

The Seven Sundays of Saint Joseph

(Note: On the seven Sundays preceding his feast, March 19, one can contemplate a series of circumstances - seven joys and sorrows - in Saint Joseph's life so that he/she might confront the joys and sorrows of his/her life as he did. The following Novena was taken from the booklet "Devotion to St. Joseph", edited by F. Delclaux, printed by Scepter Publishers.)

First Sunday

Reading:

"Now the origin of Christ was in this wise. When Mary His mother had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. But Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wishing to expose her to reproach, was thinking to put her away privately.

But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying:

'Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take Mary your wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus; for he shall save His people their sins.'

Now all this came to pass that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call His name Emmanuel';

*So Joseph, arising from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took unto him his wife."
(Mt. 1: 18-25)*

Commentary:

Until the angel appeared, Joseph suffered immensely. His sorrow was as great as his love for the Virgin Mary.

The Fathers of the Church comment on this scene in different ways. The interpretation that Thomas Aquinas gives to Joseph's perplexity corresponds to the reality of the situation. He explains: "Joseph wanted to leave Mary not because he was suspicious but because, out of humility, he was afraid to live beside such great sanctity. This is why the angel told him, 'Do not be afraid.' "

Joseph felt that he was worthless, that he was nothing, compared to the incomprehensible mystery that surrounded Mary. To his great sorrow, he determined to withdraw discretely. But from the angel, he received confirmation of the fact that what had happened to her was God's work and that besides, he too, had a part, a mission in the

mystery: 'You shall call his name Jesus'. In Biblical language, this expression meant that he was going to be Jesus' father according to the law. Knowing this, St. Joseph was filled with the joy of his vocation.

Prayer:

O chaste spouse of most Holy Mary, glorious St. Joseph, great was the trouble and anguish in your heart when you were perplexed over putting away your immaculate spouse, yet your joy was immense when the sublime mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to you by the angel.

By this sorrow and this joy, we ask you to comfort our souls, both now and in the sorrows of our final hour, with the joy of a good life and a holy death like your own in the company of Jesus and Mary.

Specifically, I ask (mention in silence the favor asked and pray one Our Father, One Hail Mary and one Glory Be).