

19. March 2024

## LENTEN ITINERARY

### Day 35: "St. Joseph and the Mission of the Man"

On the occasion of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we will reflect today, in context with our Lenten journey, a little on the one whom God chose to be the foster father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Mt 1:16,18-21,24<sup>a</sup>*

*Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.*

*Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally.*

*He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins. 'When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.*

The feast of St. Joseph and his example invite us to reflect on the mission that God has entrusted to man; a mission that in today's society is often in crisis. At first glance, it seems that Sacred Scripture does not give us much information about this saint, to whom the enormous task of being the head of the Holy Family was entrusted. But, if we look more closely, we will realize that, in the little that is said about St. Joseph, we are given a profound description of what should characterize a God-fearing man.

The fact that God entrusts St. Joseph with his greatest treasures is already of

extraordinary importance, because it highlights the responsibility that God places on man, so that he can exercise it in the family and in society.

To the man has been given the chivalrous mission of protecting. And St. Joseph assumes this mission, precisely in the midst of that difficult trial that Mary was expecting a child without him being able to explain it. Instead of exposing her to public infamy, St. Joseph asked himself how to act correctly in those circumstances. In this attitude, his sincerity, rectitude and paternal character are shown.

Taking responsibility and protecting the good, that has been entrusted to him, especially if it is a question of the family and other people... This is what forms the man in his deepest being, who has been created in the image of God. Just as we know that God holds in his hands the whole course of history and the life of each person, man has to assume this task in the personal mission entrusted to him by the Lord. In man, God's way must be reflected, and thus he can testify to the fatherly care and concern for the life of men and women.

A man is to protect the good that has been entrusted to him, even at the cost of his own life. In this is reflected the Being of God as Shepherd, who in his Son gave his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11).

In St. Joseph we can find this attitude in a wonderful way, for as soon as the angel communicates to him that Mary had been chosen by God, he follows his instructions without delay. Now, Joseph assumes responsibility for Mary -whom he takes as his bride- and for the Son growing in her womb. Now, the Mother and the Son are under Joseph's protection.

In the Gospel that we have heard today, we find another important statement about St. Joseph. The gospel tells us that Joseph was "just". A quality that to have would be a great honor for all men. This quality is also related to the responsibility and function of protection.

In this word, Holy Scripture gives St. Joseph great praise. The virtue of justice means giving people what is really their due. The justice mentioned here describes St. Joseph as a man who sincerely longed to do what was right in the eyes of God and man; that is, to do God's Will.

And one last essential point we can extract from today's text: It is the obedience of St. Joseph, who does not hesitate to fulfill God's Will, once he has recognized it. This is also a characteristic that ennobles the man. It is not an obedience that resembles servility. Rather, it is an integral and dignified obedience, which goes after the recognized truth, submits to it and abandons one's own ideas. This is obedience before God and before everything that comes from God!

To assume responsibility, to offer protection, to practice justice and to act in obedience... These are four essential attitudes of St. Joseph, which are an example for all, and, in a special way, they show us something of the manly character in following the Lord.