

Cahiers of Spirituality n° 22
SAINT JOSEPH,
PRINCIPAL PATRON OF THE CONGREGATION



Congregation of the Sacred Hearts

**SAINT JOSEPH
PRINCIPAL PATRON
OF THE CONGREGATION**

Cahiers of Spirituality

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Photo on the cover: Saint Joseph in the SSCC Parish of Sevilla (Spain)

INDEX

INTRODUCTION.....5

SAINT JOSEPH, A PATRONAGE IN THE SHADOWS7

Aurora Laguarda Navarro ssc

THE "ECONOMY" OF SAINT JOSEPH.....39

Nacho Moreno Santamaría ssc

**SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY:
AN ICON OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE.....57**

Sudhir Nayak ssc

INTRODUCTION

Invoked for centuries as protector and guide, St. Joseph continues today to hold a precious message, that is good news for our exhausted and suffering world. It seems no coincidence that Pope Francis wanted to dedicate this year 2021 to St. Joseph, a year that was born shaken by the pandemic. The life of Saint Joseph is presented for our inner gaze, to be taken up in its contradictions, cocooned in its fragility, recreated with tenderness and daring in its unprecedented possibilities.

St. Joseph, a protagonist perhaps to his regret, invites us to abandon familiar references and let ourselves be guided by intuition, not to plunge into a formless chaos but to hear how the rhythm that God had set in his heart resounds in his heart. Joseph teaches us to close our eyes and to open them in a different way.

It is also an adventure to which three of our SSCC members invite us to reflect with them, thanks to their written reflections which we share here. We are given three insights into the husband of Mary: Aurora Laguarda has made a historical study of his figure in the Congregation and the consequences for the present. Nacho Moreno relates the saint to the economy, a key area for these times, and he offers us a number of practical consequences. Sudhir Nayak,

for his part, shows us how the carpenter of Nazareth is an icon for interreligious dialogue.

As the Commission for Spiritual and Historical Patrimony, we invite you to enter into these reflections presented to us by Aurora, Nacho and Sudhir. Through them we can renew and deepen our understanding of the one who is the main Patron of our Congregation.

SAINT JOSEPH, A PATRONAGE IN THE SHADOWS

Aurora Laguarda Navarro ssc
Rome

Introduction

The history of devotion to St. Joseph in the Church today has been progressively clarified through on-going reflection and meditation, contemplation and study of the Word of God. It is in this atmosphere of study and meditation that the figure of the Holy Patriarch comes to the fore.

The greatness of St. Joseph is to have lived his life as a service, rendered more honourable because he lived in humility and silence, with a constant presence and total fidelity, even when he did not fully understand. He is known as the "saint of silence", since no word is known to have been uttered by him, but his works, his faith and his love, which influenced the life of Jesus, are known.

Pope Francis tells us that Joseph is a "guardian" because he knows how to listen to God; allows himself to be guided by his will; knows how to read events realistically; is attentive to his surroundings; and knows how to make the wisest decisions. He

affirms that, in St. Joseph, we see how to respond to God's call, with availability and promptness.

In this sense of welcoming and listening, our Founders, from the beginning, wanted St. Joseph to be the protector of our Congregation, so that we would learn, like him, to take care of Jesus and his favoured ones, the poor.

I. St. Joseph, Patron of the Congregation

Our Founders recognized St. Joseph as the protector of our family because he was the protector of the Holy Family. It can be said that devotion to the Sacred Hearts and meditation on the mysteries of Jesus' childhood and hidden life introduced the community to the ambience of St. Joseph and makes it easy to imagine the origins of his proclamation as patron saint. The Good Father always had a special devotion to St. Joseph, perhaps because of the popular fervour toward this saint in the neighbourhood of Montbernage, and because of the contact he had with the Sisters of Wisdom. It seems that the text of the prayer to St. Joseph, the "Hail Joseph", then adopted by the community, is due to St. Louis Marie Grignon de Monfort.

Devotion to St. Joseph is, therefore, one of the most revered riches of our congregational patrimony. From the beginning, he has been the patron and protector of the Congregation. The oldest reference we have is the first rule written by the Good Father, around 1797, for the group of "Solitaires": "God is our

Father, Jesus our spouse, the Holy Spirit our light, the Blessed Virgin our good Mother, the Holy Angels our guardians, St. Joseph our patron." In the prayer intentions of this same rule, he declares that Wednesday was to be dedicated to, and placed, under the protection of St. Joseph (cf. LEBP 2197).

In his *Memoirs* I, Father Hilarion tells us that the Good Father felt that, after his vows, his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph redoubled. When he made his vows, he changed his name from Brother "*Caprais*" (Caprasius) to *Marie-Joseph*. He was happy to bear their names, especially since he had taken them by divine indication.

"Our Very Reverend Father felt that after his vows, his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph redoubled. He felt happy to bear their names, all the more so since he had taken them only by order of heaven. He usually unites in his prayers the Queen of Angels and the Adoptive Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In her *notes (billets)* that the Good Mother wrote to the Good Father between 1800 and 1801, she recounts one of her visions in which St. Joseph appears, and the difference between the three hearts: that of Jesus, that of Mary and that of Joseph.

"This morning, I found myself more profoundly with the good God than usual. (...) Above all, at the moment after Communion, something like a big cloud passed over me

which opened to allow me to see St. Magdalene at our Lord's feet. I felt the Lord's presence, but He was in the cloud. On the other side was St. John and St. Joseph. In the middle was Mary presenting you to Our Lord."

(Good Mother, 29, 1800 1801)

"There is a significant difference between their three beautiful hearts: there is greater distance between the purity of St. Joseph and that of Mary than between that of Mary and that of Jesus. St. Joseph's had been stained; the tendency towards evil always remained in him. Moreover, unlike Mary he did not have all the infused virtues. The Heart of Mary, like that of Jesus, had a perpetual tendency toward good. The heart of St. Joseph was purified; the heart of Mary was (as it were) divinized and that of Jesus humanized. What proves the great difference between these three hearts is the end of their lives. One died; this is the irrevocable penalty attached to sin. Mary was taken up into heaven. Our Lord wanted to die, but He was raised up."

(Gabriel de la Barre, *Billet*, #58 - 1801)

Gabriel de la Barre, in her writings, tells us that the Good Mother saw in one of her "dreams" that St. Joseph should be the patron and guardian of the Order. In times of uncertainty, of clandestinity that they lived, they wanted St. Joseph to protect the Congregation.

"She (the Good Mother) saw that St. Joseph should be the patron and guardian of the Order, as he was of the Holy Family, and that the hearts of Jesus and Mary should be placed on the emblem of our scapulars. God made known to her the reason and the difference between the three hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph."¹

"She particularly recommended that I inspire in all those who would enter here the devotion to St. Joseph who is the guardian of the Order as he was of the Blessed Virgin."

Throughout the years, in various writings and reviews, St. Joseph is mentioned as patron and protector of the Congregation.

1. In a draft of a supplication to the Pope at the *end of 1800* in the hand of Father Coudrin, he asks for "a plenary indulgence every first Sunday of the month, the feasts of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, of the Apostles, of St. Joseph and of St. Regis, our Patron, for all those who receive communion in our chapel".
2. In the request to the Pope, made by the Good Father on *October 2, 1801*, for the "provisional" approval of the Congregation, the Good Father says that for eight years there have existed in the diocese of Poitiers two fraternities, useful to the Church, under the title of Zealots of the Love of

¹ *Writings of Sister Gabriel de la Barre*, p. 29. *Annales Congregationis Sacrorum Cordium*, vol VI, 1962, pp 212-213.

the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary...and that they are under the patronage of St. Joseph.

3. On *September 4, 1814*, Father Hilarion (who had arrived in Rome on July 21, 1814), had already obtained an indult, by which Pius VII granted a plenary indulgence, among other things, for the feast of St. Joseph, "principal patron of our Order".

A first indult was granted on September 4, 1814, and was soon followed by another granting wider indulgences, dated December 18, 1814. Thus, handwriting, which seems to be that of Father Hilarion, was added in the margin, in Latin:

"As for the indulgences, they were granted for 30 years, by indult of December 18, 1814. But this observation does not refer to the Indulgences of September 4th, but to the privileges requested in this Supplication, and granted on December 18, 1814."²

4. On *October 25, 1814*, in the petition of the founders, ratified by Bishop Chabot, to His Holiness asking the Holy See to approve the Institute, the founders express that the Congregation is consecrated to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, recognizes St. Joseph as its patron, and adopts the rule of St. Benedict, but with Constitutions proper to the

² Antoine Hulselmans ssc, *Études Picpuciennes I: Historical account of the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts*, Art. 1, II: period of solemn approbation 1814-1817, in a footnote.

Institute: "It (this Congregation) recognizes St. Joseph as its patron". It also asks for the extension of the indulgences granted to the Congregation:

"that the indulgences which, by Your Holiness' decree of September 4, 1814, were granted for thirty years to the brothers and sisters of the said Congregation, be also common to the students of both sexes who are educated or will be educated in the houses of the same Congregation already erected or to be erected in the future. They should also be common to all the faithful who, by a special communion of prayers, are or will be associated with this Congregation."

(*Annals* n° 35; this paragraph is only in Latin)

5. On *January 10, 1817*, in the supplication that precedes the Constitutions and Statutes, the Good Father repeats that the Congregation has St. Joseph as its patron. In the Preliminary Chapter of the first Constitutions of the Brothers and Sisters approved in 1817, N° 7 says: "Our special patron is St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our special protectors are St. Augustine, St. Dominic, St. Bernard and St. Pachomius".
6. In the circular letter announcing the approval of the regulations, dated *April 14, 1817*, in Paris, The Good Father invites us to unite to the cult of Mary a tender devotion to St. Joseph, patron of the Institute:

"To the cult of Mary, you, our dear brothers and sisters, must unite a tender devotion to St. Joseph, the patron of our Institute. Adoptive father of Jesus, guardian of Mary's virginity, if he did not have, like Mary, all the infused virtues, he was elevated to a high degree of contemplation, he was inflamed with love for Jesus. He has a very great acclaim with the Son and the Mother; therefore, you will not cease to invoke him every day."

7. In the *Memoir of the Good Father* on the offices proper to the Congregation, written on *September 29, 1824*, he says:

"By apostolic indult, our patron is St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so we have great confidence that we will be allowed to celebrate his patronage under the double rite of 1st class with octave. We also ask to be able to recite this same office once a month, on a day without impediment."

(*Annals* n° 35; this paragraph is only in Latin)

8. In the *Ceremonial, Constitutions and Statutes of 1826*, the plenary indulgence is established on March 19th, feast of St. Joseph; the patronage of St. Joseph, on the third Sunday after Easter. Likewise, the prayer to St. Joseph should be recited:
- After the profession of vows.
 - After the solemn renewal of vows.
 - Before the chapter of faults.

- After the chapter of faults.
- Every evening, after the Salve.

In various writings, the Good Mother specifies when the prayer to St. Joseph should be prayed: at the beginning of chapters, vespers, at different times of prayer during the day....

"The chapter should always begin with the *Veni Sancte*, a *Vivat*, a prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one to the Heart of Mary, the prayer to St. Joseph, the *Domine Non Secundum*. (...) At nine o'clock, all gather: a *Vivat* (long live the Sacred Heart of Jesus, long live the Immaculate Heart of Mary), a Hail Mary, the Salve, the salutation to St. Joseph."

(*Note to the Good Father*, August 1801)

On January 15, 1821 in Bouilly, at a meeting of missionaries, Father Coudrin blessed a floral wreath for the missionaries. This wreath, resembling the crown of thorns, requested by the Good Father, contained three hearts and, according to his vow, this wreath was to be the insignia of all the missions of the sons of the Sacred Hearts.

"On Monday, the 15th, the Founder sang Mass and then we went in procession to the place where the mission cross was to be erected. ... The cross was solemnly blessed. The crown of thorns, the spear and the nails were attached to it. In the middle of the crown of thorns were placed three hearts: the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the sweet Heart of Mary

and the sweet Heart of St. Joseph. These were the insignia of all the missions of the sons of the Sacred Hearts."

(Hilarion Lucas, *Memoirs*, II, p. 422)

Before he was named patron of the Church, our Congregation already had St. Joseph as its patron and protector. Gerald de Becker SSCC in his book *The Foundations of Devotion to St. Joseph* (1959) says:

"... In its devotion to St. Joseph, principal patron of our Institute, our Congregation has once again anticipated the official piety of the Church. This devotion is for us a family treasure; what a joy to see how it is spreading more and more in the Catholic world. It is not just any devotion, but a devotion that is rooted in the deepest realities of Christianity."

Over the years, the cult of St. Joseph and the invocation of his protection is reflected in different events. The month of St. Joseph, the Associations under his patronage, the magazines or bulletins, which are expanding and increasing the cult of our patron saint, have become more and more important. In different sermons, the importance that they had for our founders and the need to continue invoking his protection is recalled.

As is evident in the Annals, in the beginning the devotion was very strong and spread rapidly. In the Congregation there is no lack of seminaries, houses of formation, houses of prayer,

communities, schools... with the name of this patron saint. Even in many of our chapels there is an image of St. Joseph, as our Good Mother had indicated.

"The cult of St. Joseph has much affinity with the purpose and spirit of devotion to the Sacred Hearts. St. Joseph is the first and most intimate confidant of the Sacred Hearts, the model of that life of self-denial and hidden dedication/surrender which we are called to imitate (...) Our founders had recourse to him in their needs and hardships and placed the future and prosperity of their works under his special protection. Today, more than at any other time, we need to take refuge in the saint whose protection Jesus and Mary invoked and to place our weakness under the mantle that covered the Saviour of the world with its folds. In the midst of the turmoil of the present that foreshadows the storm of tomorrow, St. Joseph will be our best hope."

(Annals 1899, p. 85)

Devotion to St. Joseph was also promoted in the distant places of the Pacific missions. Thus, Brother Séverine Baltes ssc, writes that, with the intention of sharing with the lepers the confidence of the Congregation in St. Joseph, Father Wendelin Moellers ssc founded, in Kalaupapa, an association in honour of the holy Patriarch (*Annals 1899, p. 293*).

In the *Annals*, the chronicler J.B. narrates the importance of the perpetual cult of St. Joseph, especially in Louvain. He even

mentions the publication of a bulletin entitled *The Perpetual Veneration of St. Joseph*, which aims to honour St. Joseph every day of the year. He recounts the devotion to this saint and the favours and spiritual graces obtained through his intercession. He also narrates the continuous pilgrimages, from different parts of the country, to the Sanctuary of St. Joseph. The Brothers of the Sacred Hearts continually invite people to "go to St. Joseph": "Ite ad Joseph" (*Annales 1900*, p. 161, 403).

In speaking of St. Joseph as our model and protector, the chronicler P.S.G. comments:

"All devout servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary profess a profound veneration for St. Joseph and invoke him with unshakable confidence. They rightly consider him their perfect model and their born protector.

St. Joseph was, in fact, the most intimate confidant of Jesus and Mary, the first servant - I would say - the first religious of the Sacred Hearts. He practiced to a very high degree the virtues that were to be ours, and from then on, he enjoyed a powerful acclaim in heaven for obtaining the grace that we be his faithful imitators.

For this reason, our venerable founders, the Good Father in particular, had a special devotion to him and asked that we consider it a duty to invoke him every day."

"We, religious of the Sacred Hearts, turn to Joseph as the perfect model for our life of recollection, prayer, hidden work and adoration in the company of Jesus and Mary. Who better to teach us to serve Jesus and Mary with the simplicity, innocence, gentleness and generosity of a loving heart? Living in continuous intimacy with these divine Hearts, of which he was a worthy companion and vigilant guardian, he practiced to a very high degree the virtues that should be part of our heritage, because we too are companions and guardians of the Sacred Hearts, who live under our roof, preside over our prayers and all our work and invite us sit at their table. Therefore, if we want to know how to behave in such august company, we should ask St. Joseph: 'Ite ad Joseph' (go to Joseph)."

(*Annals 1909*, p. 67)

Antoine Hulselmans ssc, in his commentary on the Preliminary Chapter of the *Rule of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts* in 1948, comments that the founders placed their Congregation under the special patronage of St. Joseph:

"We do not exaggerate when we say that the foundation of Father Coudrin and Mother Henriette, in their life and activity, in their purpose and works, is a continuation of the life of the Sacred Hearts, a replica of the great mystery of the love of Jesus and Mary. Therefore, is it not natural that St. Joseph should be the special patron of a Congregation that so tenderly portrays the image of Jesus and Mary? Moreover he, who in

the ineffable designs of divine Providence, had been chosen as guardian of the life of Jesus and his Mother, should be the guardian of this mystery, where everything bore the imprint of the life of the Saviour and his blessed Mother.

And St. Joseph has always been the patron of our Institute. The Congregation has honoured him in a special way from the beginning. The feast of his patronage was introduced during the lifetime of the founders and celebrated with great solemnity in all the houses of the Institute, long before it entered the liturgy of the universal Church. In all ceremonies - the taking of the habit, profession, renewal of vows etc., recourse is made to his intercession; he is invoked every day.

And we can say that, for his part, St. Joseph showed himself to be the true protector of the Congregation, especially in such a difficult period of storm and division."³

II. St. Joseph, Patron of the Church

Over the years, the Church also experienced a gradual growth in devotion to St. Joseph. The tradition of his cult was slow to take hold in the Christian world, despite the fact that he was the chosen father of Jesus. He was the subject of occasional

³ Historical account of the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts by Father Antoine Hulselmans ssc, 1948 (*Études Picpuciennes*, art. VII, no. 44).

attention by Christian writers, such as Justin, Origen and Irenaeus, from the second century onwards.

In the East this veneration arose earlier than in the West. At the beginning of the fourth century the cult of St. Joseph already appeared among the Copts, who instituted his feast day on July 20th of the Coptic calendar. A martyrology of around the year 850, names St. Joseph for the first time.

In the VIII and IX centuries there was an awakening of his cult. The Carmelites were the first to import the cult of St. Joseph from the East to the West. The first references appear in the year 1129, where there is a church dedicated to his name in Bologna.

It could be said that until the 14th century St. Joseph was practically ignored at the universal level. The mystics and theologians at the end of the Middle Ages began to deal with his place in the history of salvation. Interest in St. Joseph gradually grew, and he was invoked by families, carpenters, cabinetmakers, doubters, travellers, those looking for houses and the dying.

It was in the 15th century that the cult of St. Joseph found its fullness with the influence of St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Bernardine of Siena, Peter of Ailly and John Gerson. The latter composed an Office of the Espousal of Joseph, particularly at the Council of Constitutions (1414), as a means of promoting public recognition of the cult of St. Joseph.

Pope Sixtus IV instituted the feast of March 19th, in 1479, and introduced the liturgical outlines in the Breviary and the Missal. The devotion and cult to St. Joseph spread also in America, where we find many churches and cities under his patronage.

From the 17th century it has received a systematic treatment in Catholic theology. The reformed Discalced Carmelite Order, in which St. Teresa instilled her great devotion to the foster father of Jesus, chose him, in 1621, as their patron, and in 1689, they were allowed to celebrate the feast of his Patronage on the third Sunday after Easter.

He received his own office in the Roman Breviary in 1714 and his name was included in the Litany of Saints in 1729. The month of March and every Wednesday became especially associated with him. With the cultural rise of the enlightenment in the 18th century, devotion to St Joseph did not emerge strongly in the following century.

In more recent history, the figure of St. Joseph has been gaining importance and many popes of the last two centuries have written letters and documents about St. Joseph.

Pope Pius VII, who in 1809 was taken prisoner by Napoleon, and was prevented from freely governing the Church that God had entrusted to him, turned to the holy Patriarch for help and protection. Years later, this same pope approved our Congregation, whose patron is St. Joseph.

Pope Pius IX, "prisoner of the Vatican" after the unification of Italy, responding to the innumerable requests he received from the Catholic faithful throughout the world and, above all, to the plea of the bishops gathered at the First Vatican Council, declared and constituted St. Joseph "Universal Patron of the Church", on December 8, 1870, by the encyclical *Quemadmodum Deus* (Declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church).

To underline the importance of this event, Pius IX wanted the proclamation to be made simultaneously in the three great patriarchal basilicas: St. Peter's, St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran. He expressly chose the feast of the Immaculate Conception and wanted the announcement to be made during the celebration of Holy Mass. He thus underlined the bonds that exist, by God's will, between St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary, between the Church in heaven and the Church on earth, between the Eucharist and the sanctification of the members of Christ.

Pope Pius IX asks "that the Christian people become accustomed to implore, with great piety and profound trust, St. Joseph at the same time as the Virgin Mary". Since then, the Church is constantly renewing the reading of this saint.

Leo XIII wrote the first and masterful encyclical dedicated to St. Joseph, *Quamquam pluries*, on August 15, 1889, in which he invokes St. Joseph against the religious and social crises of his time. In it he explains the role of St. Joseph in the Church, extolled in his characteristic light as a model of fathers and workers. In

addition to expressing familiar sentiments about the saint's unique virtues, he asks the poor to take St. Joseph, and not socialism, as their guide to justice.

In the Brief *Neminem fugit*, June 14, 1892, Pope Leo XIII asked Christian households to consecrate themselves to the Holy Family of Nazareth, "the most perfect example of domestic society, at the same time a model of all virtue and holiness".

Pius X had a great devotion to St. Joseph. He approved his litanies, authorized their insertion in the liturgical books and invited the faithful to honour him on Wednesday, the day dedicated to St. Joseph.

Benedict XV dedicated the *motu proprio Bonum Sane*, July 25, 1920, to St. Joseph, inviting all the bishops of the world to celebrate the *fiftieth anniversary of the patronage of St. Joseph* and encouraging the faithful to renew their devotion to the saint and the Holy Family. He declared St. Joseph patron against communism, moral laxity and of the dying.

In 1930, Pius XI named St. Joseph special protector of Russia to counter Soviet persecution of Christians, and invoked him again seven years later against atheistic communism. He spoke words of exceptional importance about St. Joseph, often on the annual feasts on March 19th. Joseph's intercession is that of the husband, the presumed father, the head of the family.

Pius XII, in 1955, wishing to Christianize the "feast of work on May 1st," named him patron of work, instituting the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, entrusting all the workers of the world to his patronage. He spoke of this saint to workers, young couples, militant Christians, students and children.

"Be propitious to us, O St. Joseph, in times of prosperity, when everything invites us to taste honestly the fruits of our efforts, but be propitious to us above all and sustain us in the hours of sadness, when it seems that the sky closes over us and even the instruments of work seem to fall from our hands."

John XXIII, who was very devoted to St. Joseph, named him patron of the Second Vatican Council: "no better protector can be found than St. Joseph to obtain heaven's help in the preparation and development of this Council".

In the Apostolic Letter *Le Voci* of 1961, John XXIII speaks about the promotion of devotion to St. Joseph, referring to different speeches and documents in which the magisterium of the Church has emphasized the veneration of the spouse of Mary. Another important initiative of this pope was to introduce in 1962 the name of St. Joseph in the canon of the Holy Mass, immediately after the Virgin Mary.

Paul VI often speaks of St. Joseph:

"Joseph's mission at the side of Jesus and Mary was a mission of protection, defence, safeguarding and subsistence... The Church needs to be defended; she needs to be guarded."

"St. Joseph was a poor, honest, industrious man, but he has an unfathomable interior life. He is a committed man, all for Mary and for Jesus: devoted to work, responsibilities, risks, concerns of the small and unique family."

He points him out as a model of the humble, assuring that, in order to follow Christ, great things are not required, but the common, human, simple virtues marked by truth and authenticity are.

The cultural and pastoral changes at the end of the 20th century affected the devotion to the Patriarch: the crisis of the family, the gradual loss of the figure and role of the husband and father, etc.

John Paul II dedicated the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, August 15, 1989, to St. Joseph, to commemorate the centenary of Leo XIII's encyclical *Quamquam pluries*. He again acclaimed St. Joseph as a model, in his effort to renew the family, society and the Church. He wanted to place the Church under the protection of the holy Patriarch as it entered the Third Millennium, hoping that devotion to the patron of the universal Church would grow.

"This patronage must be invoked and is still necessary to the Church, not only as a defence against the dangers that arise, but also, and above all, as encouragement in her renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and to re-evangelization. Now more than ever we must 'Go to Joseph'."

On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis wrote the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as patron of the universal Church. He reminds us of the importance of this saint in salvation history, and proclaims this year as the year of St. Joseph, in which he invites the faithful of the world to meditate on the virtues of the guardian of Jesus and Mary. Having assumed the legal paternity of Jesus, Joseph is "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of difficulty." In *Patris Corde* Pope Francis describes St. Joseph as a beloved father, a father in tenderness, obedience and welcome, a father of creative courage, a working father. The aim of this Apostolic Letter is that "love for this great saint may grow, so that we may be impelled to implore his intercession and imitate his virtues, as well as his steadfastness".

III. St. Joseph in our Spirituality in the light of *Patris Corde*

The Church is constantly rereading this saint and never ceases to find in him unknown riches, or rather, riches not already revealed, because the history of humanity also helps in

this understanding. The personality of St. Joseph allows us to approach the deepest human values. If in past centuries the Holy Patriarch was considered as a model of contemplative souls, nowadays we have to see him as a model of contemporary man, more social and more as a tutor or father.

In *Patris Corde* Pope Francis highlights some characteristics of St. Joseph, that are very close to the spirituality of our Congregation, and to Christian spirituality in general: acceptance of the will of God; tenderness and obedience; love for the Church and the poor; selfless love; living with dignity; and exemplifying the joy of work. It may be a good time for the Congregation to "recover and revitalize" his cult and its importance.

Let us look at some common features described in the Pope's encyclical and in our spirituality, to try to understand why our founders wanted him to be our patron.

CONTEMPLATION

There is one aspect that stands out notably in the figure of St. Joseph: his relevance as a witness of salvation. In this way, Joseph becomes a master of contemplation. Thus, God looked upon a humble man, a father of a family, to entrust him with the sublime task of caring for and watching over the growth of his only begotten son (*Patris Corde*, Introduction)

Joseph thus learns to contemplate what is essential, the Love of God manifested in his Son. Contemplation is part of our mission:

"To contemplate, live and proclaim the Redeeming Love of God". "The Eucharistic celebration and contemplative adoration make us participate in his attitudes and feelings before the Father and before the world." (*Constitutions*, n° 5).

OBEDIENCE

Joseph developed a great capacity for listening and dialoguing with God, always attentive to what God was telling him, through dreams and through life itself. Joseph knew how to pronounce his "fiat", like Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in Gethsemane (*Patris Corde*, n° 3). Our founders were discovering God's will for the Congregation. By listening and praying before the Blessed Sacrament, they were deciphering God's call. The Good Mother lived in a constant "fiat". "In everything, for everything and for all, say: Fiat." (Good Father). "Religious obedience commits us to personally seek God's will in our lives..." (*Constitutions*, Sisters n° 33 and Brothers n° 36).

HIDDEN LIFE

St. Joseph was "the man who goes unnoticed, the man of daily discreet and hidden presence, although he was an unparalleled protagonist in the history of salvation" (*Patris Corde*, Introduction).

The preliminary chapter of our Constitutions states, "The purpose of our Institute is to retrace the four ages of the life of our Saviour, Jesus Christ..." (*Constitutions*, n° 1). In Joseph, our patron, we have an example of what this unnoticed, discreet and hidden presence means. St. Joseph has been and continues to be

a father in the shadows. Our Congregation was also born in a "hidden" way, in secrecy. In the solitude of the prison and the granary, our founders resolved to offer their lives for the good of their people and of the Church.

MISSION

"Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood" and in this way, "he cooperates in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation." (*Patris Corde*, n° 3). We too are called to "participate in the mission of the Risen Christ, who sends us to announce the Good News of salvation" (*Constitutions* n° 4). "Our consecration calls us to live the dynamism of saving love and fills us with zeal for our mission" (*Constitutions* n° 2). By our vocation we are "committed to participate in the mission of Jesus, proclaiming the Good News of that Love, which alone fully repairs, liberates and reconciles" (*Constitutions, Sisters* n° 57). "Thus, we are free to 'be with Jesus' and available to be 'sent by Him' in mission for the building of God's Kingdom." (*Constitutions, Brothers* n° 11).

TENDERNESS AND MERCY

"In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God....Tenderness is the best way to touch fragility within us....That is why it is so important to encounter God's mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we experience his truth and tenderness." (*Patris Corde*, n° 2). Joseph knows that the God of Israel shows his

justice in his ability to have mercy. "The first interior virtue that the Good Mother practiced was an unbounded trust in the mercy of the Lord." (*Writings of Gabriel de la Barre*, p. 103). The Good Mother, through her writings and her attitudes, forms the sisters in tenderness and mercy.

OPTION FOR THE POOR

"Like Joseph we are called to understand and welcome the presence of God in the poor and excluded, as represented in Mary, his spouse, and in Jesus, her son." (*Patris Corde*, n° 4). Joseph lives the poverty of solitude and of silence. He is aware of his own poverty and experiences in it the greatness of God.

Our founders had a clear option for the poorest from the beginning. The Good Mother used to say that before opening a fee-paying school, she had to open a free school for poor girls. "Always see to it that the class of poor girls does not decline; it is the blessing of our houses." (*Letters and Writings of the Good Mother*, Letter 1216, *Correspondence*, Vol. 6).

The first *Constitutions of 1817*, expresses it clearly: "To imitate the childhood of Jesus Christ, we educate poor children of both sexes gratuitously. We open free schools for all poor children who cannot be educated in our houses" (*1817 Constitutions*, n° 2).

In our present Constitutions, this preferential option for the poor is also expressed as follows:

"Our mission urges us to evangelizing action by which we enter into the inner dynamism of Christ's Love for

his Father and for the world, especially for the poor, the afflicted, the marginalized and those who have not heard the Good News." (*Constitutions*, n° 6).

WELCOME

"Joseph's attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak." (*Patris Corde*, n° 4). Only the Lord can give us the strength to welcome life as it is, to make room even for contradiction, the unexpected and disappointments in our lives. Joseph listens and welcomes God's plans in his life. Welcoming and the family spirit are traits that characterize our community life:

"We live our vocation and mission in community. Simplicity and the family spirit are the characteristics of our relationships within our international Congregation, which desires to be open to all people. Our community life gives witness to the Gospel and makes our announcement of redeeming Love more convincing." (*Constitutions*, n° 7).

FREEDOM

Joseph was capable of loving in an extraordinarily free manner. "He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus." (*Patris Corde*, n° 7). Joseph accompanied the life of Mary and Jesus, but without appropriating them to himself.

Our founders knew how to live in complete freedom, stripping themselves of everything and placing the Hearts of Jesus and Mary at the centre of their lives: "Consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary is the foundation of our Institute" (*Constitutions*, n° 2). "A response of love to a call of love, consecrated chastity demands that we let ourselves be caught up by Christ. We grow in intimacy with God through solitude and renunciation and in God we are led to discover the fulfilment of our being in Gospel simplicity, liberty and joy." (*Constitutions*, Sisters n° 16). "Give them much freedom of mind and of heart" is the Founder's maxim for young religious in formation (*Cahier of Spirituality* 10, n° 213).

ABANDONMENT TO PROVIDENCE

"Joseph, a man of creative courage, knew how to "...transform a problem into possibility by trusting always in divine Providence." (*Patris Corde*, n° 5). Joseph learns to trust in the provident God, knowing that He always comes to meet us, allowing God's loving plan to be realized.

The faith of the Good Father and the Good Mother in the Providence of God is a precious patrimony. "This way of life demands that as individuals and communities we base our security on Providence and not on an accumulation of goods." (*Constitutions*, Sisters, n° 22). "God knows better than we what we need, so let us abandon ourselves to his divine Providence." (*Letters and Writings of the Good Mother, Correspondence*, Vol. I, Letter 126). "I am responsible for a work which I have every reason to believe is a work of God, since He has sustained it until now." (Good

Father, 649). "I hope that Divine Providence will always sustain our Work." (Good Father, *Cahier of Spirituality 10*, n° 488).

DOING GOD'S WILL

Joseph was a "just man," always ready to do God's will. "During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food." (*Patris Corde*, n° 3). Joseph accepts the divine will, surrendering himself to God's plan. His presence and his witness allow God to develop his plans with ease. Our founders experienced that true happiness consisted in fulfilling God's Will for them. "Our reparation is communion with Him, whose food is to do the Father's will." (*Constitutions*, n° 4). "Let us adore His will and consider ourselves blessed." "I read and discover God's will in all that happens to us." (Good Father).

RECONCILIATION

"Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow." (*Patris Corde*, n° 4). Joseph's love for Mary enables him to initiate a process of reconciliation, with himself and with her, turning fragility into grace. Having faith in God includes believing that He can act even through our fears, our frailties, and our weakness. To repair, to liberate, to reconcile are three verbs closely linked to our mission.

Our founders, through adoration, desired to make reparation for the outrages committed against the Heart of Jesus. They wanted to repair, reconcile and liberate men, women and children through their life of prayer and by their works. Our reparatory vocation is a call to become, with Jesus and like him, servants of the reconciliation of humanity with God: "In solidarity with the poor, we work for a just and reconciled society" (*Constitutions*, n° 6).

IV. Conclusion

In the circular announcing the approval of the regulations, dated *April 14, 1817* in Paris, the Good Father requests that a tender devotion to St. Joseph, patron of the Institute, be joined to the cult of Mary: "To the cult of Mary, you must, our beloved brothers and very dear sisters, join a tender devotion to St. Joseph, patron of our Institute."

In his introduction to *Patris Corde* the Pope tells us:

"Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all."

Let us take advantage of this opportunity offered to us by the Church to revitalize our devotion to St. Joseph; let us grow in our love for him. Let us try to renew and deepen it, and let us place our Congregation once again under his protection, especially in the difficult times in which we live. As Gerald De Becker ssc said: "Let us entrust ourselves to St. Joseph and entrust to him the interest of our beloved Congregation and of the universal Church."

The Pope concludes *Patris Corde* stating: "We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion."

We end this reflection with this prayer to Saint Joseph for our Congregation:

Saint Joseph,

we desire to place our religious family
of the Sacred Hearts
under your protection,
so that each one of us may live in fidelity to the Spirit,
in listening to and fulfilling the Word of God.
You who are a model of selfless love, intercede for us
to seek first the happiness of others, not ours;
to be always willing to give up
our own plans to follow God's;
to be attentive to the needs of the brothers and sisters,

accompanying them in their joys and pains.
Teach us to be humble so that we may bloom
wherever God has planted us,
and may we have the grace to live, as you did,
always giving glory to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

THE « ECONOMY » OF SAINT JOSEPH

Nacho Moreno Santamaría ssc
Econome General

Receiving an assignment to write something like this was, at first, a bit of a shock. I wondered what I could write about drawing from only a few verses in the Gospels that have to do with the infancy of Jesus. Clearly, I would have to invent, or use my imagination to come up with some ideas. Going to the books and commentaries would be a short trip, as they all say more or less the same thing. Just at that moment, the magazine *Vida Nueva* arrived containing a reflection on Saint Joseph written by the recent Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, Miguel Márquez, ocd (cfr. *Vida Nueva*, n° 3328). This was the break I needed, something could be done! For this reason, I offer the reader an invention, my own, which I hope will be useful.

To speak of St Joseph and the economy is an exercise of the imagination, "an excursion into the soul of St Joseph, a shining figure in the shadows, decisive in his non-appropriation, effective in using his time on earth to give value and meaning to the lives of Jesus and Mary. All this to be understood in a metaphorical, vital sense", says the aforementioned author. This sounds good to me, let's go on that journey.

Joseph in the flesh: the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream (Mt 1:18 ff.)

I don't know if such a thing happens to any of us. Maybe not, we are ordinary people and "a state of grace" is not enough. We are also people who dream, but our dreams are not so clear, they are always mixed with other issues, almost always our own. We have assets because we share, in one way or another, what we bring home. We have sufficient resources and we do not need to see whether or not the budget allows for extraordinary expenses. We must admit that "we look down from above", even if at times and especially in some places and moments, we experience a certain tightening of the belt, more out of austerity than for having nothing.

We dream of something better for ourselves. Like every human being, the dust of the road sticks to us and sometimes becomes a burden that prevents us from moving to where we want. This may have to do with solidarity, with sharing, ultimately with compassion - compassion for others, for those who have nothing and who sometimes expect nothing. The kind of compassion that brings us closer to what the families around us are going through. There will always be questions: how it is possible that they never get themselves out of their situation; how can they be addicted and prefer drugs over their children; how can people care more about their own ethnicity or country than the fate of their fellow travellers; and many other questions besides. These are good questions if they lead us to new answers, even if they are small. But they are not helpful when they lead us to become selfish, insensitive or

even cynical. Let us be careful with dreams and how they contrast with what we see, or even with what we don't see.

"The angel said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her."

Joseph had decided to divorce Mary quietly, because the situation did not live up to his expectations: he didn't understand anything and surely thought something strange had happened. He, like us, could, and perhaps wanted to, control life and arrange it according to his own criteria. But, because the dream came from God, he accepted change.

I think that the dream of someone who talks about economics in a religious congregation is similar to this: the common fund; caring for one another; caring for young people who join us and older people who have served the Lord for many years; not keeping things for oneself; not disposing of things according to one's own will. We do all of this so as to share with others, and in different ways. The money, the goods, are not ours, they are not everyone's. Putting in some money and sharing a little with the common fund for common expenses does not fit into the dream, however much our tradition is or has always been.

In life we pass through different places and different times. Sometimes we put in a lot of money though not in some places or works. Among other reasons, we contribute to the common fund in service of all, so that everyone can reach and help others.

Our work is not only ours, it is what the Congregation has asked us to do so that the common mission may develop.

When we enter the Congregation we put everything at the service of all: abilities, skills, options, etc. Why is it that later we can get lost? Why is it that at some point in life we only care about doing what we like or what we are good at? Why do we attach ourselves to well-paid jobs? Why, in some cases, do we keep a good part of the money for ourselves or have so many things of our own? Perhaps we have given up on holding the tension between the dream and the reality, secretly disowning our mission. Perhaps we fear a future without security; perhaps we only trust in what we can do, or maybe it is something else. We can each go over our dreams and name them. In any case, a better world, which is more human and more evangelical must take up again the dream of the true realisation of love, and its concrete fruits: justice, solidarity, sharing, etc. "Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust." (*Patris Corde*, n° 7).

Learning to listen In silence

"When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus." (Mt. 1:24-25).

Joseph listened, woke up and then did what the Lord asked of him. He didn't give speeches, sermons or homilies. He didn't

talk about poverty, austerity, or indeed many other things. Talking is easy, especially if we are not lacking anything. His word was to act. Maybe he didn't understand everything; but neither was he judgmental. And then he left the stage, he was not the protagonist. His work in his life was to take care of his family; we know he was a carpenter and we know little else.

Joseph yields to the protagonist, he let God be God. He is but another means to God's plan of salvation. In this economic approximation to Joseph, if at all possible we may also find something else about his silence that enlightens us. To be a steward or manager requires a level of caring and thinking about the good of all, those at home, those outside the home and even those far away. We manage better when we don't reproach much, when we try to draw from others their best qualities. We hear brothers saying "the numbers are not given to me, I don't understand anything." That's okay, there are people who don't have the capacity to understand it, or are not too competent at planning, ordering and getting everything ready to work every day.

The question is not - Why can't you be good at everything?, but, What can you do or what can you contribute? I remember an older brother who could not do the dishes because of back problems, who never did anything. In a small community, he was asked to share a little about his difficulties: what could he do? Set the table, buy the newspaper and bread? Okay, then that can be his job. Not understanding numbers doesn't justify anything. Doing what you can, quietly, serenely and humbly, is as important as making a budget. We've all seen people who have held important

positions and when they get older, lay out the cutlery in the community dining room or make some photocopies for school. For me this is a great lesson, one doesn't need to preside over a pontifical university to be important. Whoever 'wants to be the first, let them be the servant of all'- we know this so well.

In Joseph's silence there are important words, attitudes that help, a willingness to seek and ask. Joseph did what the Lord asked of him, and then dedicated himself to caring for his people and working like so many others. He thus collaborated in God's plan. He cared about everything and took care of everyone, he was where he was needed. He was "A father who realises that he is most a father and educator at the point when he becomes useless" ... (*Patris Corde*, n° 7).

Joseph made a living from his work, he was a carpenter who surely passed on his skills to Jesus, that he might learn something. "Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion" (*Patris Corde*, n° 6). For us, work is an apostolic activity, and we would like to be able to live off our work. That said, we have an infrastructure and facilities that are too large for that to be possible. On the one hand, we are getting older and wages are converted, at best, into pensions that are sometimes very low. On the other hand, we have groups with young brothers in countries where it is very difficult to self-finance. We have a financial income that helps us make up for whatever the income does not cover. This is also the result of

the work of the brothers. If we can invest money it is because we have generated it through our activity.

The resources we use should not impede our dedication. We prefer to be among the poor and with projects that serve those in need, and that is fine because that is our purpose, a mandate that comes to us from the Gospel. We also have to sustain these projects, otherwise they will end. We have apostolic works in more affluent areas that allow us to have higher incomes and we have financial resources. All this must be handled intelligently and with an eye on the horizon: sharing with and serving others. Joseph worked to establish God's plan through his quiet and constant work; through his service to support his family; and through his commitment to Jesus, his son.

"The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new 'normal' from which no one is excluded. Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work." (*Patris Corde*, nº 6).

Economy: taking care of the home

The word "Economy" is defined in the Spanish dictionary as an "efficient and reasonable administration of goods." To be effective means that we achieve the objectives we set ourselves in a project or activity. To be effective is not simply to do "material"

things, but to do what is planned. Reasonable is what everyone understands - actions are planned, carried out and evaluated. One does not need to engage the whole formal process to buy a kilo of chicken, but you do need to engage the process to draw up a budget or face an economic project that affects us all. Efficient and reasonable are two hallmarks of economics.

I like to include a third element, which is efficiency. It means seeking to be efficient using the most appropriate means possible, that is, without wasting resources of any kind. It seems to me that our economic actions should be effective, reasonable and efficient. In this way we carry out what we set out to do, with consistent reasons, efficiently, economically, environmentally and socially.

Taking care of the house is also a common task. To take care of the house is to do so with the people who live there. Cleaning a space is to consider that the other person matters to you and you want him or her to live as best as possible. To take care of the garden is to think that beauty has a place and that the house is more habitable. Cooking for others is caring for them, so that they can enjoy more of one of life's most enjoyable activities. We say we're not interested in economics, and that may be the case. We may not be very interested in macroeconomics, big figures or the gross domestic product of countries, or the value of cryptocurrencies or profitable investment flows on different continents. At the same time we do have brothers who are not interested in the economy of the house because they have always

been served, always finding everything they need and in order. This is not the place to ask the question Jesus asks: what do you want me to do for you?

The effectiveness of our community action can be measured by what we do for others, by our commitment to take care of our home so that we can offer hospitality to others. We have a certain tendency to contrast the pastoral with the economic, or if you will, the pastoral with household chores. Each brother will know where he applies the most effort, but both are necessary and both are a service to others. The solution is not to hire more people to serve us even more, that is not reasonable efficiency, and it is certainly not efficient. Such terms, used by companies, can help us think about our own religious life. We can ask questions and apply them to our community projects.

The pandemic has highlighted some of this. Seeing our incomes fall very quickly has caused us concern, but it has also forced us to ask ourselves questions and to be better stewards. How can we take care of our duties, support the house, support our brothers, pay the employees, care for the elderly, etc.? Good economic practices have been developed to avoid hiring outside services, brothers taking care of the garden, taking an active part in household chores, helping with the secretarial services of a school or provincial house, sweeping the canteen, etc. These practices should be maintained; they meet the challenges of effectiveness and efficiency, as well as being reasonable. These are the small things, and they are the first steps to facing the bigger ones.

"If at times God seems not to help us, surely this does not mean that we have been abandoned, but instead are being trusted to plan, to be creative, and to find solutions ourselves." (*Patris Corde*, n° 5).

Joseph, a righteous man (Mt 1:19)

From the little we know of him, Joseph was a righteous man who liked to keep the Law. Observance is an attitude that we can situate in the context of Obedience - to God's plan and to the place where he places us to make the plan possible. To observe the Law, as we all know, is to respect the Covenant and what it expresses. Exaggerated observance, concerning ourselves above all with details, is useless and distracts us from Jesus' plan, "I want mercy, not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13).

We have abundant texts in Scripture that refer to economic matters and their relationship to the Law and even more so to the Gospel. "It is therefore necessary to emphasise from the outset the Christian assessment in order to lay the firm foundations of an economic morality with a Christian outlook." (Cf. VIDAL, Marciano, *Moral de Attitudes III, moral social*, Perpetuo Socorro ed.)

There are numerous calls to share goods and be alert to the danger of riches. We have a multitude of texts and documents in the whole of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

The Christian moral perspective of economics does not present a set of laws or norms; it raises attitudes that have to do, or not, with the Gospel. These are usually contrasting attitudes, which invite us to ask ourselves questions. The Church does not propose an economic "third way" against capitalism or collectivism; that is a debate that seems more than over. What it does ask are questions to do with the horizon of the economy, whether or not it is at the service of people, whether it includes and generates opportunities for life, or whether it excludes and discards. In our small measure, the questions are similar.

We owe obedience to the Lord, not to any particular policy, party or economic outlook. The proposal for everyone should have a humanist perspective, thinking about what makes the world, the whole world, more human. We need a shared ethical perspective, to know what the limits are and how we can have a common, not necessarily equal, project for our world. Protesting against multinationals may be fine, but just talking is a very comfortable position to be in. Thinking about what we can do is more complicated. What can we give up? What do we want to build? Where do we want to collaborate and dedicate our time and effort?

We can also improve on some of the things we do. We demand transparency from the institutions, and that is fine. Our services, too, must be transparent, we must account for what is given to us, what we get and what we gain, and we must do it well. We have not been the most transparent in the Congregation.

Transparency requires information, knowledge of accounts and sharing them with simplicity and humility. Doing the accounts well and reporting on time, not when everyone wants to, is necessary. To make economic decisions you have to start from the data. In order for us to care about our situation, we must know the data. To share, you have to inform. Without information there can be no transparency. We can't make demands from anyone if we don't fulfil them ourselves, that's how life is.

We can equip ourselves with better means or better professionals, and that can solve part of the problem. The rest is in our hands. Doing things right is not superfluous. We can change our bursars, but it is neither sensible nor healthy for everything to start over again. This is a problem of attitude, it has to do with our moral conception. What commits us goes far beyond ourselves. The most technical things reflect what we do and for what we are accountable, they are not just numbers.

Injustice moves us and we fight against it. We care so much that we take a vow of poverty, to remember that goods are not our property, and that we are called to share what we are and have with others, whether they are "ours" or not. However, money is very tempting, we all like to own it. There will always be tensions between the individual and the collective, between the freedom to use things and the sense of community, between the technical and the exhortation. We are always somewhere between the inhumanity of capitalism and the inhumanity of collectivism. There is little point in us being austere with our own expenses

and living in houses of unlimited size. We need to find a difficult balance, to denounce without being demagogues and to announce without being naive in the knowledge that, basically, we live well and are not affected. At the same time, Jesus invites us to be as "shrewd as the children of darkness" in that difficult parable of the unjust man whom he praises so surprisingly (Lk 16:1-9). He even raises something that we do not like to hear: "I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." We also live with our burden of incoherence, looking for the good in a complex world.

That is why it helps us to think about our personal and community projects, about our way of living the economy and the coherence that it requires if we put the Gospel before it. Joseph did his part, lived from his work, cared for his family, cared as much as he could for the needy; at least we can assume this given Jesus' attitudes.

"Even through Joseph's fears, God's will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture."

(Patris Corde, n° 2)

Joseph caring for his family is a call for us to take care of the Congregation

"Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." (Lk 2:48).

Many times we reflect on our situation as a Congregation. We see objective data: we are decreasing in number, the provinces with resources have very older brothers, many of whom are dependent or sick. The provinces without so much resources have to take care of many people in formation. We have projects that run at a deficit. Life is made complicated for us with shameful issues such as abuse and compensation, with expensive buildings and facilities, with the questionable building of new houses, with waste. There is no common fund in all the provinces. We are resourceful and uncreative. All that is surely true, but it is not the whole truth.

We will worry about the future if we do not have confidence and if we do not have enough creativity and innovative capacity. Saying "it's always been done like this" doesn't help us. Companies call this "change management", and we are also going through it. The current situation is agitating us more, because the boundaries are becoming more visible and much more obvious. What can we do?

"God acted by trusting in Joseph's creative courage. Arriving in Bethlehem and finding no lodging where Mary could give

birth, Joseph took a stable and, as best he could, turned it into a welcoming home for the Son of God come into the world. (cf. Lk 2:6-7)."

(Patris Corde, n° 5)

Joseph was, in his own way, creative. He knew how to interpret the signs that God offered him. Otherwise, he would have stayed where he was, secretly divorcing Mary and perhaps remaining an anonymous carpenter. We can say that Joseph knew how to manage change, even if he did not think so.

During this time we are thinking about how to take care of the body of the Congregation. How we can generate more revenue to sustain the body. We think of an economy linked to congregational solidarity, though not so that those who already have resources can gain more. We talk about joint investments because it is the way that can help us the most. To do that we have to change the perspective that we have worked with so far, namely that each province invests its own monies and generates an income, which it then shares. Putting money together gives us more capacity and generates more income, and we do so in order to seek, a balance between prudence and results. Some congregations work like this, sharing some of the resources for common investment. There are enough models to be considered.

We have global obligations that need internal and operational changes. We all support initial formation and we hear the voices that speak of the need for help to care for our elderly and sick

brothers, who are growing in number. We are also thinking about how the services of the General Government, its headquarters, its organisation, etc. should be organised. These are tasks that demand a lot of us, and we have to look for answers.

We have been reflecting for some time on general aspects of the economy and poverty, our own and that of others. We are receiving many appeals to rethink our standard of living and many calls to reduce it and adjust our lifestyle more to the Gospel. It is now up to us to think more concretely, which implies a personal and community commitment. We have already started going down some paths, such as reducing travel and using digital media to communicate and work. We have reconstituted budgets and reduced the number of hired staff. And that's all good, but it's not enough. Taking care of the body of the congregation presents us with the challenge of change, creativity and new responses.

The economy and mission

"Faced with imminent danger from Herod, who wanted to kill the child, Joseph was warned once again in a dream to protect the child, and rose in the middle of the night to prepare the flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14)." (*Patris Corde*, n° 5).

Joseph set about avoiding the danger, but also fulfilling what was expected of him. A new time was beginning, the time of Jesus, the new Moses, the New Covenant.

Doing has to do with being - being and doing go hand in hand. It matters not so much what is being done but from what place are we acting and how. A moment of prayer or a moment of work are equally important. The quality of what we do determines our way of being in life and how we deal with life. It doesn't matter if something we do is very visible or flashy or is hidden and insignificant. One activity is not more worthy than another, nor is one person more worthy. It is love that makes life worthy, the love which we receive from God and of which we are a reflection, whether more visible or more hidden.

"The administration of our goods, just as with everything in our life, has to be a sign and witness of the evangelical life. All the temporal goods of the Congregation are at the service of communion, mission, justice and solidarity. The administration of these goods has as its purpose to provide for the needs of the brothers and the communities, to support and develop the mission of the Congregation, and to contribute towards answering the needs of the Church and of the world (...)" (*Constitutions*, 141, 142).

Economics is part of the mission. We must not forget this. For even if we are not all economists, we all participate in, build and are part of a group that wants to be better.

Saint Joseph is the Patron of the Congregation, animating and giving meaning to our mission. While he did not say anything specific, we have attributed to him certain characteristics to

which we aspire. He was fair, he worked to make the lives of others better, he took care of his family, which is sacred, like ours. He created new paths, unknown, for himself and for humanity, following God's call as faithfully as possible. May Saint Joseph help us to be good stewards of the goods that God has given us. And may we know how to give back the talents we have received.

SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: AN ICON OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Sudhir Nayak ssc
Rome (from the Region of India)*

Introduction

This year the Catholic church is contemplating and celebrating the person of St. Joseph. We find in him a universal character of faith and a source of grace for the renewal of the church and the world. In his person is hidden the treasures of grace which we need to discover to strengthen our faith and to live in peace and harmony with God, with oneself and with others in the world. This grace, that we discover in St. Joseph, permeates through the church and beyond to all of humanity, just as God in His graciousness reaches out to all of humanity through His incarnation.

St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the unsung hero in the story of redemption, is an icon of faith. Deep within his role in the story of redemption, there is a message of internal and external communion in and beyond the church. From the beginning, he experienced inner struggles and faced numerous challenges in fulfilling his responsibility as the spouse of Blessed

Virgin Mary. However, in the end he emerges as the hero. Out of fear and doubt he displays a strong character of faith, perseverance and courage. In this context I would like, in this article, to bring out a few characteristics of St. Joseph as an icon of interreligious dialogue.

Interreligious dialogue is an ongoing movement centred on the principle of communion and peace, taking into consideration the richness of innumerable religious worldviews, spiritual heritages and sacred practices. Principles of self-centred egoism and group-centred intellectualism regarding our religious worldview, spiritual heritage and sacred practices lead us to conflict, isolation and separation.

However, interreligious dialogue involves a dynamic process of discovering God and His will in order to harvest the unfathomable grace of God so as to live in communion, harmony and peace. Through interreligious dialogue, we attempt to fulfil what God desires for His people by letting go of what we desire for ourselves.

Interreligious dialogue is necessary in order to make religion dynamic because at the centre of religion there is God who is active. Interreligious dialogue cannot be confined to a compartmentalized idea of religion given the fact that religious worldviews, human characters and cultures are all intertwined, each influencing the other in an ongoing process. Moreover, interreligious dialogue cannot be treated in complete isolation from anthropological and sociological factors. In fact, interreligious dialogue leads to

a dialogue in regards to human character and culture. For this reason, it is important to look at St. Joseph as an icon of interreligious dialogue: in terms of his human character; the religious worldviews in the context of Judaism; and in the cultural setting of first century Israel. Therefore, in this article, it is not possible to deal with all the areas of interreligious dialogue in detail. Instead, this article aims at presenting St. Joseph, who rises above all social distinctiveness, as the instrumental icon of inter-religious dialogue.

The Gospel presents St. Joseph on the path of a journey – a journey from listening to God to following his voice all through his life; from accepting Mary as his spouse to accompanying her in her mission to be the mother of God; from being a provider of a family to fostering Jesus, the son of God. These acts of St. Joseph are powerful means for interreligious dialogue.

The identity of St. Joseph as the foundation of interreligious dialogue

One of the fundamental elements in the process of interreligious dialogue is the identity that comes from our affiliation to a particular religion. This identity is moulded by a deep sense of belonging to a community, in which the charism is expressed through sacred actions and witnessed through social actions. When this identity is prejudiced by self-centred egoism and group-centred intellectualism, we create an island for ourselves. But, if this identity is predisposed by God-centred

wisdom and humanity-centred vision, we embrace the vast world as our common home where we desire to live in an intimate communion with all of humanity and the creation of God.

There is a three-fold identity of St. Joseph: primary, his identity which directly comes from God's own likeness and image; secondary, his identity as a descendant of King David in connection to an event in history (Matthew 1:16); and tertiary, his identity as Joseph who has a vocation to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the father of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, within the first century cultural context of Israel and religious worldview of Judaism. By manifesting this three-fold identity, which are inter-twined, St. Joseph fulfils the vocation he has received from God.

Before we associate with any identity based on social realities, there is our primary identity. In his gratuitousness, God gives us this identity. When we are in connection with this identity, we become the real seekers of God and His will. But a disconnection with this identity makes us wanderers since we choose to be immersed with the temporariness of this world in association with other identities of the world.

St. Joseph maintains this identity by constantly seeking the will of God with all reverence. As a result, God incarnates in his home and lives with him. The principal purpose of this primary identity is nothing else other than seeking the re-incarnation of God into our lives. Regardless of our religious affiliation, starting

from the platform of our primary identity, we all can become seekers of God who will incarnate into our hearts and in our common home, inhabited by the whole of humanity.

The secondary identity is based on history. St. Joseph inherits this identity from a historical person and a historical event. The post-biblical Jewish tradition depicts King David as a prophet-king whose powerful reign replicates God's justice. This reign becomes the salient feature of the Messiah and the foundation of messianic expectation of the people of Israel. St. Joseph, being a just man, becomes an instrument to bring into the world the Son of Justice, Jesus Christ, who would restore justice to His people which was lost in the world.

There is a need for us to understand our identity in connection with history. All religions provide historical events. Some of the historical events of the Christian tradition include the salvation history in the Old Testament, the Kingdom of King David, the Incarnation and the event of Jesus's death and Resurrection. Every religious tradition records many of the historical events of how God has worked in human history. These historical events are foundational and inspirational for us to dialogue with each other and commit ourselves to restoring what is lost in order to bring God's justice and peace to the world.

From the primary and secondary identities, which are universal, we can now see the tertiary identity of St. Joseph as particular or personal. This is the vocation that we are called to

live out through our personal charism, in a particular religious and social context. God intervenes in the life of Joseph with a plan for his mission. Joseph receives a vocation from God to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the legal/foster father of Jesus Christ, the redeemer of the world.

A common platform for interreligious dialogue is the call of God which is always directed towards the common good. We commit to fulfil this vocation of God for a common good within the context of our religious worldviews and cultural context, just as St. Joseph fulfilled his vocation in the context of the worldviews of Judaism and the culture of Israel. At this level, we share our vocation with each other with wholehearted support for the common good of humanity.

Human Character of St. Joseph as the means of interreligious dialogue

St. Joseph displays a commendable human character in living out his vocation as the spouse of Blessed Mary. St. Joseph was betrothed to Mary in a conventional way. However, the script in the story changes, after the Annunciation, when he finds out that Mary is pregnant. Internally, he undergoes an intense conflict which was heavily influenced by the religious and cultural worldviews of his time, and so he plans to divorce her quietly, because as a just man and a faithful husband, he wanted to follow the law. (Matthew 1:19). In this instance, there is a divine intervention following which he engages in a dialogue within

himself. He turns the conflict, brought about by his religious and cultural worldviews, into a means of dialogue in order to follow the vocation to which God was calling him. This process proposes a method for interreligious dialogue in which our focus is always to turn conflicts resulting from our religious worldviews into means of dialogue for discerning, listening and following the plan of God.

St. Joseph, while manifesting faith, perseverance and courage, was not afraid of demonstrating his weakness of fear and doubt. With this disposition, when he surrenders, God acts. In the process of interreligious dialogue, the openness to demonstrate not only the good things but also the weaknesses that exist in us is important to allow God act with us.

The Gospel description of St. Joseph as a faithful husband and a just man who was faithful to the law cannot be ignored. Being faithful, just and law-abiding are the core values of a human who engages in dialogue with oneself and with others. We come to interreligious dialogue with an openness to dialogue and a desire to rise above the conflicts that are, apparently, created by the differences.

St. Joseph's vocation as the purpose of interreligious dialogue

We live our life having many significant roles in society that help us fulfil the vocation we receive from God. When these roles are fulfilled with utmost commitment and passion, the

common good of our vocation is achieved. In turn this fulfils the principal purpose of the primary identity. St. Joseph is a man with a charism who has the roles of being the spouse of the Blessed Mary and the foster/legal father of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Obviously, the locus of his vocation is his family.

As the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he fulfils his role even in the context of what is an unconventional situation. Rising above the conditions of the religious worldview of Judaism, he obeys God. This obedience leads him to a journey of accompaniment. He becomes a companion of Mary so as to accompany her to be the mother of God. This companionship has a greater purpose, that is, the redemption of humanity.

In interreligious dialogue, the common goal is to accompany each other in fulfilling the vocation of our life. When we fulfil faithfully God's vocation in our life, we have a way towards the redemption of humanity. A further step from here would be to choose to become the companions of those brothers and sisters who are suffering, in pain or despair, so as to bring to their lives a ray of hope.

The role of St. Joseph as the foster/legal father of Jesus provides another reason for interreligious dialogue. Providing for and fostering Jesus, who is both human and divine, was an instant obligation for St. Joseph. As the mystery unfolds, Jesus as the divine son is not confined to his earthly family. The vocation of St. Joseph has a wider consequence; namely that he was taking

care of someone who came into the world for the world. This exposition urges us to embrace another character of social responsibility: we are to be concerned not only with our own household but also to be concerned and care for others out of a sense of solidarity.

The *locus* for St Joseph to fulfil his vocation was his family, which is universal across all the religions and cultures. Therefore, the purpose of interreligious dialogue must consider this locus as the starting point for social responsibility. Due to continuous human error and intentional perpetuation of self-interests, families are broken, children are orphaned and deprived, family covenants are wrecked, the young are being led astray, and the old are abandoned. Undoubtedly, a shared commitment of interreligious dialogue towards building our families and sustaining them will bring communion and peace to our world.

St. Joseph is an insignia of human labour which cannot be separated from his vocation. He engages in human labour as a carpenter. The sole aim of his human labour was to be able to provide for his family and thus co-operate in God's work of creation and redemption. In the changing world of today, human labour, which is universal, is driven by erroneous orientations of greediness, accrual of wealth and social power, and a compromise of the material over the spiritual. As a result, it has brought about division and classification, the perpetuation of human violence and the justification of human exploitation. For interreligious dialogue, the orientation of St. Joseph towards

human labour could become another area for building a platform of equality, justice and communion.

Conclusion

St. Joseph is an icon of interreligious dialogue. His life and vocation serve as the foundation, means and purpose of interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue calls us, firstly, to engage in dialogue within ourselves in order to resolve the conflicts arising from our religious affiliations. Secondly, it calls us to find the common good and commit to it in accordance with the plan of God.

As brothers and sisters of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, the dialogue which takes place in our interior journey urges us to engage in dialogue with brothers and sisters of other faiths in our mission of living, contemplating and bringing Jesus' love to all. For us, this dialogue is not possible without our first being transformed by the grace of the Eucharist and freed from prejudiced prepositions so that we may embrace the path of communion and peace in our communities and beyond.

For us, the primary identity is particularly revealed in the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Through this revelation and our consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are urged to become witnesses of God's love and forgiveness through a constant dialogue effecting reconciliation among ourselves and with others. Some of our historical events

such as our foundation story, missionary stories and the life-stories of some brothers and sisters provide us with direction. Some icons of faith such as our founders, Saint Damien, Blessed Eustáquio and our SSCC martyrs, all with an inclusive vision, can inspire us to become agents of God's love, communion and peace in the world.

