary's spouse [*sponsum*],"<sup>(3c)</sup> as the one who in due time must give this name<sup>(3d)</sup> to the Son to be born of the Virgin of Nazareth who is married [*desponsata*] to him. It is *to Joseph*, then, that the messenger turns, *entrusting to him the responsibilities of an earthly father with regard to Mary's Son.*

"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife" (Mt 1:24). He took her in all the mystery of her motherhood. He took her to-

gether with the Son who had come into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way *he showed a readiness of will like Mary's* with regard to what God asked of him through the angel.<sup>(3e)</sup>

COMMENTS ON CHAPTER I (Nos. 2 and 3)

(2a) The Holy Father indicates once again (see the very beginning of this document) his reliance on patristic exegesis as the basis for his interpretations of the Gospels. He uses no "modern" methodology, nor is any contested. He simply accepts the way the Fathers understood these passages about St. Joseph. The patristic understanding of Joseph's role in the Gospel story is consistent with that derived from contemporary literary critical studies.

(2b) How Joseph *lived* that moment of Joseph's "annunciation" (as he calls it) will be emphasized by the Pope, mainly because we have no spoken words of Joseph.

(2c) Our contemporary custom of engagement is relatively new in the history of humanity. For many millennia, in most cultures, betrothal was the custom. The parents or guardians would choose the marriage partner for their young one, while the young person was usually not even consulted. During the time of their betrothal, the betrothed were considered legally married, and intercourse with any other person was considered to be adultery, not simply fornication. At an agreed time, the groom would go with his friends to the home of the bride, who would be waiting with her bridesmaids (see Mt 25:1-10); he would conduct her to his home, and this would be considered the finalization of the marriage.

This was the situation with Joseph and Mary. To be sure, we know nothing of their parents or families, but it is not necessary. It is sufficient to know that they were betrothed and that, as Matthew (1:20) tells us, the angel told Joseph, "*do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.*"

(2d) The Gospel texts do not indicate how Joseph became aware of Mary's pregnancy, nor when.

(3a) Through the many centuries there have been many interpretations of Matthew 1:19, such as, Joseph was in awe

and felt unworthy, or he judged Mary guilty of adultery, or he had a serious problem of conscience and did not know what to do. Pope John Paul says Joseph "certainly sought an answer to this unsettling question, but above all he sought a way out of what was for him a difficult situation."

(3b) Just as the pope sees similarities in the divine action in Mary and in Joseph, so here he sees "a strict parallel" between the Annunciation to Mary in Luke, and the annunciation (his term) to Joseph. This is followed by a patristic-papal sentence that can be penetrated not by interpretation but by deep and long contemplation: *The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary's motherhood.*

(3c) Another proof, if one be needed, that Joseph was truly the *husband* of Mary.

(3d) The Greek of Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:31 is identical (*kai kaleseis to onoma autou Iēsoun*), but because it was the prerogative of the father to name the child (cf. Lk. 1:62f.), the text of Luke has been translated and interpreted in the sense of "they will call him Jesus" or "his name will be Jesus," but in Matthew it is a command to Joseph: "you shall name him Jesus."

(3e) As is seen throughout this document, Joseph's *actions* indicate his dedication to the will of God and are comparable to Mary's *words* of submission.

## II. *The Guardian of the Mystery of God* (Nos. 4-16)

4. When, soon after the Annunciation, Mary went to the house of Zechariah to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth, even as she offered her greeting she heard the words of Elizabeth, who was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk 1:41). Besides offering a salutation which recalled that of the angel at the Annunciation, Elizabeth also said: "*And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord*" (Lk 1:45). These words were the guiding thought of the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*,<sup>(4a)</sup> in which I sought to deepen the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which stated: "*The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully preserved her union with her Son even to the cross,*" "preceding" all those who follow Christ by faith.

Now at the beginning of this pilgrimage, *the faith of Mary meets the faith of Joseph.*<sup>(4b)</sup> If Elizabeth said of the Redeemer's Mother, "blessed is she who believed," in a certain sense this blessedness can be referred to Joseph as well, since he responded positively to the word of God when it was communicated to him at the decisive moment.<sup>(4c)</sup> While it is true that Joseph did not respond to the Angel's "announcement" in the same way as Mary, he "*did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife.*" *What he did is the clearest "obedience of faith"* (cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26; 2 Cor 10:5-6).<sup>(4d)</sup>

One can say that *what Joseph did* united him in an altogether special way to the faith of Mary. *He accepted* as a truth coming from God *the very thing that she had already accepted* at the Annunciation. The Council teaches: "The obedience of faith must be given to God as he reveals himself. By this obedience of faith man freely commits himself entirely to God, making 'the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,' and willingly assenting to the revelation given by him." *This statement, which touches the very essence of faith, is perfectly applicable to Joseph of Nazareth.*<sup>(4e)</sup>

5. Therefore he became *a unique guardian of the mystery* "hidden for ages in God" (Eph 3:9), as did Mary,<sup>(5a)</sup> in that decisive moment which Saint Paul calls "*the fullness of time,*" when "God sent forth his Son, born of woman . . . to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). In the words of the Council: "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will (cf. Eph 1:9). His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and become sharers in the divine nature" (cf. Eph 2:18; 2 Pt 1:4).

*Together with Mary,*<sup>(5b)</sup> *Joseph is the first guardian of this divine mystery.* Together with Mary, and in relation to Mary, *he shares in this final phase of God's self-revelation in Christ*, and he does so from the very beginning. Looking at the Gospel texts of both Matthew and Luke, one can also say that Joseph is the first *to share in the faith of the Mother of God*, and that in doing so he supports his spouse in the faith of the divine annunciation. He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary's "pilgrimage of faith." It is a path along which—especially at the time of Calvary and Pentecost—Mary will precede in a perfect way.

6. The path that was Joseph's—*his pilgrimage of faith—ended first*,<sup>(6a)</sup> that is to say, before Mary stood at the foot of the Cross on Golgotha, and before that time after Christ returned to the Father, when she was present in the Upper Room on Pentecost, the day the Church was manifested to the world, having been born in the power of the Spirit of truth. Nevertheless, *Joseph's way of faith moved in the same direction*: it was totally determined by the same mystery, of which he, together with Mary, had been the first guardian. The Incarnation and the Redemption constitute an organic and indissoluble unity, in which "the plan of revelation is realized by words and deeds which are intrinsically bound up with each other." Precisely because of this unity, Pope John XXIII, who had a great devotion to Saint Joseph, directed that Joseph's name be inserted in the Roman Canon of the Mass—which is the perpetual memorial of redemption—after the name of Mary and before the Apostles, Popes and Martyrs.<sup>(6b)</sup>

#### The service of fatherhood

7. As can be deduced from the Gospel texts, Joseph's marriage [*coniugium*] to Mary is the juridical basis of his fatherhood. It was to assure fatherly protection for Jesus that God chose Joseph to be Mary's spouse [*coniugem*].<sup>(7a)</sup> It follows that Joseph's fatherhood—a relationship that places him as close as possible to Christ,<sup>(7b)</sup> to whom every election and predestination is ordered (cf. Rom 8:28-29)—comes to pass through marriage to Mary, that is, through the family.

While clearly affirming that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that virginity remained intact in the marriage (cf. Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38),<sup>(7c)</sup> the Evangelists refer to Joseph as Mary's husband [*virum*] and to Mary as his wife (cf. Mt 1:16, 18-20, 24; Lk 1:27; 2:5).<sup>(7d)</sup>

And while it is important for the Church to profess *the virginal conception of Jesus*, it is no less important to uphold *Mary's marriage to Joseph*, because juridically Joseph's fatherhood depends on it. Thus one understands why the generations are listed according to the genealogy of Joseph: "Why," St. Augustine asks, "should they not be according to Joseph? Was he not Mary's husband? . . . Scripture states, through the authority of an Angel, that he was her husband. *Do not fear*, says the Angel, *to take Mary your wife, for that which is con-*

ceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was told to name the child, although not born from his seed. She *will bear a son*, the Angel says, *and you will call him Jesus*. Scripture recognizes that Jesus is not born of Joseph's seed, since in his concern about the origin of Mary's pregnancy, Joseph is told that it is of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, he is not deprived of his fatherly authority, since he is told to name the child.<sup>(7e)</sup> Finally, even the Virgin Mary, well aware that she has not conceived Christ as a result of conjugal relations with Joseph, still calls him *Christ's father*."

The *Son of Mary* is also *Joseph's Son*<sup>(7f)</sup> by virtue of the marriage bond that unites them: "By reason of their faithful marriage, *both of them* deserve to be called Christ's parents, not only his mother, but also his father, who was a parent in the same way that he was the mother's spouse [*coniux*]: *in mind*, not in the flesh." In this marriage none of the requisites of marriage were lacking: "In Christ's parents all the goods of marriage were realized—offspring, fidelity, the sacrament: the *offspring* being the Lord Jesus himself; *fidelity*, since there was no adultery; the *sacrament*, since there was no divorce."<sup>(7g)</sup>

Analyzing the nature of marriage, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas always identify it with an "indivisible union of souls," a "union of hearts," with "consent."<sup>(7h)</sup> These elements are found in an exemplary manner in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. At the culmination of the history of salvation, when God reveals his love for humanity through the gift of the Word, it is precisely *the marriage of Mary and Joseph* that brings to realization in full "freedom" the "spousal gift of self" in receiving and expressing such a love. "In this great undertaking which is the renewal of all things in Christ, marriage—it too purified and renewed—becomes a new reality, a sacrament of the New Covenant."<sup>(7i)</sup> We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple. But whereas Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Saviour began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his all-powerful will to *purify and sanctify the family*—that sanctuary of love and cradle of life."

How much the family of today can learn from this!<sup>(7j)</sup> "The essence and role of the family are in the final analysis specified

by love. Hence the family has *the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love*, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing of God's love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his bride." This being the case, it is in the Holy Family, the original "Church in miniature (*Ecclesia domestica*)," that every Christian family must be reflected. "Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families."

8. Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission<sup>(8a)</sup> of Jesus directly *through the exercise of his fatherhood*. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church's Liturgy teaches, he "cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation" and is truly a "minister of salvation." His fatherhood is expressed concretely<sup>(8b)</sup> "in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it; in having used the legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, of his life and work; in having turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house."<sup>(8c)</sup>

In recalling that "the beginnings of our redemption" were entrusted "to the faithful care of Joseph," the Liturgy specifies that "God placed him at the head of his family, as a faithful and prudent servant, so that with fatherly care he might watch over his only-begotten Son." Leo XIII emphasized the sublime nature of this mission: "He among all stands out in his august dignity, since by divine disposition he was guardian and, according to human opinion, father of God's Son. Whence it followed that the Word of God was subjected to Joseph, he obeyed him and rendered to him that honor and reverence that children owe to their father."

Since it is inconceivable that such a sublime task would not be matched by the necessary qualities to fulfil it adequately,<sup>(8d)</sup> we must recognize that Joseph showed Jesus "by a special gift from heaven, all the natural love,<sup>(8e)</sup> all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know."

Besides fatherly authority over Jesus, God also gave Joseph a share in the corresponding love, the love that has its origin in

the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15).

The Gospels<sup>(8f)</sup> clearly describe the fatherly responsibility of Joseph towards Jesus. For salvation—which comes through the humanity of Jesus—is realized in actions which are an everyday part of family life, in keeping with that "condescension" which is inherent in the economy of the Incarnation. The Gospel writers carefully show how in the life of Jesus nothing was left to chance, but how everything took place according to God's predetermined plan. The oft-repeated formula, "This happened so that there might be fulfilled . . .," in reference to a particular event in the Old Testament, serves to emphasize the unity and continuity of the plan which is fulfilled in Christ.

With the Incarnation, the "promises" and "figures" of the Old Testament become "reality": places, persons, events and rites interrelate according to precise divine commands communicated by Angels and received by creatures who are particularly sensitive to the voice of God. Mary is the Lord's humble servant, prepared from eternity for the task of being the Mother of God.<sup>(8g)</sup> Joseph is the one whom God chose to be the "overseer of the Lord's birth," the one who has the responsibility to look after the Son of God's "ordained" entry into the world, in accordance with divine dispositions and human laws. All of the so-called "private" or "hidden" life of Jesus is entrusted to Joseph's guardianship.

The remaining eight numbers of this long second chapter are brief statements on the events of the Infancy Gospel. Most have no reference to Mariology, except the following:

The Census (No. 9.)

The Birth at Bethlehem

10. As guardian of the mystery "hidden for ages in the mind of God," which begins to unfold before his eyes "in the fulness of time," *Joseph, together with Mary*,<sup>(10a)</sup> is a privileged witness to the birth of the Son of God into the world *on Christmas night in Bethlehem*. Luke writes: "*And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn*" (Lk 2:6-7).



*Joseph was an eyewitness* to this birth, which took place in conditions that, humanly speaking, were embarrassing<sup>(10b)</sup>—a first announcement of that “self-emptying” (cf. Phil 2:5-8) which Christ freely accepted for the forgiveness of sins. . . .

#### The Circumcision

11. A son’s circumcision was the first religious obligation of a father, and with this ceremony (cf. Lk 2:21) Joseph exercised his right and duty with regard to Jesus. . . .

#### Conferral of the Name

12. At the circumcision Joseph names the child “Jesus.” This is the only name in which there is salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). Its significance had been revealed to Joseph at the moment of his “annunciation”: “You shall call the child Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (cf. Mt 1:21). In conferring the name, Joseph declares his own legal fatherhood [*paternitatem legitimam*] over Jesus, and in speaking the name he proclaims the child’s mission as Saviour [*opus . . . servatoris (sic)*].<sup>(12a)</sup>

#### The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

13. . . . The *ransoming of the first-born* is another obligation of the father, and it is fulfilled by Joseph. Represented in the first-born is the people of the covenant, ransomed from slavery in order to belong to God. . . .

The Gospel writer notes that “his father and mother marvelled at what was said about him” (Lk 2:30-34). . . .

#### The Flight into Egypt

14. . . . And so Jesus’ way back to Nazareth from Bethlehem passed through Egypt. Just as Israel had followed the path of the exodus “from the condition of slavery” in order to begin the Old Covenant, so *Joseph, guardian and cooperator in the providential mystery of God*, even in exile watched over the one who brings about the New Covenant.<sup>(14a)</sup>

#### Jesus’ Stay in the Temple

15. From the time of the Annunciation, both Joseph and Mary found themselves, in a certain sense, *at the heart of the mystery* hidden for ages in the mind of God, a mystery which had taken on flesh. . . . He dwelt among men, within the surroundings of *the Holy Family of Nazareth*—one of many fami-

lies in this small town in Galilee, one of the many families in the land of Israel. . . . The Gospels summarize in a few words the *long period of the "hidden" life*, during which Jesus prepared himself for his messianic mission. Only one episode from this "hidden time" is described in the *Gospel of Luke: the Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old*.

Together with Mary and Joseph, Jesus took part in the feast as a young pilgrim. . . .

Joseph, of whom Mary had just used the words "your father," heard this answer. That, after all, is what the people said and thought: Jesus was "the son (as was supposed) of Joseph" (Lk 3:23). Nonetheless, the reply of Jesus in the Temple brought once again to the mind of his "presumed father" what he had heard on that night twelve years earlier: "Joseph . . . do not fear to take Mary your wife, for *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*." From that time onwards he knew that he was a<sup>(15a)</sup> guardian of the mystery of God, and it was *precisely this mystery* that the twelve-year-old *Jesus brought to mind*: "I must be in my Father's house."<sup>(15b)</sup>

#### The Support and Education of Jesus of Nazareth

16. The growth of Jesus "in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52) took place within the Holy Family under the eyes of Joseph,<sup>(16a)</sup> who had the important task of "raising" Jesus, that is, feeding, clothing and educating him in the Law and in a trade, in keeping with the duties of a father.

In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Church venerates the memory of Mary the ever Virgin Mother of God and the memory of Saint Joseph,<sup>(16b)</sup> because "he fed him whom the faithful must eat as the bread of eternal life. . . ."

#### COMMENTS ON CHAPTER II (Nos. 4-16)

(4a) The Pope's devotion to Mary shines through, as he recalls the principle he used in his teaching on Mary, rooted in the teaching of Vatican II.

(4b) But now he unites that principle to a similar (but not identical) principle regarding Joseph. For at least a century the teaching of the popes has been that Joseph is the greatest of the saints after Mary, but never equal to Mary.

(4c) Yet, this Pope expresses it with a nuance: "in a certain sense" the blessedness of Mary's faith is applicable to

her husband's, because his response of faith was similar to hers.

(4d) The similarity is in their responses, the difference—or a difference—is that Mary's response was in *words*, whereas Joseph's was in *action*, which the Pope calls "the clearest 'obedience of faith.' "

(4e) More than any other devotee of Mary, then, Joseph was united in an altogether special way to her faith. What higher praise for any man—or woman?

(5a) Whereas Joseph is usually called the guardian of Jesus, here Mary is also called a guardian.

(5b) Again, that wonderful refrain about Joseph: "together with Mary . . . Together with Mary, and in relation to Mary. . . ." The holy couple constitutes a team, as it were, in the service of Jesus.

(6a) In this number, as in Number 5, there are indications, reminders, of the special place of St. Joseph in the plan of the Redemption. Some theologians have expressed this location as "within the order of the Hypostatic Union," as will be discussed later. This Pope presumes, as most readers of the Bible have, that Joseph died before Jesus began his public life, although the Evangelists do not give us a simple declarative sentence to remove all doubt on this matter. The Pope simply teaches that Joseph's faith "moved in the same direction" as that of his wife (and eventual widow), Mary.

(6b) Reference is made to the *Motu Proprio* of Pope John XXIII (issued during the Council, though not an act of Vatican Council II), placing the name of Joseph within what was the only Eucharistic Prayer at that time. A question to be asked now is: Why was the will of that pope not carried out and continued in the other Eucharistic Prayers approved since that time?

(7a) Josephologists agree that by divine providence Joseph was called first to be the husband of Mary, which was ordered to his being the father of Jesus in all ways except, of course, the actual physical generation.

(7b) Here Pope John Paul continues the teaching of the popes of the last century that Joseph is the greatest of the

saints after Mary, by reason of his paternal relation which places him "as close as possible to Christ."<sup>5</sup>

(7c) While there have always been those who acknowledged that Joseph and Mary were both virgins up to the birth of Jesus but denied that they remained virgins, alleging various Biblical texts (all refuted centuries ago by St. Jerome and by proper interpretation of the Bible), others (including St. Thomas Aquinas and many other theologians throughout the centuries) have believed, as does Pope John Paul, that "virginity remained intact in the marriage." In fact, St. Thomas maintained that both Mary and Joseph had each vowed virginity: "... Afterwards, when she had accepted her husband, in accordance with the requirements of the customs of that time, she made a vow of virginity together with him."<sup>6</sup> Those last three words remind us of that same phrase that echoes through this papal document—or is it vice versa?

(7d) A reminder, proved from Scripture, that the marriage of Joseph and Mary was a true and valid marriage. This is confirmed, so to speak, in the next paragraph, by St. Augustine, who cites the angel.

(7e) Not only is Joseph validly married, he is also validly a father, with fatherly authority.

(7f) Equality in marriage makes Joseph equally the parent of Jesus, even though not physically, in the nice phrasing of St. Augustine.

(7g) Cited here is St. Augustine's principle, which St. Thomas Aquinas explains (*Summa Theol.*, III, 29, 2, c. *finem*), that "in Christ's parents all the goods of marriage were realized—offspring, fidelity, sacrament." It was not the intention of Augustine, and certainly not the intention of Thomas nor of Pope John Paul II, to teach that Joseph and Mary received the Sacrament of Matrimony as later instituted

<sup>5</sup>One may read with benefit the truly encyclopedic work of the late great American Josephologist, Francis L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph: The Man Closest to Christ* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1962). He had previously published *The Man Nearest to Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1944).

<sup>6</sup>*Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 28, a. 4.

by Christ. It is an analogous use of the term *sacramentum*, as the original context makes clear.

In my translation here I have corrected the garbled version of the English *Osservatore Romano*, also found in the edition of *The Pope Speaks*; the edition of the Catholic Truth Society is correct.

(7h) Mariologists and indeed all devotees of Mary can find much to contemplate in this paragraph. While the Pope is careful to refrain from speculations of specifics of their daily lives, he does transmit to us several beautiful phrases from Augustine and Thomas on the nature of marriage (*indivisible union of souls, union of hearts, consent*)<sup>7</sup> and simply says these are found *in an exemplary manner* in the marriage of Mary and Joseph.

(7i) This sentence must be read carefully. The authority cited here is papal (Paul VI)<sup>8</sup> and not patristic, and the context clearly does not teach that by their marriage Mary and Joseph had received the Sacrament of Matrimony, just as they did not receive other sacraments.

(7j) This paragraph is a homiletic application of the above-mentioned principles.

(8a) This phrase, in English at least, evokes the subtitle of the document. The French also has *la personne et le mission de Jesus*; the Latin, however, reads: *A Deo est Sanctus Iosephus arcessitus ut Iesu recta via munerique eius. . .*

(8b) The Pope distinguishes between *directly* in the first sentence and *concretely* in this third sentence.

<sup>7</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, *in the conclusion* of the body of his article 2 (*Summa Theol.*, III, q. 29: "Utrum inter Mariam et Ioseph fuerit verum matrimonium") quotes Augustine: "Omne nuptiarum bonum impletum est in illis parentibus Christi: proles, fides et sacramentum. Prolem cognoscimus ipsum Dominum Iesum; fidem, quia nullum adulterium; sacramentum, quia nullum divortium. Solus ibi nuptialis concubitus non fuit."

It is at the *beginning* of this same article 2 that St. Thomas says: "Forma autem matrimonii consistit in quadam indivisibili coniunctione animorum, per quam unus coniugum indivisibiliter alteri fidem servare tenetur." Note that he writes *animorum* (minds), not *animarum* (souls).

<sup>8</sup>Paul VI, "Discourse to the Equipes Notre-Dame Movement (4 May 1970)," *AAS* 62 (1970): 431.

(8c) An interesting listing, from Pope Paul VI,<sup>9</sup> of the ways Joseph lived his fatherhood. Especially to be contemplated is Joseph turning "his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self."

(8d) This principle is applied by St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa theol.* III, q.27, a.4) to Mary. A century-and-a-half after Thomas, St. Bernardine of Siena applied it, in due proportion, to St. Joseph; this great Franciscan's sermon is read each March 19 as the second reading in the Liturgy of the Hours.

(8e) The Pope distinguishes between Joseph's natural, human love, here, and, in the following paragraph, Joseph's grace-informed or grace-infused love, which has its origin in the Father.

(8f) No specifics are given here; rather, Pope John Paul indicates that divine providence was especially at work in the life of Jesus.

(8g) Mary and Joseph were part of the details of that providence.

(10a) Again, the phrase *together with Mary* is repeated.

(10b) The English translation may not be clear. It is not that Joseph was embarrassed, but rather that the conditions of poverty at the Nativity were humble, humbling. The Latin text uses *abiecta*. The French reads: *conditions humaine-ment humiliantes*.

(12a) The context certainly expects *Saviour* here, which all English and the French versions have. Yet the Latin text of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* has *servatoris*.

(14a) Strong words to indicate Joseph's special place and functions: "guardian . . . cooperator . . . providential . . . watched over." They cannot be emphasized enough.

(15a) Better: *the guardian* (. . . *le dépositaire* in the French).

(15b) It is presumed that readers are aware there have been two translations of long standing: "in my Father's house" and "about my Father's business."

<sup>9</sup>Paul VI, "Discourse (19 March 1966)," *Insegnamenti* 4 (1966): 110.

(16a) The Latin is even stronger: *sub ipsis Iosephi oculis*.

(16b) See Comment (6b) above, regarding Eucharistic Prayer I.

### III. A Just Man—A Husband (Nos. 17-21)

17. In the course of that pilgrimage of faith which was his life, Joseph, like Mary,<sup>(17a)</sup> remained faithful to God's call until the end. While Mary's life was bringing to fullness of that *fiat* first spoken at the Annunciation, *at the moment of Joseph's own "annunciation"* he said nothing; instead he simply "*did* as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt 1:24). And *this first "doing" became the beginning of "Joseph's way."* The Gospels do not record any word ever spoken by Joseph along that way. But *the silence of Joseph* has its own special eloquence, for thanks to that silence we can understand the truth of the Gospel's judgment that he was "a just man" (Mt 1:19).

One must come to understand this truth, for it contains *one of the most important testimonies concerning [the]<sup>(17b)</sup> man and his vocation*. Through many generations the Church has read this testimony with ever greater attention<sup>(17c)</sup> and with deeper understanding, drawing, as it were, "what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52) from the storehouse of the noble figure of Joseph.

18. Above all, the "just" man of Nazareth possesses the clear characteristics of a husband. Luke refers to Mary as "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph" (Lk 1:27). Even before the "mystery hidden for ages" (Eph 3:9) began to be fulfilled, the Gospels set before us *the image of husband and wife*. According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages: first, the legal, or true marriage was celebrated, and then, only after a certain period of time, the husband brought the wife into his own house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her "husband." *Mary, however, preserved her deep desire to give herself exclusively to God*. One may well ask how this desire of Mary's could be reconciled with a "wedding" [*nuptiis*]. The answer can only come from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of God himself. From the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knew that *she was to fulfil her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to God precisely by becoming the Mother of God's Son*.<sup>(18a)</sup> Be-

coming a mother by the power of the Holy Spirit was the form taken by her gift of self: a form which God himself expected of the Virgin Mary, who was "betrothed" to Joseph. Mary uttered her *fiat*.

The fact that Mary was "betrothed" to Joseph was *part of the very plan of God*.<sup>(18b)</sup> This is pointed out by Luke and especially by Matthew. The words spoken to Joseph are very significant: "Do not fear to take Mary *your wife*, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20). These words explain the mystery of Joseph's wife: In her motherhood Mary is a virgin. In her "the Son of the Most High" assumed a human body and became "the Son of Man."

*Addressing Joseph* through the words of an angel, God speaks to him *as the husband of the Virgin of Nazareth*. What took place in her through the power of the Holy Spirit also *confirmed in a special way the marriage bond* which already existed between Joseph and Mary. God's messenger was clear in what he said to Joseph: "Do not fear to take Mary *your wife* into your home." Hence, what had taken place earlier, namely, Joseph's marriage to Mary, happened in accord with God's will and was meant to endure. In her divine motherhood Mary had to continue to live "as a virgin, the wife of her husband" (cf. Lk 1:27).<sup>(18c)</sup>

19. In the words of the "annunciation"<sup>(19a)</sup> by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife's indescribable vocation, he *also heard once again the truth about his own vocation*. This "just" man, who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the Chosen People, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband's love, was once again called by God to this love.<sup>(19b)</sup>

"Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife" into his home (Mt 1:24); what was conceived in Mary was "of the Holy Spirit." From expressions such as these are we not to suppose that his *love as a man was also given new birth by the Holy Spirit*?<sup>(19c)</sup> Are we not to think that the love of God which has been poured forth into the human heart through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), molds every human love to perfection? This love of God also molds—in a completely unique way—the love of husband and wife, deepening within it everything of human worth and beauty, everything that bespeaks an exclusive gift of self, a covenant between persons,



and an authentic communion according to the model of the Blessed Trinity.

"Joseph . . . took his wife; *but he knew her not*, until she had borne a son" (Mt 1:24-25). These words indicate *another kind of closeness in marriage*. The deep spiritual closeness arising from marital union and the interpersonal contact between man and woman have their definite origin in the Spirit, the Giver of Life (cf. Jn 6:63). *Joseph, in obedience to the Spirit, found in the Spirit, the source of love*, the conjugal love which he experienced as a man. And this love proved to be greater than this "just man" could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart.<sup>(19d)</sup>

20. In the Liturgy, Mary is celebrated as "united to Joseph, the just man, by the bond of marital and virginal love."<sup>(20a)</sup> There are really two kinds of love here, both of which *together* represent the mystery of the Church—virgin and spouse—as symbolized in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. "Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with his people," the Covenant which is a communion of love between God and human beings [Latin: *homines*].

Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God, and gave her a husband's "gift of self." Even though he decided to draw back so as not to interfere in the plan of God which was coming to pass in Mary, Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God.

On the other hand, it was from his marriage to Mary that Joseph derived his singular dignity and his rights in regard to Jesus. "It is certain that the dignity of the Mother of God is so exalted that nothing could be more sublime; yet because Mary was united to Joseph by the bond of marriage, there can be no doubt but that *Joseph approached as no other person ever could* that eminent dignity whereby the Mother of God towers above all creatures. Since marriage is the highest degree of association and friendship, involving by its very nature a communion of goods, it follows that God, by giving Joseph to the Virgin, did not give him to her only as a companion for life, a witness of

her virginity and protector of her honor: he also gave Joseph to Mary in order that *he might share*, through the marriage pact, in her own sublime greatness."

21. (21a) This *bond of charity was the core of the Holy Family's life*, first in the poverty of Bethlehem, then in their exile in Egypt, and later in the house of Nazareth.<sup>(21b)</sup> The Church deeply venerates this Family, and proposes it as the model of all families. Inserted directly in the mystery of the Incarnation, the Family of Nazareth has its own special mystery. And in this mystery, as in the Incarnation, one finds a true fatherhood: *the human form of the family of the Son of God*, a true human family, formed by the divine mystery.<sup>(21c)</sup> *In this family, Joseph is the father: his fatherhood* is not one that derives from begetting offspring; but neither is it an "apparent" or merely "substitute" fatherhood. Rather, it is one that *fully shares in authentic human fatherhood* and the mission of a father in the family.<sup>(21d)</sup> This is a consequence of the hypostatic union: humanity taken up into the unity of the Divine Person of the Word-Son, Jesus Christ. Together with human nature, *all that is human, and especially the family*—as the first dimension of man's existence in the world—*is also taken up* in Christ.<sup>(21e)</sup> Within this context, Joseph's human fatherhood was also "taken up" in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation.<sup>(21f)</sup>

On the basis of this principle, the words which Mary spoke to the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple take on their full significance: "*Your father and I . . . have been looking for you.*" This is no conventional phrase: Mary's words to Jesus show the complete reality of the Incarnation present in the mystery of the Family of Nazareth.<sup>(21g)</sup> From the beginning, *Joseph accepted with the "obedience of faith"* his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings [Latin: *hominī*] through faith, he certainly came to discover ever more fully *the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood*.<sup>(21h)</sup>

#### COMMENTS ON CHAPTER III (Nos. 17-21)

(17a) Here we note that Joseph, "like Mary" [*perinde ac*], not "with Mary," remained faithful to God's call.

(17b) There is an infelicitous error in the English translation. By omitting one word, *the*, it may give the impression that the Pope may be speaking of the human vocation in

general. The Latin text has *de viro ipso*, thus leaving no doubt it refers to Joseph alone.

(17c) The last sentence ("Through many generations . . .") touches on a point well known to Josephologists and historians, namely, that there has been a growing devotion to St. Joseph over the last several centuries. Indeed, an increasing number of saints are remembered for their personal devotion to St. Joseph, from St. Teresa of Avila to Bl. André Bessette of Montreal. The whole Church, under the leadership of the ten popes of the past century, has come to appreciate ever more deeply the true spiritual greatness of the husband of Mary.

(18a) In other words, if Mary wanted to do God's will, *this* was God's will: wifedom and motherhood.

(18b) And all this, the Pope is saying, was part of the very plan of God. No need to add that we all would like to know what were the thoughts of their hearts, individually and together, as they discerned that will, that providential "plan of God." It is an echo of Matthew's theme that "all this happened to fulfil what was spoken. . . ." (Mt 1:22, 2:5, 17,23). While the betrothal was not explicitly prophesied, it does seem to be part of a special divine plan; note that the Pope says "especially by Matthew."

(18c) This paragraph teaches that it was God's will, confirmed to Joseph, that he and Mary be married—permanently and virginally. Some may argue that the text of Luke 1:27 does not clearly say all that much.

(19a) This number treats more of Joseph's "annunciation" than of Mary's (treated in no. 18). Just as Mary had her own vocation from God, so also did Joseph have his.

(19b) A special privilege of a special man, to be called ("once again") by God to love the Virgin with a husband's love.

(19c) The Pope advances our appreciation of Joseph's love by the challenging rhetorical question: Was not Joseph's human love from God, indeed, from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love? Of course, John Paul continues, this divine love molds the love of (every) husband and wife.

(19d) Joseph's love was unique in that there was no sexual intercourse involved. This is described as "another kind of closeness in marriage," that is, a deep spiritual closeness, an interpersonal (but far from impersonal) contact, contiguity, between the two—all coming from the Spirit. This was a love that St. Joseph never expected, and, dare we say, a love he never even dreamed of. Here is a personal application to St. Joseph of what St. Paul wrote: "Glory be to Him, whose power, working in us, can and does accomplish infinitely more than we can ask, or even imagine" (Eph 3:20-21).

(20a) As he draws closer to the end of this part on St. Joseph as saint and husband, the Pope quotes several other authorities that express his teaching:

First, he cites one of the recently approved Mass prefaces in honor of Mary which proclaims that Joseph was just [i.e., holy], truly married, and in a virginal marriage.<sup>10</sup>

Second, while it has long been held that the love between believers in their marriage symbolizes the love of Christ for the Church and the love of God for each person, the Pope adds that in the marriage of Joseph and Mary there is also the symbolism of the Church as virgin and bride.

Third, he confirms this by quoting from his own Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* ("Virginity or celibacy for the sake . . .").

Fourth, he offers a beautiful sentence on the internal love of Joseph, his gift of self to Mary.

Finally, he concludes this section with a quote from the very document that occasioned this *Redemptoris Custos*, namely, the encyclical *Quamquam Pluries* of 1889. These two sentences are the foundation of the theology of St. Joseph; they teach that Joseph is the greatest of the saints af-

<sup>10</sup>This Preface is from Mass 1, "Sancta Maria de Nazareth," of the *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine*, approved in 1986 by the Congregation for Divine Worship. The entire collection of forty-six masses has not yet been published in English (1991).

ter Mary and ahead of all other saints—and why. Leo XIII's words ("... quia intercessit Iosepho cum Virgine beatissima maritale vinculum, ad illam praestantissimam dignitatem, qua naturis creatis omnibus longissime Deipara antecellit, non est dubium quin *accesserit ipse, ut nemo magis.*") have led some to conclude that Joseph is higher even than the angels, as well as all saints.

(21a) Chapter III concludes with a reflection on St. Joseph as father and on some implications of his fatherhood. Perhaps this may be seen as the apex of this document, as theologians ponder it.

(21b) First, we note the importance of love—charity. This was the unitive bond, the core of the Holy Family, the model family. It was present at all stages and through all conditions (even as refugees) and all locations (even internationally).

(21c) Second, the Pope tries to express in various ways the mystery of the divine family that is human, this human family that is divine.

(21d) Third, he defends the right of Joseph to be called *father*—not apparent father, not substitute father. It is not physical fatherhood, yet it is authentically human fatherhood.

(21e) Fourth, he explains, proves, Joseph's fatherhood by saying it is a "consequence of the hypostatic union."

The term *hypostatic union* has had a long history in theology. St. Thomas Aquinas defines it in similar words: "the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Word" (*Summa theol.* III, q. 2, art. 2), which in Greek is called *hypostasis*. This union, a relation is something created (art. 7), and if we consider the term, the thing in which the natures are united, it is the greatest of unions (art. 9).

Francis Suarez, S.J. (1548-1617), seems to have been the first to propose that St. Joseph belongs to the order of the hypostatic union. The first papal application of the term to Joseph was by Pius XI, with first a hint in a 1928 allocution and then explicitly on 19 March 1935:

In truth, it is impossible to rise higher. We are in the order of the hypostatic union, of the personal union of God with man.

It is in this moment that the gesture of God invites us to consider the humble and great saint. . . . (*Bollettino del clero romano* 16 [1935]: 57)

(21f) Fifth, the Pope explains the extent of *hypostatic union*: "Together with human nature, *all that is human, and especially the family . . . is also taken up* in Christ." Then he applies it: "Within this context, Joseph's human fatherhood was also 'taken up' in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation." The first statement is difficult to understand. Is he saying that the human nature of Christ and, with it, his family (Mary and Joseph, that is) are taken up, raised up, to the order of the hypostatic union? And that, with it, Joseph's fatherhood is raised up to the highest created dignity? Or, is he saying that all human nature—in general and in particular—and every human family are raised up to the hypostatic order? This latter sounds to be too much. The Latin reads:

Unionis hypostaticae consecrarium aliquod inibi reperitur: hominis nempe natura in Personae divinae Verbi-Filii unitatem suscepta. Assumpta vero humanitate, in Christum simul *omne id assumitur quod est humanum ac particulatim familia ipsa*, quae prima condicio illius vitae est in terris. Qua in re paternitas quoque Iosephi humana suscipitur.<sup>11</sup>

(21g) Sixth, Mary herself, continues the Holy Father, in her words to Jesus ("Your Father and I"), signifies, however implicitly, an application of the same principle. Lest there be any doubt, the Pope adds, "This is no conventional phrase. . . ." What deeper teaching on the dignity of St. Joseph can there be than this? Surely, it will be the subject of more than one dissertation.

(21h) Finally, another subject for the contemplation of the Church, namely Joseph's own progress in saintliness: ". . . following the light of the Holy Spirit . . . [Joseph] certainly came to discover ever more fully *the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood*."

<sup>11</sup>AAS 82 (1990): 26.

IV. *Work as an Expression of Love* (Nos. 22-24)

This is a brief encomium on the value of human work and on St. Joseph as model and proof that "in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things—it is enough to have the common and simple virtues. . . ."

V. *The Primacy of the Interior Life* (Nos. 25-27)

25.<sup>(25a)</sup> The same aura of silence that envelops everything else about Joseph also shrouds his work as a carpenter in the house of Nazareth. It is, however, *a silence that reveals in a special way the inner portrait* of the man. The Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph "did." Still, they allow us to discover in his "actions"—shrouded in silence as they are—an aura of *deep contemplation*. Joseph went about in daily companionship with the mystery "hidden from the ages" which "dwelt" under his roof.<sup>(25b)</sup> This explains, for example, why St. Teresa of Jesus, the great reformer of the Carmelites, promoted the renewal of veneration to St. Joseph in Western Christianity. . . .

27. . . . If through Christ's humanity this [divine] love shone on all mankind, the first beneficiaries were undoubtedly those whom the divine will had most intimately associated with itself: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Joseph, his presumed father. . . .<sup>(27a)</sup>

## COMMENTS ON CHAPTER V (Nos. 25-27)

(25a) This first paragraph gives an idea of the theme of the chapter.

(25b) Sad to report, this sentence ("Joseph went about in daily . . .") is omitted in the English translations in *Osservatore Romano*, *The Pope Speaks*, and even the *Catholic Truth Society*.

(27a) The Pope finds still another way of saying Joseph is the greatest of all saints after Mary.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>In a footnote here, John Paul II calls attention to Pius XII's Encyclical Letter *Haurietis aquas* (15 May 1956), III: AAS 48 (1956): 329f.

*VI. Patron of the Church in our Day* (Nos. 28-32)

In the final chapter of *Redemptoris Custos* Pope John Paul II begins by recalling the naming of St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Universalis*):

28. At a difficult time in the Church's history, Pope Pius IX, wishing to place her under the powerful patronage of the holy patriarch Joseph, declared him "Patron of the Catholic Church." For Pius IX this was no idle gesture, since by virtue of the sublime dignity which God has granted to his most faithful servant Joseph, "the Church, after the Blessed Virgin, his spouse, has always held him in great honor and showered him with praise, having recourse to him amid tribulations."

The remaining thirteen paragraphs are exhortations, from Leo XIII and Paul VI and from himself, to devotion to St. Joseph. Among the reasons which he himself presents is a final echo of a theme of this document:

30. As the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation has said, the basic attitude of the entire Church must be that of "hearing the word of God with reverence," an absolute readiness to serve faithfully God's salvific will revealed in Jesus. Already at the beginning of human redemption, after Mary, we find the model of obedience made incarnate in Saint Joseph, the man known for having faithfully carried out God's commands. . . .

## E. CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions are under two headings, namely that:

1. There has been progress in the papal teaching on St. Joseph over the past century (indeed, over 119 years).
2. Much remains to be done,
  - a. theologically
  - b. ecumenically
  - c. liturgically.



### 1. *Evolution of Papal Teaching (about Joseph) since 1870*

Ever since Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church, every pope (except John Paul I) has contributed to the advancement of the theology of and devotion to St. Joseph. Leo XIII issued the great encyclical, *Quamquam Pluries*, already mentioned. Pius X (whose baptismal name was Joseph) approved the litany of St. Joseph for private and public recitation.<sup>13</sup>

Benedict XV, in 1920, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Patronage of St. Joseph; among other things, he wrote:

With the increase of devotion to St. Joseph among the faithful there will necessarily result an increase in their devotion to the Holy Family of Nazareth, of which he was the august head, for these devotions spring spontaneously one from the other. By St. Joseph we are led directly to Mary, and by Mary to the fountain of all holiness, Jesus Christ, who sanctified the domestic virtues by his obedience toward St. Joseph and Mary. . . .

Therefore, full of confidence in the patronage of him to whose providence and vigilance it pleased God to entrust his only-begotten Son as well as the Virgin most holy, We earnestly exhort all the bishops of the Catholic world that in the Church's present need they should induce the faithful to implore more earnestly the powerful intercession of St. Joseph. . . .<sup>14</sup>

Pope Benedict also re-established March 19 as a holyday of obligation, granted the liturgy a proper preface, and decreed the insertion of the name of Joseph *after* that of Mary and before all the other saints in the Divine Praises recited after Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>15</sup> He also extended to the Universal Church the feast of the Holy Family; the decree states:

<sup>13</sup>AAS 1 (1909): 290.

<sup>14</sup>AAS 12 (1920): 313-317 (p. 316 cited here).

<sup>15</sup>AAS 11 (1919): 191; 13 (1921): 156, 543-544.

Thus Mary and Joseph are united once more in the cult rendered by the society of the faithful, because of their close and unique union with Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

Pius XI left the Church several teachings about Joseph from his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) and from allocutions in 1926, 1928, 1935 and 1938 (summarized as follows):

—Participation in the order of the hypostatic union by reason of his relation to Jesus and Mary;

—Primacy of holiness and even dignity over St. Peter and St. John the Baptist;

—Universal patronage over the Church by reason of his role as head of the Holy Family;

—Omnipotence in intercession with God (stated twice, in 1935 and 1938).<sup>17</sup>

Pius XII spoke of St. Joseph's greatness in various allocutions. He also instituted the feast of St. Joseph the Worker,<sup>18</sup> and set it for May 1, as an antidote to the Communist celebration of May Day. One teaching can be found in the hymn for Lauds:

<i>Altis locatus sedibus</i>	Placed among the highest thrones
<i>Celsaeque Sponsae proximus</i>	Next to his heavenly Spouse.

John XXIII—to remember him is to recall his personal devotion to St. Joseph—admitted to a public audience that he regretted that he could not take the name of Joseph (his baptismal name) as his papal name, because of the custom of taking the name of a previous pope.<sup>19</sup> He spoke often in

<sup>16</sup>AAS 13 (1921): 543-544. [We note once again that Mary and Joseph are not yet completely "united once more" in all the Eucharistic Prayers of the cult of the Church.]

<sup>17</sup>*L'Osservatore Romano*, 22-23 April 1926, p. 1; 20-21 March 1928, p. 1; 21-22 March 1938, p. 1; *Bolletino del clero romano* 16 (1935): 57.

<sup>18</sup>AAS 47 (1955): 402-407, see esp. p. 406.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 28 (1980): 131-133. This and, indeed, all references to papal documents regarding St. Joseph can be found in the gigantic research work, *Pontificia Josephina*, of Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap., which is continually updated in the *Cahiers de Joséphologie*.

audiences of St. Joseph, even going so far as to say (in a homily on Ascension Day, 1960) that one could piously accept as plausible the bodily assumption into heaven of St. Joseph and of St. John the Baptist at the time of our Lord's Ascension.<sup>20</sup> In 1961, he placed the coming Vatican Council II under the patronage of St. Joseph, "to whom we have given charge over the Council with complete confidence." Best known of all John XXIII's actions was his decree on the insertion of the name of Joseph in the Canon of the Mass, immediately after the name of Mary and before all other saints.<sup>21</sup>

Paul VI spoke often of St. Joseph in homilies and allocutions, often on his humility and obedience; several of these texts are cited in *Redemptoris Custos*. One regrettable event in Paul VI's administration was the deliberate decision not to commemorate the centenary of the patronage of St. Joseph in 1970.<sup>22</sup>

Unhappily, Pope John Paul I died after only a month in office, and there is nothing official recorded from him concerning our subject.

All things Pope John Paul II previously said about St. Joseph are certainly transcended by this Apostolic Exhortation.

1. He is the first pope to go back to the roots of the theology of St. Joseph, that is, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke—and he does so extensively and deeply—and the Fathers of the Church. There has never been a papal document like this. In this respect, it is a major contribution to Josephology—and to Mariology.

2. Grounded as John Paul is in "personalist" philosophy, he has exhorted the Church to look more intently at these two human beings, Joseph and Mary, and to contemplate them in the human as well as the divine aspects of their lives.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 28 (1980): 158.

<sup>21</sup>Sacred Congregation of Rites, Decree *Novis hisce temporibus* (13 November 1962): AAS 54 (1962): 873.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 19 (1971): 34. The explanation is given by Cardinal Jean Vilot.

3. He is careful not to speculate on the intimate details of their daily living and companionship, yet he also insists that we consider them together; he uses such phrases as: *sharing with her, sharing like no other, guardian of the same love, the faith of Mary meets the faith of Joseph, Joseph is the first to share in the faith of the Mother of God, his love as a man was given new birth by the Holy Spirit, another kind of closeness in marriage*—and similar phrases—at least 25 times! How can anyone ever in the future ignore this relationship, which was foremost in Mary's life, for most of her life?

4. As his predecessors have always done, Pope John Paul II insists that the marriage of Joseph and Mary was a true marriage and that Joseph was juridically the father of Jesus, but he does so on the authority of Scripture. This should be pleasing to many ecumenists.

5. While he may not be the first to do so, he does give prominence to another similarity of Joseph to Mary, namely, Joseph's own "annunciation" by an angel. He uses this term often in this document.

6. Pius XI was the first pope to say that Joseph belongs to the order of the Hypostatic Union along with Jesus and Mary, but he did so only in allocutions. Pope John Paul speaks of this in a document that is a bit more authoritative. More attention should be given to this point.

## *2. Some Agenda for the Future*

### *a. Theological agenda.*

In his introduction to *Redemptoris Custos*, the Pope writes:

I am convinced that by reflecting upon the way that Mary's spouse shared in the divine mystery, the Church . . . will be enabled to discover ever anew her own identity within this redemptive plan, which is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation.

This theme of *identity* is important in philosophy and theology, and Pope John Paul has also spoken of it. It is impor-

tant for Mariology to realize the place of Joseph in Mary's identity. Is there any married woman, happily married, who does not consider her husband as an integral (or even essential) part of her identity? One would hope, of course, that each husband would feel the same about his wife.

A consequence of this will be a deeper appreciation of what the popes have been saying about the greatness of Joseph in dignity and holiness, that he is closest to Mary's dignity and holiness by reason of their marriage as well as their parenthood. Also, if Mary merited for others, surely she merited most for the man she loved the most (after Jesus, of course).

The teaching of this Apostolic Exhortation can open the way to new, as-yet-unexamined aspects of Mary and Mariology, flowing from the recognition that she was a married woman.

#### *b. Ecumenical agenda*

Some ecumenists say two major obstacles to Christian unity are Peter (i.e., the papacy) and Mary. Catholics maintain that most objections are not true or are based on misunderstandings. In the case of Mary, I stated at the beginning of this paper (B. THE PURPOSES) that one purpose (no. 5) "not explicitly stated by Pope John Paul, but which may be seen in this [Apostolic Exhortation], is to rectify a misunderstanding" deriving from Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II, where Mary's role in the history of salvation is developed in such a manner as to give the impression that she was not a married woman, and, by *failing even to mention St. Joseph*, the Council may have risked dehumanizing Mary, while exalting her prerogatives, privileges and importance. I refer particularly to a 1966 critique by Jean-Jacques von Allmen of the Reformed Church. He writes:

Now let us pass on to two questions concerning chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, on the Roman Catholic Marian doctrine, as it is at present.

The first concerns terminology. It seems to me to be lacking in rigor. . . .

The second question concerns the total absence of Joseph. This omission, particularly palpable in §§ 56 and 57, where there is mention of Elizabeth, the shepherds, the magi, Simeon—seems to me to be serious especially for Christology. . . .

. . . when one sets Joseph aside, or when one ignores him, is this not tearing Jesus away from his Jewishness, and by this fact compromising his messianity, and perhaps even his historicity? . . . To ignore Joseph, is this not, implicitly, to alter the mission of Jesus of Nazareth? . . .<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>My translation of selected passages from pp. 20, 22-23 of Jean-Jacques von Allmen, "Remarques sur la Constitution dogmatique sur l'Église 'Lumen Gentium,'" *Irénikon* 39, 1 (1966): 5-45. The following is taken from the original text:

"Et maintenant, passons à deux questions concernant le chapitre VIII de *Lumen Gentium*, la doctrine mariale catholique-romaine étant ce qu'elle est.

La première concerne la terminologie. Elle me paraît manquer de rigueur. . . ." (p. 20).

"La seconde question concerne l'absence totale de Joseph. Cette omission—particulièrement sensible aux §§ 56 et 57 où il est question d'Élisabeth, des bergers, des mages, de Siméon,—me paraît grave d'abord pour la christologie. Je sais qu'une tradition exégétique (à laquelle se rattachaient d'ailleurs aussi les Réformateurs) fait de Marie aussi une descendante de David. Il n'empêche que d'après le témoignage direct, obvie du Nouveau Testament (Mt I.16; Lc I.27), c'est Joseph qui est de la maison de David; c'est donc par lui d'abord que Jésus pourra être "de la postérité de David selon la chair" (Rom I.3) et accomplir ainsi en sa personne les promesses concernant le Messie d'Israël. Marie, elle, toute qualifiée qu'elle soit spirituellement par sa virginité se trouve située historiquement et juridiquement par ses fiançailles avec Joseph. Et voici ma question: quand on écarte Joseph ou qu'on l'ignore, n'arrache-t-on pas Jésus à sa judaïté, et ne compromet-on pas de ce fait sa messianité et peut-être même son historicité? Peut-il encore être le Messie d'Israël et ainsi le sauveur du monde, s'il n'est pas enté sur la généalogie davidique, porteuse des promesses messianiques? Ignorer Joseph n'est-ce pas, implicitement, altérer la mission de Jésus de Nazareth? A cette question christologique on pourrait, en retrait, ajouter une question qui relève de la spiritualité chrétienne: Joseph, l'homme, a été écarté pour la conception de Jésus, car les hommes ne sont capables ni d'accomplir les promesses de Dieu ni

Another Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, has been quoted as saying, "If I were a Roman Catholic theologian, I would lift Joseph up. He took care of the Child; he takes care of the Church."<sup>24</sup>

### c. Liturgical Agendum

There is only one main point for the foreseeable future regarding Joseph and Mary: to continue the integration of Joseph into the liturgy, i.e., to mention him always immediately after the name of Mary and before all other saints. His preface should be listed in the Missal before those of the Angels and St. John the Baptist.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, in the litanies his mention should be placed accordingly. Most of all, however, in *all Eucharistic Prayers*, as Pope John XXIII decreed

de produire le sauveur du monde. Mais ils peuvent le recevoir, lui donner droit de cité, lui offrir une famille, le protéger (cf. Mt 2.13 ss !). Ignorer le fiancé de Marie n'est-ce pas négliger tout cela—avec pour conséquence, une exaltation de Marie qui menace justement de la soupçonner capable, elle, de ce dont l'homme a été reconnu incapable? Comment alors éviter la tentation de voir dans la Femme, dans la Mère, dans la Vierge-Mère, la porteuse de la révélation, la pourvoyeuse du divin, la médiatrice du salut, celle qui recueille et combine les convoitises de pureté et les complexes utérins qui travaillent les hommes que le pardon n'a pas apaisés? Comment barrer la route à une mariologie informée et déformée par tous les vieux cultes païens qui affleurent ici et qui demandent si instamment accès? Suffit-il pour éviter cette intrusion de singulariser Marie par rapport à toutes les femmes, et donc par rapport à la Femme, en la disant conçue, elle, à l'abri du péché? Mais n'est-ce pas précipiter au contraire ce que l'on croyait éviter? K. Barth se trompait peut-être sur les mobiles de Jean XXIII quand il l'applaudissait si fort d'avoir placé Joseph à côté de Marie dans le canon de la messe [Ref.: *Réflexions sur le deuxième Concile du Vatican*, Genève, 1963, pp. 18s.]. Il n'empêche que si Marie reste la fiancée de Joseph elle a beaucoup de chances d'éviter des tentations que, seule, elle n'est guère de taille à affronter victorieusement bien qu'elle soit bénie entre toutes les femmes. Ici non plus, il ne faut pas que l'homme sépare ce que Dieu a uni" (pp. 22-24).

<sup>24</sup>Cf. F. L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph: The Man Closest to Jesus* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1962), 462.

<sup>25</sup>Erroneous interpretations of Mt. 11:11 and Lk. 7:28 should not be adduced as obstacles to this.

in 1962, the name of Joseph should be inserted in the Canon of the Mass. After John XXIII's death, and after the completion of Vatican II, other Eucharistic Prayers were composed, but somehow this intention of Pope John has been forgotten. Surely, those whom God has joined together, the Church should stop separating!<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>This has been a theme, accommodated obviously from Mt. 19:9, that has continued from its use by a Nicaraguan bishop at Vatican I (cf. *For the Insertion of the Name of St. Joseph in the Prayers of the Mass* [Montreal: St. Joseph's Oratory, 1961], 54), through the Protestant theologian von Allmen (see n. 23 above), and, we hope, it will continue.

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