

## CHAPTER XV

### *The Most Happy Death of St. Joseph and what Happened at It, and how Jesus our Savior and Most Holy Mary, Our Lady, Assisted at It.*

162. Already eight years St. Joseph had been exercised by his infirmities and sufferings, and his noble soul had been purified more and more each day in the crucible of affliction and divine love. As time passed his bodily strength gradually diminished and he approached the unavoidable end in which the stipend of death is paid by all of us children of Adam (Heb. 9:27). In a similar manner also increased the care and solicitude of his heavenly Spouse, our Queen, assisting and serving him with unbroken punctuality. Perceiving in her exalted wisdom that the day and hour for his departure from this cumbersome earth was very near, the loving Lady went to her blessed Son and said to Him: "Lord and God most high, Son of the eternal Father and Savior of the world, I know by thy divine light the time determined by thy eternal will for the death of thy servant Joseph has arrived. I beseech Thee by thy ancient mercies and infinite goodness to assist him in this hour by the powerful arm of thy Majesty, so his death shall be as precious in thy eyes (Ps. 115:15) as the uprightness of his life was pleasing to Thee, and so he may depart in peace with the certain hope of the eternal reward to be given to him on the day in which by thy condescension Thou shalt open the gates of heaven for all the believers. Be mindful, my Son, of the love and humility of thy servant, the summit of his merits and virtues, and the fidelity and solicitude by which the Just Man has supported your Highness and me, thy humble servant, in the sweat of his brow."

163. Our Savior responded: "My Mother, thy petitions are acceptable to Me, and in my presence the merits of Joseph are pleasing. I shall now assist him and in due time shall assign him a place and seat among the princes of my people (Ps. 112:8), so eminent that he shall be the admiration of the angels and a motive of praise for them and for men. With none of the human born shall I do as with thy spouse." The great Lady gave thanks to her sweetest Son for this promise, and for nine days and nights before the death of St. Joseph he enjoyed without interruption the company and attendance of Mary or her divine Son. By command of the Lord the holy Angels, three times on each of the nine days, furnished celestial music, mixing their hymns of praise with the benedictions of the sick man; moreover, their humble but most precious dwelling was filled with the sweetest fragrance and odors so wonderful that they comforted not only St. Joseph but invigorated all the numerous persons who happened to come near the house.

164. One day before he died, being entirely inflamed with divine love due to these blessings, he was rapt in an ecstasy which lasted twenty-four hours, the Lord himself supplying him strength and life by miraculous assistance. In this magnificent rapture he saw the divine essence with beatific clarity, and in it was manifested to him without veil that which he had believed by faith, such as the incomprehensible Divinity, the mysteries of the Incarnation and human Redemption, and the Church Militant with the Sacraments which belong to Her. The most blessed Trinity chose and assigned him as the messenger of Christ our Savior to the holy Fathers and Prophets of limbo, and commanded him to prepare them for their issuing forth from this bosom of Abraham to eternal rest and happiness. All this most holy Mary saw reflected in the soul of her divine Son together with all the other mysteries just as they had been made known to her beloved spouse, and for all this the great Princess rendered worthy gratitude to the Lord himself.

165. When St. Joseph issued from this ecstasy his countenance was full of wonderful splendor and beauty and his mind was entirely deified by his vision of the essence of God. He asked his blessed Spouse to give him her benediction, but She requested her divine Son to bless him in her stead, which He did. Then the great Queen of humility, falling on her knees, besought St. Joseph to bless Her as being her husband and head. Not without divine impulse the man of God fulfilled this request for the consolation of his most prudent Spouse. She kissed the hand with which he blessed Her and asked him to salute the just ones of limbo in her name. The most humble Joseph, sealing his life with an act of self-abasement, asked pardon of his heavenly Spouse for all his deficiencies in her service and love, and begged Her to grant him her assistance and intercession in this hour of his passing away. The holy man also rendered most humble gratitude to her Son for all the blessings of his life, and especially for those received during this sickness. The last words which St. Joseph spoke to his Spouse were: "Blessed art Thou among all women, and chosen among all creatures. Let angels and men praise Thee, let all generations know, magnify and exalt thy dignity, and may through Thee be known, adored and exalted the Name of the Most High through all future ages. May He be eternally praised for having created Thee so pleasing in his eyes and in the sight of all the blessed spirits, and I hope to enjoy thy sight in the celestial fatherland."

166. Then the Man of God turned toward Christ our Lord in most profound reverence and desired to kneel before Him; but the most sweet Jesus, coming near him, received him in his arms where, reclining his head upon them, St. Joseph said: "My Lord and God most high, Son of the eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the world, give thy eternal blessing to thy slave and the work of thy hands; pardon, most merciful King, the faults which I, as unworthy, have committed in thy service and company. I confess and magnify Thee, and with a melted heart give Thee eternal thanks, since among men Thou didst in thy ineffable condescension choose me as spouse of thy true Mother. Thy own greatness and glory shall be my thanksgiving for all eternity." The Redeemer of the world gave him his benediction and said: "My father,\* rest in peace and in the grace of my heavenly Father and mine, and to my Prophets and Saints who await thee in limbo bring the joyful news of the approach of their redemption." At these words of Jesus himself, and reclining in his arms, the most happy St. Joseph expired, and the Lord himself closed his eyes. At the same time the multitude of Angels who attended upon their King and Queen intoned hymns of praise in loud and harmonious voices. By the command of the Lord they carried his most holy soul to the gathering place of the Patriarchs and Prophets, where he was immediately recognized by all as clothed in the splendors of incomparable grace, as the putative father and the intimate friend of the Redeemer, worthy of highest veneration. Conformable to the will and mandate of the Lord his arrival spread unutterable joy in this countless gathering of the saints by the announcement of their speedy rescue.

167. Not to be passed over in silence is the fact that the lengthy infirmities and sufferings which preceded the precious death of St. Joseph were not the sole cause and occasion of his passing away, for despite all of his infirmities he could have extended the term of his life if to them he had not joined the fire of the intense love within his bosom. So his death would be more the triumph of his love than of the effects of original sin, the Lord suspended the special and miraculous assistance by which his natural forces were enabled to withstand the violence of his love during his lifetime. As soon as this divine assistance was withdrawn nature was overcome by his love, and the bonds and chains by which this most holy soul was detained in its mortal

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\* cf. *Incarnation* 681 [Ed.]

body were at once dissolved, and the separation of the soul from the body in which death consists took place. Love, then, was the real cause of the death of St. Joseph as I have said above (155). This was at the same time the greatest and most glorious of all his infirmities, for in it death is but a sleep of the body and the beginning of real life.

168. The great Queen of heaven, seeing her spouse had passed away, began to prepare his body for burial according to Jewish custom. No other hands touched him than her own and those of the holy Angels, who assisted Her in visible human forms. So the utmost propriety could be observed by the Virgin Mother, God enveloped the body of St. Joseph in a wonderful light which hid all except his countenance, and thus his purest Spouse, though She clothed him for burial, saw only his face. Sweetest fragrance exhaled from his body, and it remained so beautiful and lifelike that the neighboring people eagerly came to see it and were filled with admiration. With the assistance of his relatives, acquaintances, and many others, especially the Redeemer of the world, his most blessed Mother, and a great multitude of Angels, the sacred body of the glorious St. Joseph was carried to the common burying place. Yet on all these occasions and in these occupations the most prudent Queen preserved her composure and gravity, without altering her countenance by trivial or unladylike expressions, nor did her sorrow prevent Her from attending to all that belonged to the service of her deceased spouse or her divine Son; in every one of her movements was visible the royal and magnanimous behavior of the Queen of the human race. She reiterated her grateful acknowledgment of the great favors granted to her spouse by the Son of God, and prostrate at his feet in new abasement of humility She said to Him: "Lord and Master of my whole being, my true Son and Teacher, the sanctity of my spouse Joseph could until now detain Thee so we could be worthy of thy desirable company; yet with the death of thy beloved servant I fear losing this good which I do not merit. I appeal, O Lord, to thy own goodness not to abandon me, accepting the humble desires and longings of the heart which loves Thee." The Savior of the world accepted this new offering of his most holy Mother, and He promised not to leave Her until the time when obedience to his eternal Father would oblige Him to begin his life of public preaching.

#### *TEACHING OF MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.*

169. My dearest daughter, it is not without particular cause thy heart has been moved with special compassion and pity for those who are at the point of death, and with the desire to help them in that hour; for it is true, as thou hast known, that then souls suffer incredible and dangerous ordeals from the snares of the demon, from their own nature, and from visible creatures. That is the moment in which the trial of life concludes, and in which falls the last sentence of eternal death or eternal life, of everlasting pain or glory. Since the Most High, who has given thee this affection, desires to acquiesce to it so thou mayest put it into practice, I ratify it and admonish thee to concur on thy part with all thy powers and endeavor to obey us. Take notice then, my friend, that when Lucifer and his ministers of darkness recognize by accidental or natural causes that anyone has a dangerous and mortal illness, they immediately prepare to assail the poor and unwary sick person with all their malice and astuteness in order to ruin him if possible by various temptations; and as the enemies run out of time to persecute souls, they try to compensate for it by their fury, adding to their malice what they lack in time.

170. For this purpose they gather like bloodthirsty wolves, and seek to recognize anew the state of the sick person, considering his natural and acquired inclinations, habits and customs, and in which of his affections he has the greatest weakness, in order to focus there the battle and

implements of war. Those who have a disorderly love of earthly life the enemy persuades there is not such great danger, or he prevents anyone from undeceiving them; those who have been remiss and negligent in the reception of the holy Sacraments he again makes lukewarm, and places great difficulties and delays in receiving them so they die without them, or receive them without fruit and with a bad disposition. To others he proposes suggestions of shame so they do not open their conscience and confess their sins. Others he embarrasses and hinders so they do not declare their obligations or disentangle their consciences. To others, who love vanity, he proposes that they arrange, even in that last hour, many vain and proud things to be done after death. Those who are avaricious or sensual he inclines with great force to what they blindly loved. The cruel enemy makes use of all bad habits and customs in order to drag them towards creatures, and make difficult or impossible their remedy. The many sinful acts they committed in life, by which they acquired depraved habits, become pledges given to the common enemy, and offensive weapons by which he makes war and batters them in that tremendous hour of death; and with each appetite indulged a way and a path is opened by which he enters into the castle of the soul. Within it he spews forth his depraved breath and raises dense darkness (which are his characteristic effects), so the soul does not accept the divine inspirations, has no true sorrow for its sins, and does no penance for its wicked life.

171. Generally these enemies wreak great havoc in that hour by the deceitful hope that the sick person will live longer and be able to execute later what God inspires in that hour by means of the holy angels; and by this deceit they find themselves duped and lost. Also great in that hour is the danger of those who have despised in life the remedy of holy Sacraments. Because of this contempt, which for the Lord and the saints is very offensive, divine justice usually punishes it by leaving these souls in the hands of their wicked counsel, since they do not desire to take advantage of the opportune remedy in due time; and by having despised their remedy, they merit by just judgments to be forsaken in their last hour, for which they waited with insane boldness to seek eternal salvation. Very few are the just whom this ancient serpent does not attack with incredible viciousness in the danger of that last hour; and if he expects to bring down many saints in that hour, what hope have those who are wicked, negligent, and full of sins, who have spent their whole lives making themselves unworthy of divine grace and favor, and who find themselves without works which can be of value against the enemy? My holy spouse Joseph was one of those who enjoyed the privilege of neither seeing nor feeling the presence of the demon in that decisive hour; for when these malignant spirits attempted to approach, they felt a powerful force which stopped them far away, and the holy Angels drove and plunged them into the abyss. Feeling themselves so oppressed and terrified (according to thy way of understanding), they were left disturbed, perplexed, and as if stunned. This was an occasion in which Lucifer called a meeting or council in hell in order to consult about this new event and search the earth again, inquiring is perhaps the Messiah was already in the world; and then happened what thou shalt relate in its place (222ff.).

172. From this thou shalt understand the utmost danger of death and how many souls perish in that hour, when both meritorious works and sins shall begin to show their effects. I do not declare to thee how many are condemned and lost so thou dost not die of sorrow, if thou wouldst know it and have true love of the Lord. But the general rule is: A good life gives hope of a good death; any other means of salvation is doubtful, very rare and contingent. The secure precaution is to take a running start from afar, and therefore I admonish thee that each day which dawns for thee, upon seeing the light, thou reflect whether it shall be the last day of thy life; and as if it shall be, for thou dost not know whether it shall be, compose thy soul in such a manner that thou

receive death with a joyful countenance. Do not delay for one moment sorrow for thy sins and the resolution to confess them, if thou hast any, and to amend even the smallest imperfection; and do this in such a way that thou leave no defect on thy conscience to be reprehended without being sorry for it, and washing thyself in the blood of my most holy Son. Place thyself in the state in which thou canst appear before the just Judge, who shall examine and judge thy least thoughts and movements of thy faculties.

173. In order for thee to help according to thy desires those who are in that extreme danger, in the first place thou must give to all thou canst the same counsels that I have told thee, exhorting them to live with care for their souls in order to have a happy death. In addition to this pray for this intention every day, without omitting any, and with fervent affection and clamors ask the Almighty to dispel the deceits of the demons, burst their bonds and crush their counsels which they wield against those who are dying or at the moment of death, and that his divine right hand confound all the demons. Know that I have offered this prayer for mortals, and in this I desire thee to imitate me. Likewise I charge thee, in order to better help them, to command and constrain the demons themselves to depart from them and not oppress them; and thou canst efficaciously use this power, although thou art not present, since it is in the name of the Lord thou must command and compel them for his greater glory and honor.

174. For thy religious on these occasions, enlighten them regarding what they must do, without disturbing them. Admonish and assist them to promptly receive the holy Sacraments, and always frequent them. Seek and labor to encourage and console them, speaking to them of the things of God and of his mysteries and Scriptures, so they awaken their good desires and affections, and dispose themselves to receive light and inspirations from on high. Encourage them in hope, strengthen them against temptations, and teach them how they must resist and overcome them, seeking to know them before they themselves manifest them to thee; and if thou dost not discover them, the Most High shall give thee light in order to understand them, so to each one the most proper medicine may be applied, for spiritual infirmities are difficult to recognize and cure. All that I admonish thee thou must execute as a most beloved daughter in the service of the Lord, and I shall procure for thee certain great privileges for thyself and for those thou dost desire to help in that terrible hour. Do not be sparse in charity, for thou shalt not work in this by what thou art, but by what the Most High desires to work in thee for Himself.