Isidore de Isolanis, O.P.

A SUMMA ON THE GIFTS OF ST. JOSEPH

Summa de donis Sancti Joseph

From the Latin of the first edition (Pavia, 1522), edited by J. J. Berthier (Rome, 1887)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from Isidore de Isolanis, O.P., *Summa de donis Sancti Joseph* (Pavia, 1522), in the edition of Fr. Joachim Joseph Berthier, O.P. (Rome: Typis S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1887), with Berthier's preface and notes, Isidore's dedication to Pope Adrian VI, his prologue and hypotheses, the four Parts of the Summa, and the Office and Mass of St. Joseph that close the book. The translation is complete.

The pages of the 1887 edition are given in the text as (p. N). The notes are Berthier's. Words whose reading is doubtful are marked [uncertain].

Front Matter

Title Page

Summa de donis Sancti Joseph (A Summa on the Gifts of Saint Joseph), by Fr. Isidore de Isolanis of the Order of Preachers (1522). Newly edited by Fr. Joachim Joseph B. Berthier of the same Order. Rome: Polyglot Press of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, 1887.

Editor's Preface

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Here is a new edition of a truly remarkable work, the *Summa on the Gifts of Saint Joseph*, by Fr. Isidore de Isolanis of the Order of Preachers.

Although the author has been forgotten by most of our contemporaries, he became very famous among his own for both piety and learning. He was a Lombard (Insubrian) by birth and a son of our convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. In various houses of study, especially in the convent at Pavia and at the University of Bologna, he lectured on the *Book of Sentences* according to the mind of St. Thomas, to the great credit of himself and of the Order, and he cultivated every other kind of learning as well.

The year of his death is unknown, though it is certain that he died around 1530.[1]

He wrote various works in which his piety, learning and talent shine out remarkably. The chief of them were these:

• A treatise *On the Eternity of the World*, against the Averroists.

• *On the Velocity of Motions* of Brother Albert of Saxony, reduced to a compendium.

• A treatise *On the Empire of the Church Militant*.

• *The Deeds of the Inexplicable Mystery of Blessed Veronica*, etc.

• A panegyric *In Praise of His Native City*.

• An *Epitome of the Questions of Brother Capreolus*.

• Five *Catholic Disputations*: On the Fire of Hell;

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On the Fire of Purgatory, etc.; On the Imposition [of Hands?] of the One Granting and the One Receiving Indulgences [uncertain]; On the Manner of the Remission Made through Indulgences.[2]

• A treatise *On the Institutions of Kings and Princes*.

• The *Summa on the Gifts of Saint Joseph*.

We have decided to publish this last again, for reasons to be set out below.

Isidore himself says this about it at the end of the work: "The said Summa was begun by me, Brother Isidore of Milan, in the year of the Lord 1514, in the month of March, in the town of Fontanellato, at the place of St. Joseph,[3] and completed at Pavia, including its correction, in the year of the Lord 1521, on the feast of the Apostles Simon and Jude"; and "printed at Pavia by Jacob Paucidrapius, 1522, on the third day before the Kalends of September" [30 August]. In quarto, 100 leaves.

From this same first edition another was produced at Avignon in 1861, together with a French version, through the care of the Abbé Cr..., a priest most devoted to St. Joseph.[4] We have hardly inquired whether

other editions appeared,

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since it is perhaps enough for us that this book is still known to very few, and can no longer be found by those who look for it.

That is truly much to be regretted, for this book stands out entirely above the other books on the same subject composed by the theological method, and indeed above all others, both by its priority in time and by the fullness of its doctrine.

On this point the reader will not mind being reminded of some documents of antiquity.

In the earlier centuries of the Church, especially among Western Christians, traces of a cult proper to Blessed Joseph appear rather seldom, as St. Bernardine of Siena testifies: "The Church," he says, "has not greatly ordained his solemnity: first, because he descended into Limbo and belongs to the Old Testament; second, in order to avoid scandal from heretics. Hence they do not even call him father except with a qualification, namely 'putative.'"[5] Our Isidore asserts the same.[6] Hence the monuments, whether written or, as they say, figurative, that are brought forward concerning the ancient cult of Blessed Joseph indicate private rather than public devotion.[7] It seems that the credit should go above all to the Carmelite Order for the veneration of the blessed Patriarch first emerging into public view among Western Christians.[8] The reason was surely that the Carmelites trace their origin from the East, where

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that devotion flourished from antiquity. Indeed, someone has even suspected that there is a cause of some affinity here: the Carmelites are held by some to be, as it were, heirs of the Essenes, and St. Joseph is said to have given his name to that same society of the Essenes; from this the reason for a particular devotion flows of its own accord. They argue that St. Joseph belonged to the society of the Essenes, first because he is called "just," a name applied to the Essenes almost by antonomasia; and second because Blessed Joseph, like the Essenes, considered it unlawful for himself to go to the law courts, which is why he "was not willing to expose" his wife [Matthew 1:19].[9]

However that may be, that cult was soon taken up from the Carmelites by the new Mendicant Orders, and above all by the Order of Preachers. For the Carmelite and Preaching Orders have been bound together for all time in matters of doctrine by a close tie, from the day when Blessed Angelus and Blessed Dominic, together with Blessed Francis, spent the night speaking of God or with God in Dominic's cell at Santa Sabina in Rome, down to the time when St. Teresa first set out her teaching at the command of the Preachers.

The Preachers, then, made devotion to Blessed Joseph their own without delay. Hence Blessed Albert the Great, at the request of many, as he himself relates, composed a proper Office of Blessed Joseph, which the Preachers of Cologne printed in 1483 out of ancestral devotion. Likewise Albert himself, Thomas Aquinas, Hugh of Saint-Cher and many others professed remarkable things about

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the most holy Patriarch in their works. Hence too the Sisters of the Order of Preachers, emulating their brothers, practiced the same devotion, as appears above all in the Life of Blessed Margaret of Castello at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[10]

We must admit that in the fifteenth century, because of the excessive straits of the Christian commonwealth, the cult of Blessed Joseph diminished somewhat among the faithful, as did the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin. Yet it did not perish. To pass over other testimonies, St. Vincent Ferrer preached the surpassing praises of St. Joseph everywhere; and at about the same time, in 1497, the Preachers of Grenoble asked Charles VIII, King of the French, to endow their Confraternity of St. Joseph with privileges.[11]

But as soon as peace was restored to the Church and the Order, both the Rosary devotion and the cult of St. Joseph flourished again everywhere: the former through the work of Brother Alan, the latter through that of Brother Isidore. Perhaps alluding to both of these restorations, our author says: "O faithful and devout client of the Blessed Virgin, when you finish her Rosary, do not be reluctant at the end to perform something in honor of her Spouse, St. Joseph!"[12]

Nor should you suspect that this was the private devotion of a single friar. For from the year 1521 there appears

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a proper Office of St. Joseph in the Dominican liturgy. The following year our Isolani printed another, which the celebrated Cardinal Cajetan ordered to be received and celebrated throughout the whole Order. At the same time (to omit many others) Fr. Cornelius de Sneek spread the cult of Blessed Joseph everywhere by his preaching. In 1510 Fr. Bernard of Luxembourg published a book entitled *A Compilation in Commendation of Blessed Joseph, with a Mass and a Crown of the Twelve Honors of the Same, taken from Pierre d'Ailly.*[13] Others again founded confraternities and solemnities in honor of St. Joseph in various places.[14] I pass over what the Preachers later laid down in praise of the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; and I say nothing of the proper Office

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that the Preachers of the Philippine Islands had;[15] or that the first bishop of New Cartagena in America, himself a son of St. Dominic, gave Joseph to his cathedral church as its patron; or that Benedict XIII, of the Order of Preachers, did much for the holy Patriarch; or countless other things, old and recent. Let us come to a halt at our Isidore, about whose work a few things seem worth adding.

On this point Benedict XIV, the most learned of the Popes, says this: "Among those who labored most in their writings to extend the cult of St. Joseph, by no means to be omitted are John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, who died in 1429, and Isidore de Isolanis, a theologian of the Order of Preachers, in his *Summa on the Gifts of St. Joseph*, dedicated to the Supreme Pontiff Adrian VI; others afterwards followed them." So says Benedict XIV, with his usual learning and fairness.[16]

Indeed, our Isidore was the first who undertook and treated the life and cult of St. Joseph theologically, so that he too, at the beginning of the work, not without reason addressed the reader in these words: "Behold, candid reader, a new work, unknown to many centuries, although the very lofty mysteries that it pursues and proves have by no means escaped Catholic doctors of keen intelligence. Here, indeed, things unknown to the scholastics are disputed, certainly not for the sake of exercising the mind, but on account of the majesty of Christian light, which is to be adored."[17]

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He asserts this again elsewhere as well, especially in the Prooemium of the Fourth Part, where he claims for himself that he is the first in the empire of the Church Militant to publish a book gathering the gifts of Joseph into one. For, as he adds in the margin, "John Gerson published not a book on the Gifts, but the *Josephina*," that is, he composed it in heroic verse. He does not vainly boast that he is the inventor of the doctrine, but says that he has opened up what lay hidden "in the secret chests of the Church."[18] Or, as he explains more clearly elsewhere: "The work will indeed seem new to many, but it was inserted by the Lord in the Sacred Scriptures from the beginning, and expressed by the holy Doctors, outstanding in the Spirit of God, in various places of their volumes."[19]

Just as Aquinas composed his *Theological Summa* not from new doctrines but from those scattered everywhere like members of one body, so Isidore composed his Summa, or synthesis, from the various assertions of the Doctors about Blessed Joseph that set forth his praises explicitly or implicitly. So in this

discipline he should be regarded, not (to use the apt pun some make) in the manner of certain recent writers who are all but futile,

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but with full right "as the prince of theologians."

This must be granted not only because of his priority in time, but also because of the fullness of his doctrine, which will be plain on every side to anyone who reads him. Whatever weightier things have been said, in ancient and more recent times, Isolani said or hinted first, more fully, more learnedly and more securely, as the Abbé Cr... testifies in his Avignon edition: "An astonishing work," he says, "for although it is so old, nothing solid has been said, or will be said, on this subject that is not found established or indicated there."[20] What Cardinal Hugh, Santes Pagnini and Sixtus of Siena achieved in their investigations and explanations of the Scriptures, what Albert achieved in philosophy, Thomas in dogmatic theology, Raymond of Peñafort in canon law and moral theology, Cano in the discipline of the theological sources, and many other Preachers in other sciences sacred and profane, Isolani achieved in the theology of St. Joseph. Others, as Benedict XIV testifies, "followed," and none, in our judgment, has surpassed him. Would that all who followed had emulated his knowledge and prudence, and had not offered, in place of doctrine and sound documentation, empty words that merely sound and tinkle! Would that, in this and in other disciplines, enlightenment of mind had gone before the affections of piety!

We therefore consider that this new edition of the *Summa on the Gifts of St. Joseph* will be exceedingly profitable to all, and especially to priests.

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About the author's style it is worth noting only this: it is far terser and more elegant than was usual among most scholastics of his age, so that it is suffused with a certain sweetness and eloquence by which it draws in and moves the reader's mind more deeply, while in him, as in Aquinas, "the meaning remains clear and firm." Isolani added to his Summa an Office of St. Joseph, which we also publish again, especially since it is said to have been approved, at Isolani's earnest request, by Pope Adrian VI, with the rite of the second class and an octave.[21]

We must now add what we have done in this edition.

First, we give the text entirely complete from the first edition itself, removing only some errors, and those quite obvious ones.

We have, however, altered the punctuation somewhat to modern usage, and also the spelling, though very rarely, admitting *quoties* for *quotiens*, *considerare* for *consyderare*, and other things of this kind.

We have not altered at all the authorities cited by the author. We have not brought the texts of Scripture into line with the Vulgate, nor the sayings of the Fathers or Doctors into line with more recent texts, judging that the old editions stand to some extent by their own weight and conform more closely to the author's mind. But since once or twice something was missing from a passage of St. Thomas he cited,

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we have added it for the completeness of the demonstration, especially since the author himself had promised the full authority. We have added a few brief notes, very few indeed, where they seemed useful.

The titles of the whole work, and of the four Parts, the Prologues and so on, which were rather long, as was the custom of that time, we have given in shorter form. So that these original titles may not be missed, we set them down here.

Here is the title of the work: "Behold, candid reader, a new work, unknown to many centuries, although the very lofty mysteries that it pursues and proves have by no means escaped Catholic doctors of keen intelligence. Here, indeed, things unknown to the scholastics are disputed, certainly not for the sake of exercising the mind, but on account of the majesty of Christian light, which is to be adored. The work is a Summa, divided into four parts, on the Gifts of St. Joseph, Spouse of the most blessed Virgin Mary and putative father of Christ Jesus, the immortal God. It teaches, disputes, meditates and narrates."

The Prologue to the whole work begins thus: "Prologue. Prooemium to the Summa on the Gifts of St. Joseph, Spouse of the most blessed Virgin Mary and putative father of Christ Jesus, the immortal God, published by Brother Isidore de Isolanis of Milan, of the regular life."

This is the title of the First Part: "First Part of the Summa on the Gifts of St. Joseph, published by Brother Isidore de Isolanis of Milan, professed of the regular life of the Order of Preachers."

The Prologue to the Second Part begins thus: "Prooemium to the Second Part of the Summa on the Gifts of

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St. Joseph, Spouse of the most blessed Virgin Mary and putative father of Christ Jesus, the immortal God, published by Brother Isidore de Isolanis of Milan, of the regular life of the Order of Preachers." The Prologues to the Third and Fourth Parts: "Prooemium to the Third Part..." and "...to the Fourth Part, etc." The rest as in the Prologue to the Second Part.

The first three Parts end with these words: "End of the First," or "Second," or "Third Part on the Gifts of St. Joseph." The ending of the Fourth will be noted at the end of the work.

Finally, the last chapter in each Part is numbered thus in its title: "Chapter XVII..., XV..., XXII..., X and last."

May this second edition of a golden work serve the glory of Blessed Joseph and the devotion of the faithful toward him, so that from it may arise the good of the Church which Brother Isidore, addressing Pope Adrian, desired and hoped for with such earnest prayers. For the world labors under the same evils that Isidore lamented; let the remedy be the same.

Let us end our little preface with this prayer to St. Joseph, received among the Preachers in the proper Masses of St. Joseph from the year 1521: "O God, who entrusted to the most faithful Patriarch Joseph the incomparable treasure of your Mother to keep, and who, by the prerogative of his special merits, gave yourself to him as a son: grant us, by his merits and prayers, to despise earthly things and to prepare our hearts as chaste tabernacles for you. Who live, etc. Amen."

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[1] Cf. Andrea Rovetta, Bibliotheca Provinciae Lombardiae, p. 109; Échard, Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum, vol. II, p. 50. Others who have written about him are Antonio of Siena, I.-M. Plodius, Ambrogio Altamura, etc.

[2] This work appeared partly at Milan in 1517, and in full at Pavia in 1522. Our Isidore should therefore be added to those Preachers who were the first to write against Luther and his followers, namely (to say nothing of Tetzel and others) Cajetan, who published his opuscula on indulgences in 1518; Prierias, who published his treatises at Rome in 1520; and Francis of Ferrara, who did so in 1525.

[3] In this town, at the end of the fifteenth century, an oratory had been dedicated to Blessed Joseph by the community of the place itself. In 1502 the community gave it to the noble family of the Galeotti, and around 1512 the family freely ceded it to the Preachers, who had been there since 1497.

[4] To whom we owe this particular favor, that he graciously lent us the first edition itself so that our new one could be printed.

[5] Vol. III, ch. III, Sermon on St. Joseph.

[6] Summa, Part IV, ch. VIII.

[7] On this, if you are a theologian and wish to look into it, see Dom Calmet, Nouvelles dissertations, "Dissertation sur S. Joseph"; Sedlmayr, Theologia moralis, nos. 893–999; the Bollandists, Acta Sanctorum, 19 March; Migne, Summa aurea, Index IX; Suárez on III, q. 29; Le Hir, Études bibliques, vol. II, p. 102; Kraus, Realencyclopädie, art. "Joseph Nährvater."

[8] Cf. Benedict XIV, De servorum Dei beatificatione, book IV, part II, ch. XX.

[9] Cf. Ayma, Vie de S. Joseph. On the meaning of the word "Essene," see the works of Serarius, Drusius and Scaliger, De tribus Judaeorum sectis (Delft, 1703).

[10] Cf. the Dominican Breviary, 13 April. She died at Città di Castello in 1320, in the thirty-third year of her age. Hence images of this Blessed commonly show three rays proceeding from the Child Jesus, from Blessed Mary and from St. Joseph, which together pierce the heart of the holy virgin.

[11] Cf. the periodical La Couronne de Marie, March 1876, where Fr. François Balme, O.P., reports this.

[12] Summa, Part IV, ch. VIII.

[13] Cf. Échard, vol. II, p. 93.

[14] Of the countless documents that could be cited, I shall bring forward only this one, from the Public Archive of the City of Bordeaux, among the records of the Preachers, fols. 406–432 (in French): "In the year 1525, when the city of Bordeaux was afflicted with the plague, the Parlement, to appease the anger of God through the merits and intercession of the glorious St. Joseph, Spouse of the Most Holy Virgin, made a vow to come in a body, on the day of his feast, in procession to the church of this Convent [of the Friars Preacher], to adore the Most Holy Sacrament there and to hear the sermon preached by a religious of the Convent. This procession is made up of the whole body of the Parlement in red robes, the Cour des Aides also in red robes, the Treasurers in ceremonial dress, the Présidial also in robes, the two Chapters of Saint-André and Saint-Seurin accompanied by their musicians, all the parishes of the city, the Benedictine religious and the body of the Seminary." We report this so that certain more recent writers may not be allowed, in their not unusual way, to pervert history, knowingly or unknowingly. Vindications ought to be written on other matters as well.

[15] In 1546 the Office of the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin and Blessed Joseph was admitted among us; soon the name of Blessed Joseph was added to the Litany of the Saints, etc.

[16] De servorum Dei beatificatione, book IV, part II, ch. XX, no. 17.

[17] Summa, in the title.

[18] Prooemium to Part IV.

[19] Summa, Prologue. On his interpretation of the Scriptures, note that although the author sometimes uses the philological method and the critical art introduced more recently by Fathers Pagnini and Sixtus of Siena, he often adduces the Fathers as interpreters, and still more often both Glosses, the Ordinary and the Interlinear. The reader should remember that the former was compiled by Alcuin, Rabanus and Walafrid Strabo, and the latter by Anselm of Laon.

[20] Editor's Preface. Cf. Fr. Patrignani, S.J., Il divoto di S. Giuseppe, book I, ch. VIII; Bouix, S.J., S. Joseph d'après les Saints.

[21] Cf. Michele Pio, Progenie di S. Domenico in Italia, etc.

Dedication to Pope Adrian VI

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To the most blessed Adrian the Sixth, lately elected Bishop of the City of Rome by heavenly piety, by the concordant judgment of the Fathers and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, most holy Father of the world: Brother Isidore de Isolanis of Milan, of the Order of Preachers, unworthy Bachelor of Sacred Theology in the University of Bologna, after humbly kissing your foot, wishes a long and happy reign.

Italy, most blessed Father, whom the immortal God, after the imperial Majesty, set up with a single triple golden diadem as princess of the human commonwealth, torn by savage wars, terrified by the divine thunderbolt, has awaited your coming with flowing tears; she who sits alone, mistress of the nations and princess of the provinces [Lamentations 1:1]. She judges your coming most auspicious, bearing signs of joy exulting on every side, and like the lovely rays of the dawn as it begins to shine, a forerunner of happy times. Seized by the whirlwind of factions, bloodied with the blood of the faithful, weeping for her exiled citizens, sighing over the plunder of monasteries of both sexes, lamenting the imminent calamity of the religious orders as monks and beggars wander about, she longs with all the desires of her soul to behold you as a light sent down from on high,

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to kiss your feet, to contemplate the holiness, prudence, piety and wisdom of your most happy pontificate, and she longs to see it, as it were, face to face. Turning great things over in my mind, I write only a few, because the images of my flowing thoughts get in one another's way.

My mind is moved to extol with praise your teachings, which the Catholic academies revere. But the majesty of your character strives to run ahead of them, and the height of the dignities with which you have shone, most richly adorned, eclipses them with equal splendor. Therefore the Italians are turning their sadness into joy, seeing from afar the power of God coming with you, and the cloud of the virtues of your holiness covering the whole earth. I, a worm and no man [Psalm 21:7], coming to congratulate you, have resolved to offer to your throne, which holds the scepters of heaven and earth, the highest summits of the merits of the divine Joseph, who was graced with the great name of parent of God, gathered into one volume. I would certainly believe that peace is to be restored to Italy, not lightly, by the most holy prayers of Joseph. And you, most holy father of the human commonwealth, Abraham in faith, Moses in leadership, Aaron in priesthood, David in anointing, Peter in authority, I humbly implore that by your command, your order and your law you bid the universal Church to celebrate feast days in honor of the divine Joseph, yearly, solemn and joyful, with the greatest observance, immense

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reverence and apostolic veneration. By such honors at last the empire of the Church Militant will receive strength from above; and when peace has thereby been restored to the Church, may the water of holy baptism be poured out upon the barbarous nations, and the name of Christ be preached to the Gentiles. So, through the prayers of the great spouse of the Queen of heaven, graced with the lofty name of divine parent, may Asia, abandoning Mohammed, obediently adore your scepters (than which no region is more blessed), and may Jerusalem venerate them, which fastened to the cross Jesus our Lord, before whose divinity the army of angels trembles on high. We read likewise that many Roman Pontiffs, by instituting yearly solemnities, obtained peace for the Catholic people and brought heavenly help to the holy way of life. Farewell, most blessed Father, happy for long years. From Bologna, from the convent of the divine father Dominic, on the solemnity of Pentecost, 1522.

Prologue

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The most lofty gifts of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Christ [Matthew 1:16], gifts not sufficiently known to sick mortals, I now undertake to write down in this volume: I who am slender in talent, small in knowledge, cold in the spirit of my heart; desiring indeed to know the heavenly teachings of the Catholic faith, but reaching them only a little; an emulator of eloquence, but still a humble disciple. The work will indeed seem new to many; but it was inserted by the Lord in the Sacred Scriptures from the beginning, and expressed by the holy Doctors, outstanding in the Spirit of God, in various places of their volumes. *[Margin: A work new in form, but ancient in its teachings.]*

For this reason men of great and excellent intelligence may perhaps charge me with the vice of rashness. For which youth would dare to run the course of a giant [Psalm 18:6], unless he were too bold and too confident in his own strength? Who would try to sail across the expanse of a wide flood with a light skiff while the waves roar, unless he lacked counsel and were protected by the foolish defense of a reckless mind? But since the human mind, winged by ardor alone, flies up to Wisdom, who dwells in the highest places and whose throne is in a pillar of cloud [Sirach 24:7], I would dare to take up this great burden and to put my shoulders under the sky as it slips. For the mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures do not necessarily require Peripatetic studies, *[Margin: Sacred Scripture is understood by the Spirit of God.]*

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nor the philosophy of Plato, nor the mathematical disciplines; they are understood by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. For wisdom is clear and never fades away, and is easily seen by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her [Wisdom 6:13]. Blessed Hilary favors these bold undertakings in his book *On the*

Trinity, saying: "Begin by believing these things, run through them, persevere. And even if I should know that I shall not arrive, I shall still rejoice that I shall make progress. For he who devoutly pursues infinite things, even if he never reaches them, will always profit by going forward. But do not thrust yourself into that secret, and do not plunge yourself into the mystery of unending truth, presuming to comprehend the summit of understanding: but understand that these things are incomprehensible." Thus Hilary. Nor am I unaware that the immortal God can raise up from this stone a son of Abraham [Matthew 3:9] to speak things worthy of the holy Joseph, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened [Isaiah 59:1], and no word is impossible with God [Luke 1:37]. Taking my beginning, then, from the help of the immortal God, who inspires good wills, gives strength for noble works and looks upon the prayers of those who act with clear light, I humbly implore: *[Margin: Invocation of God.]*

Almighty One whom I worship in my mind, sole Father of all things, Unknown to the wicked, and unknown to none of the devout, Without beginning or end, older than the ages, Grant an easy course, and favor these bold undertakings. Son of the highest Father, bringer of salvation to our age, Open a way for my prayers, sending in a breath of light,

(p. XX)

And turn away the viper's crime of the venom that is doomed to perish. O Light who brighten heavenly Olympus, holy Mother, Bride of Joseph, and happy royal consort too, Recall the causes, and carry these things to the fatherland above. Grant that the prayers he offers for this our Joseph be fulfilled.

And now I would ask you again and again, whoever you are who will deign to read these pages of mine, and I beseech you by the bowels of the mercy of our God [Luke 1:78], to grant pardon to my simple veneration and, so to speak, to the tender love with which I strive to honor the most holy Joseph. Do not reject these teachings as the empty things of a new work before you have read them more attentively, understood them more deeply and meditated on them more profoundly. *[Margin: First reason for this Summa.]*

When you have candidly done this, and have convicted me of error as clearly as possible, first grant pardon to a devout affection; then take occasion from the ignorance of my breast to write the virtues of the divine Joseph, and to surpass me in my wandering by your own excellent talent. *[Margin: Attend, reader.]* By my own nature, and at the urging of Catholic institutions, through constant reading of the Angelic and holy Doctor Thomas Aquinas, whose angelic teachings I profess, and through frequent study of the volumes of the great Doctor Albert, and finally at the bidding of Christ, God most good, I submit everything I have published to the correction of the holy Roman Church, whose See alone, I believe, testify, proclaim and venerate, the light of Christian truth surrounds. *[Margin: He professes the teachings of the great Doctors and submits the work to the Roman Pontiff.]*

I chose to call the present work the *Summa on the Gifts of St. Joseph*: first, because it pursues the highest summits of things; *[Margin: First reason for the name of the work.]*

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second, because things gathered from here and there have been reduced into this one volume; third, because to those who meditate on the Sacred Scriptures these immense things will seem compressed, as it were, into a narrow space; and finally, because those who excel in divine light will be able to add what we have omitted, whether because we were taken up with other studies, or through want of keen intelligence, or through our own sloth, or the weakness of human nature, or blindness to the spirit of divine things; so that at last even the least person may without difficulty reach and behold the whole treasure of the gifts of St. Joseph. *[Margin: Second, third, fourth.]*

Let not the studious, I beg, be loath to keep to a certain principle of mine, which I have no doubt men of every degree of understanding have followed. *[Margin: The author's principle.]* It is this: that in the Catholic

Church, and in setting out the exploits of the saints, they put forward nothing that has not been thought out by long examination and agrees with reason and the Sacred Scriptures.

Imagined dreams, delightful little fables, and things that our own affection suggests to us, with the flattering applause of our own thoughts and without the compulsion of reason, they should shudder at, crush, and flee like poisons of the purest doctrine, not touching them even lightly. *[Margin: Imagined fables to be avoided.]* Let it be permitted to reason from the Sacred Scriptures and to argue from the holy Doctors; but let light and empty vanity be absent, and let the necessity of right reason instruct. Hence it comes about that Catholic writers submit things that they have arranged with the greatest care,

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worked out through long vigils and shaken by the frequent darts of disputants, to be corrected by the judgment of the Roman Pontiff, to whom it was promised that his faith should not fail [Luke 22:32].

Finally, we have divided this Summa, cut into chapters, into four principal parts, just as all time is divided into the four parts of the year. *[Margin: Division of the book.]*

The first part treats those gifts of the divine Joseph that preceded his marriage with the most blessed Virgin.

The second, those that followed the marriage.

The third explains the blessings, and those things that are found set out in both the Old and the New Testament and ascribed to the blessed patriarchs. They shine most brightly in the most holy Joseph, like the stars of heaven.

The fourth part begins from the gift of Joseph's death and, divided likewise into several chapters, then opens up the divine honors of Joseph in the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem. Before all these we set the Hypotheses and the sequence of the whole volume, so that this teaching, laid out in clear order, may be clearer to readers.

The difference of style is to be attributed to the variety of the times in which we wrote these things.

Hypotheses

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I. "Joseph her husband, being a just man." Matthew, chapter 1 [1:19].

II. "Your father and I have been seeking you sorrowing." And again: "And he was subject to them." Luke 2 [2:48, 51].

III. "Whatever occurs to you as rightly to be done, know that God has done it, as the founder of all good things." Augustine, *On Free Choice*.

IV. "Let reason defer wholly to authority when it considers whom it should believe; and most certain is the authority of truth itself once it is known and clear." Augustine, *On True Religion*.

V. "We must seek by reason what agrees with truth, without which authority neither exists nor has force." Augustine, *On the Morals of the Church*.

VI. "There each may safely abound in his own sense, where what he thinks does not run counter either to certain reason or to manifest authority." Bernard.

VII. "When someone tries to understand in the Holy Scriptures what he who wrote them understood, what harm is there if he understands what you, light of all truthful minds, show?" Augustine, *Confessions* XII.

VIII. "Remember that great patriarch who was once sold into Egypt, and know that Joseph not only received his name, but also attained his chastity, and

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achieved his innocence and grace." Bernard, *On "Missus est."*

IX. "The Lord chose Joseph alone on earth as the consolation of his mother, the nourisher of his flesh, and finally the most faithful helper of his great design." The same Bernard.

X. "Joseph, son of David not only in the flesh but in faith, in holiness, in devotion: whom the Lord found, like another David, after his own heart, to whom he could safely entrust the most secret and most sacred mystery of his heart; to whom, I say, as to another David, he made manifest the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom" [Psalm 50:8]. The same, in the same place, *On "Missus est."*

XI. "'Joseph her husband, being a just man': here he calls 'just' one who is perfect in every virtue." Chrysostom, Homily 2 on Matthew.

XII. "Joseph, while still living under the law, was philosophizing above the law." The same, in the same place.

The First Part

Chapter I. The Gift of St. Joseph's Name

(p. 1)

St. Thomas teaches most learnedly, in the Third Part, question 37, article 2, that names are given to individual men either by human or by divine means. He says: "Names given by men are taken from some property of the one to whom the name is given: either from the time, as the names of certain saints are given to those born on their feasts; or from kinship, as when the father's name is given to the son: 'And they called him by his father's name, Zachary,' and not John, 'because there was no one among his kindred who was called by this name,' as is said in Luke 1 [1:59, 61]; or from an event, as Joseph named his firstborn, saying, 'God has made me forget all my labors,' Genesis 41 [41:51]; or from some quality of the one to whom the name

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is given, as Genesis 25 says that because the one who came out of his mother's womb first was red and all hairy like a skin, his name was called Esau, which means 'red' [Genesis 25:25]. But names that are given to some by God always signify some gratuitous gift given to them by God. Thus it was said to Abraham, Genesis 17: 'You shall be called Abraham, because I have made you father of many nations' [17:5]. And it was said to Peter, Matthew 16: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church'" [16:18].

Three things persuade us that the name Joseph came to the spouse of the most blessed Mother of God by divine means. The first is the figure that went before. For Joseph the son of Jacob, of whom various things are related in many chapters of Genesis, was a figure of this Joseph: in the fidelity he kept toward his master, not daring to touch his mistress unchastely, and consequently in chastity; in the revelation of mysteries; in the charge of stewardship; in the storing of food; and in being set over the land. The great Doctor Albert testifies to this too in his book *On "Missus est,"* chapter 48.

The second is the outcome that followed. For although, since the Scriptures are silent, it is hidden from us how this just man came to be called Joseph, yet since it is certain that it came about that he was the spouse of the Mother of God and was thought to be the father of her Son, a gift which plainly surpassed the gifts granted to Abraham, Jacob and Peter,

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to whom names were given by God, we are persuaded to believe the same of Joseph as well.

The third is the expression of the meaning. For Joseph means "increase" or "addition";[1] hence Genesis 30 says: "And she called his name [Joseph], saying: The Lord give me another son" [30:24]. Hence the great Doctor says, in the chapter cited above: "The property and meaning of the name, which signifies increase, fits him perfectly as well. By this arrangement he was exalted with respect to himself, to his neighbor and to God: namely by the increase of virtues, by the fame of his renown, by the reverence and love of men, by familiarity with the Mother of God, and by the divine paternity, as it was supposed." Thus Albert.

The divine Bernard explains these three reasons in these words, *On "Missus est"*: "So he was neither husband of the mother nor father of the Son, although by a certain and necessary dispensation he was for a time both called and thought to be both. Yet infer from this title, by which, though it was by dispensation, he deserved to be so honored by God that he was both called and believed to be the father of God; infer from his own name, which you need not doubt means 'increase,' who and what sort of man this Joseph was. And at the same time remember

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that great patriarch who was once sold into Egypt, and know that he not only received his name, but also attained his chastity, and achieved his innocence and grace. For that Joseph, sold out of his brothers' envy and led into Egypt, prefigured the selling of Christ; this one, fleeing the envy of Herod, carried Christ into Egypt. That one, keeping faith with his master, would not lie with his mistress; this one, recognizing his mistress, the mother of his Lord, to be a virgin, and himself being continent, guarded her faithfully. To that one was given understanding in the mysteries of dreams; to this one it was given to be made aware of, and a sharer in, the heavenly sacraments. That one stored up grain, not for himself but for the whole people; this one received the living bread from heaven to keep, both for himself and for the whole world. There is no doubt that this Joseph, to whom the mother of the Savior was espoused, was a good and faithful man: the faithful and prudent servant [Matthew 24:45] whom the Lord appointed as the consolation of his mother, the nourisher of his flesh, and finally the one most faithful helper on earth of his great design." Thus Bernard.

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[1] The Septuagint writes Ἰωσήφ; the Hebrews יוסף or יהוסף, derived from יסף, that is, "he added" (Editor).

Chapter II. Objections against the Reasons Given

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The great Doctor Albert, the brightest light of all wisdom, who looked upon the merits, virtues and gifts of the Mother of God with lofty intelligence, presses against the reasons of the preceding chapter by these means. "It seems," he says, "that the spouse of the most blessed Virgin ought not to have been called Joseph. For as there is a wheel within a wheel [Ezekiel 1:16], so is the Old Law within the New. It seems, then, that that marriage of the Virgin should have been prefigured somewhere in the Law. And the Church interprets this as having been done in Esther and Ahasuerus. If, then, that marriage and those spouses represent this one figuratively, then these names will correspond to those names. But Esther's spouse is Ahasuerus; therefore the spouse of Our Lady should have been called Ahasuerus.

"Again, Sarah, bearing a son in her old age and barren, against nature, a son to be sacrificed, is a figure of Our Lady, who bore a son above nature, to be sacrificed on the cross. But if Sarah signifies Our Lady, then Sarah's spouse signifies the spouse of Our Lady; therefore he should have been called Abraham.

"Again, if Our Lady was prefigured by Rebecca, then her husband should have been called Isaac.

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"Again, if the Lord was prefigured by Samson, and his mother as the mother of Samson, then her spouse should have been called Manoah.

"Again, Joseph means 'increase'; but in this marriage no increase is made through Joseph; therefore he is not fittingly called Joseph."

The same great Doctor answers the first four arguments sufficiently with a single reply: "Nor was it fitting for Joseph to be prefigured by anyone who was a husband through carnal union, since he, without carnal union, contracted a holier marriage by the conjugal pact; a virgin spouse, he guarded a virgin, both by rendering due service and by being inseparably joined to mother and son with a father's affection." Thus he.

Answering the rest, he says: "We say that one person in the Old Testament sometimes prefigured several, because of his several properties. Hence Abraham, where it is said to him in Genesis 22, 'Take your son,' etc. [22:2], prefigured God the Father, who did not spare his own Son [Romans 8:32]. But where it is said to him in chapter 12, 'Go out of your country and from your kindred' [12:1], he prefigured the Son, who went out from the Father and came into the world [John 16:28]. And when it is said of him in chapter 18 that he sat at the door of his tent in the very heat of the day [18:1], he prefigures the ancient fathers, who sat under the shadow of the Law and awaited the incarnation of the Word with the heat

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of desire. In a similar way we say that that Joseph, in being sold, in his deliverance, in his imprisonment and in the saving of Egypt, prefigured the Lord; but in fidelity, chastity, the revelation of mysteries, the charge of stewardship, the storing of food and being set over the land, he was a figure of this Joseph."

Chapter III. The Gift of St. Joseph's Homeland

Joseph was a Galilean by nation. We have learned from the testimony of Sacred Scripture that the province of Galilee, not very far from Jerusalem, was inhabited by Jews and Gentiles. For Isaiah 9 says, because the Gentiles dwelt there: "Beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles" [9:1]. That it was inhabited by Jews is plain from the evangelist Luke, who says in chapter 2: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea" [2:4]. It was fitting for Joseph to have that part of Judea as his homeland, for three reasons.

First, as a recommendation of his office. For he was to bring up the Savior of Jews and Gentiles. Romans 15: "For I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision... but that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy" [15:8–9].

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Second, because of the condition of the place. For Jews and Gentiles inhabited Galilee, as was said; and it was a people of ill repute among the Jews, according to John 1: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" [1:46].

Now it should be noticed that the Lord Jesus, in all his principal deeds for the salvation of the human race, showed why he came into the world. For he willed to be born among sinful men, to live among them, to be crucified among thieves, and, rising again, to appear first to a woman who had been a sinner, showing that he came into this world to save sinners [1 Timothy 1:15]. For this reason he chose a putative father from Galilee, from whose homeland he himself also sprang.

Third, because of the meaning of the name. For Galilee means "revelation" or "passing over." And it was fitting that Joseph, to whom was made the revelation of the supreme secret of God, which is the Word who was in the beginning with God [John 1:1] and who dwells in light inaccessible, whom no man has ever seen [1 Timothy 6:16], should be born in a homeland whose name is "revelation." Nor was so great a revelation a passing one, but abiding. For he handled with his hands the hidden Word of God, and received experience of him through all the interior and exterior senses, and through the intellectual part.

A homeland named "revelation," then, suits the most holy Joseph

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because of the revelation he received passively.

The revelation of the Word of God was also made actively, through Joseph, to the whole world. For he nourished and guarded him until the time when he was to be made manifest to all the people. "For all flesh," says the prophet David, "has seen the salvation of God" [cf. Psalm 97:3; Luke 3:6].

Galilee also means "passing over" [*transmigratio*]. This name most aptly fits St. Joseph's homeland, for with him the Godhead, clothed in human infancy, passed over to be nourished, guarded and defended. By this wonderful, very great and incomprehensible passing over, Joseph himself passed over in mind: from human ignorance to the knowledge of the angels, who ever desire to look upon the humanized Godhead [1 Peter 1:12]; from a lowly condition to the highest dignity, above all the fathers of the Old Testament, who desired to see even for one hour him whom the blessed eyes of Joseph saw over many years [cf. Luke 10:24]; from shadow to truth, for the Law was a shadow of the things to come in the time of Christ [Hebrews 10:1], and he

passed over from the shadow of the Law, from figures and prophecies, to the whole truth. Joseph also passed over from slavery to freedom, and to that freedom by which he would be thought to be the father of the supreme King. Likewise from fear to love. For once Joseph had come to know the Word of God, we must not believe that he served God out of fear, since perfect

(p. 10)

charity casts out fear [1 John 4:18], but in the freedom of the sons of God [Romans 8:21].

This passing over was surely more joyful, more wonderful and more useful to Blessed Joseph than the passing over of Jacob from the house of Laban to his homeland with his wives Leah and Rachel, his sons, his flocks and his beasts. For by this passing over Joseph at once learned the distinction between the active and the contemplative life, which Jacob's wives signify. He also experienced the company of angels, and he led with him the firstborn of the whole universe, Jesus our Lord. Leah indeed is restless and troubled about many things [cf. Luke 10:41]; but she was gentler, indeed, as I think, most gentle with Joseph, who, filled with the highest joys, served the Son of God.

Nor should the passing over of the people of Israel out of Egypt be thought more excellent than this passing over of Joseph. Those fathers saw wonders in Egypt before Pharaoh, the sea divided, manna falling from heaven, the sun standing still, the walls of the city of Jericho leveled to the ground by the sole blast of trumpets; and these things as they passed over from Egypt to the land of promise. But St. Joseph beheld more wonderful things with mind and eyes in his passing over. With his mind, because he knew that through his putative son the human race would be saved, as the angel of the Lord said in Matthew 1: "For he shall save his people

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from their sins" [1:21]. He knew that this salvation would never come unless Pharaoh, that is, the devil with his army, were both conquered by signs and wonders and finally overwhelmed by the water of baptism. Christ, too, was the bread of angels; and Joseph experienced in very deed that this bread coming down from heaven was sweeter than manna.

This passing over was more excellent than the passing over from Babylon. In that one the Jews rebuilt the ruined earthly Jerusalem; this one showed that the captive human race would be free, and a new Jerusalem came down from heaven [Revelation 21:2]; indeed the ruined walls of the heavenly Jerusalem itself began to be restored.

What more? Those passings over were earthly; this was spiritual. Those were from nation to nation; this from man to God. Those profited one nation; this every nation under heaven, and not only the past but also the present and the future, gladdening the heavens, renewing the world and enlightening the angels.

Joseph's city was Nazareth by birth and dwelling, although by his parents' origin it was Bethlehem, since he was of the house and family of David [Luke 2:4]. We infer this from the conception of the Savior and from Joseph's own dwelling. For the Sacred Scriptures relate that Joseph lived in Nazareth. He was also named after that city, so that we read in John: "Is not this Joseph's son, the carpenter's son,

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from Nazareth of Galilee?" [cf. John 1:45; 6:42; Matthew 13:55]. The meaning of the name Nazareth suits the life and office of St. Joseph. For Nazareth, according to Blessed Jerome, has two meanings. First, Nazareth is the same as "flower" or "shoot," or "sanctification." This meaning suits Christ, according to Isaiah [11:1]: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root." For when Christ appeared, the whole world experienced the properties of a flower. The winter of the Old Law passed; the time of the renewal of human nature through the overflowing of divine grace came; the fruit

of heavenly gifts drew near; it prepared the medicine of the sacraments; with its sweet fragrance it refreshed the senses that had been robbed of their strength by the vanity of temporal things; and finally it came to crown sinners. These are the properties of a flower, because of which the city of Nazareth suits Christ the Lord.

Second, Nazareth means "anointing," or "medicine," or "guarding," or "separation." This meaning most aptly fits the life of Joseph, which was always pure, because of his keeping of virginity, his abstaining from sins and his observance of the divine law. It also fits his office. For he was the guardian and spouse of the immaculate Virgin, yet separated as regards the marriage bed from her with whom he lived (as we believe) until his last hour:

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joined to her by continual guardianship, and separated from her by angelic purity. For he did not know the marriage bed, but persevering in the delights of virginity with the divine Queen of heaven, anointed with supreme grace, pure with a wonderful purity, guardian of the earthly Paradise, and separated from the filth of the flesh, he was first known most clearly by all the angels, and afterwards made known to mortals.

Do not now, reader of excellent talent, ask for the authority of what I have said, or for a fuller reasoning, which we shall pursue more broadly hereafter. But enter into your heart and, sitting in the inner rooms of your house, you will know what has been said more clearly than light; you will assent to it and will affirm greater things of St. Joseph. For the law of Christ the Son of God is written in the heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit; if you read in it, you will not think, even in the slightest, that we write anything but the very truth.

Chapter IV. The Gift of St. Joseph's Genealogy, and Why His Genealogy Is Set Out in the Sacred Scriptures

Matthew, in chapter 1, reviewing Joseph's genealogy, says: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born

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Jesus, who is called Christ" [1:16]. The Gloss says on this: "After all the generations of the fathers, he puts last the generation of Joseph, the husband of Mary, for whose sake all the others are introduced, saying: 'And Jacob begot Joseph.' So that series of fathers is listed for the sake of Joseph, Joseph for the sake of Mary, and Mary for the sake of Jesus, the Savior of the world."

Hence Chrysostom says in a homily: "Having set down the forefathers and ending with Joseph, he adds 'the husband of Mary,' showing that it was for her sake that he put him too in the genealogy."

Here it is asked: since the Virgin Mary descended from the best and noblest genealogy, why is her genealogy traced not through herself but through Joseph? Damascene answers: "One must know that it was not the custom of the Hebrews, nor of the Divine Scripture, to trace the genealogy of women. But the law was that one tribe should not take a spouse from another tribe [Numbers 36:7–8]. Joseph, descending from the stock of David and being a just man (for the divine Gospel testifies to this), would surely not have taken the Virgin in betrothal unless she descended from the same scepter."

If it is asked why the Sacred Scriptures were not accustomed to trace the genealogy of women as of men, the answer is: because that sex is less worthy, later in nature, first in fault, and more fit to figure works of weakness. Hence the Apostle, 1 Timothy 2: "Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I do not permit a woman to teach,

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nor to have authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" [2:11–13].

Nor is it an obstacle that wicked men appear in the genealogy, for this is accidental. The wicked are not listed insofar as they are wicked. When someone's line of descent is described, sometimes wicked and sometimes good men are set down; and all of them, insofar as they are good with the goodness of nature, spring naturally from good. Nor is the inclusion of the origin of wicked men without mystery, for Christ had come to save what was lost [Luke 19:10] and to preserve what was not yet corrupted.

Since, then, it is a question of the origin of nature, grace is rightly left aside, which surpasses nature in causality, in efficacy of working and in end.

Chapter V. On a Certain Question Arising from the Foregoing

But here a more notable question arises, more difficult, and more fitting and closer to our purpose.

For it follows from what has been said that a woman ought not to be given a genealogy; therefore the immaculate Virgin ought to have been, because she was exempt from the curses mentioned above. Indeed she changed the name of Eve [*Eva* into *Ave*], and what Eve took away, Mary brought in.

I reply that in that genealogy Mary is indeed given a genealogy, and through her husband. Hence it says: "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

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She is given a genealogy because she was free of the curse of Eve, because of the excellence of her dignity, and to commend the new purity of her motherhood. She is given a genealogy through Joseph so that the custom of the Law might be observed, so that the most excellent virtue of St. Joseph might be commended, and so that the humility of the most blessed Virgin might be still further exalted.

In this genealogy, notice that Joseph is the last among the fathers of the Old Testament, that his name is placed before the name of Mary, and that through his origin the nobility of Christ is described.

That Joseph is placed as the last father shows that their virtues are gathered into one man, as in some way they shine forth in the goal to which they were ordered. And the virtues are signified fittingly and in the best order by the letters of this name IOSEPH: *Iustitia* (justice) in David, who is also placed first, so that mystery may be joined to mystery; *Obedientia* (obedience) in Abraham; *Sapientia* (wisdom) in Solomon; *Experientia* (the experience of exile) in Jechonias; *Patientia* (patience) in Zorobabel; *Humilitas* (humility) in the last fathers, who were of the lowest condition. We are compelled to believe that Joseph was just, since the holy Gospel proclaims it, and most obedient to the angel's voice. The wisdom that Solomon saw from afar and in a riddle, Joseph handled with his hands. Joseph also experienced exile for many years, and by his patience and labors

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kept Christ Jesus and the Virgin Mother safe, fleeing the rage of persecuting Herod. Finally, he was of such humility that he alone, among the countless multitude of men of the whole world, was chosen by the immortal God as spouse of the most humble Virgin. For if God made the Blessed Virgin exalted because he regarded the humility of his handmaid [Luke 1:48], why should we not believe that he joined to that same Virgin a spouse truly humble, indeed the most humble of all the human race?

The name of Joseph is placed before the name of Mary so that the husband's headship in marriage may be honored, so that the mutual charity of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin may be foreshown, and so that the greatness of the virtues of both may be declared. For the Blessed Virgin is nearer to Christ in holiness, and St. Joseph is not far distant in glorious merits.

The nobility of Joseph, which describes the nobility of Christ, represents the excellence of Christ's nobility. It is like the heavens, which represent the divine beauty, greatness and power; like the countless species, which express the providence, justice and mercy of God; and like the rational soul, which, as his image, proclaims the unity, trinity and happiness of the divine nature. For from the beauty, greatness and power of the heavens the beauty,

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greatness and wisdom of God are known [cf. Wisdom 13:5; Romans 1:20]; for a cause is always more excellent than its effect. The beauty of his nobility consists in the variety of outstanding men from whom he descended; its greatness in the gift of prophecy and in a fame spread over the whole world; its power in royal dignity.

By a particular gift the providence of God is made manifest, which ordained that the Word, from eternity, made flesh in time, should descend through so many fathers.

The justice of God, too, is made plain in this genealogy, which caused his promised Son to spring from the fathers of the circumcision; and by this birth the Gentiles glorified God for his mercy, as Romans 15 says [15:9].

Finally, in this genealogy the most holy Joseph is known like the rational soul, representing the unity and trinity of God. For when the Word of God, made manifest by this genealogy, is known, the multitude of gods is excluded. And the Word of God implies a relation to God the Father who produces him, and to the Holy Spirit breathed forth by the Father and the Son; and so, enlightened by the heavenly light of this genealogy, we can know the Trinity of the divine Persons.

Do not, I beg, pass over without consideration the last words of this genealogy written by Matthew. He says: "Of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." In the name of Christ the whole Trinity of divine Persons is expressed. For this reason those baptized

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in the name of Christ are believed, by a truthful assertion, to have received the sacrament in the invocation of the Holy Trinity.[1]

The divine happiness is unfolded by both names, Jesus and Christ, not only objectively but also as something acquired; not only as end but also as efficient cause; not only as term but also as means. "For this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent," John 17 [17:3]. So Jesus is the object of supernatural beatitude, the end of the rational creature, the term of all acts in the whole universe; and since he is himself the Savior, he will equally be the way of acquiring it, the efficient and moving cause toward beatitude, and the means without which that final beatitude cannot be had. Christ Jesus is likewise the positive and negative means of acquiring beatitude, and the means that shares in both extremes. He is positive through the presence of the divinity and the humanity, and through the infusion of sanctifying grace. He is negative because he is the means without which not, as Peter says, Acts 4: "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" [4:12]. For he is the door, John 10 [10:9]; he is the way, saying: "I

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am the way, the truth and the life" [John 14:6]. He is the light of the world, John 8 [8:12].

These things about the genealogy of St. Joseph, set out before Catholic ears, are irrefutable teachings: not invented by human ingenuity, but made manifest by the heavenly mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures.

[1] This is certainly said by the author only as an opinion, as his very words show. On this, cf. St. Thomas, III, q. 66, a. 6; Canon Law, c. Si revera 30, De consecratione, dist. 4 [uncertain].

Chapter VI. The Gift of Nobility

The gift of nobility is found to be twofold: one is nobility of the flesh, the other of the mind or soul.

Nobility of the flesh is natural origin from parents adorned with wealth or the power of rule. Although the human soul is not passed down from the parents, the flesh is. And God and nature put a nobler form into nobler matter. So no wise man doubts that in children likeness of constitution, conformity of character and imitation of conduct are caused by the parents, unless perhaps freedom of choice, or habit, or some other external cause inclines to the contrary. But nobility of soul is virtue alone. For the wise say that he alone is noble whom his own virtue ennobles. Hence the satirist

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poet Juvenal sang: "Virtue is the one and only nobility," not the deeds of one's parents [Satires 8.20].

Joseph was illustrious in both kinds of nobility. First, he descended from the patriarchal stock of the very rich Abraham and of his descendants. It is reasonable that the generations by which Joseph descended from Abraham were almost as many as those of the Blessed Virgin, who descended from the same Abraham in forty-one generations. Joseph's family was the house of David, as Luke 2 says [2:4].

But Joseph, of the house of David and twenty-eight generations removed from him, humble and a smith [*faber ferrarius*], was chosen by God as spouse of the Blessed Virgin and putative father of the Savior, in order to exalt humility. For humility joined to royal and patriarchal seed is proclaimed when Joseph, a humble man, is said to have been of the house of David.

Again, to honor poverty. The ignorant can learn from this that poverty is not opposed to nobility; indeed poverty itself is shown to be the more wonderful, since a nobler example of poverty and humility is displayed in the most holy Joseph.

Finally, to declare the dignity of that lineage. For David's humility is proclaimed as good news when Joseph, the son of David, is declared humble. Joseph is said to be of the house of David not only because of descent by birth, but also, and chiefly, because of

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imitation of virtues; and such men are properly said to be of one house, according to the verse: "Who makes men of one mind to dwell in a house" [Psalm 67:7]. For character is formed by living together. Hence the divine Bernard says, *On "Missus est"*: "To this is added that he is said to have been of the house and family of David. Truly of the house of David, truly of the royal stock did this man Joseph descend, noble in birth, nobler in mind: plainly a son of David, not degenerate from his father David. Wholly, I say, a son of David, not only in the flesh but in faith, in holiness, in devotion: whom the Lord, as another David, found after his own heart, to whom he could safely entrust the most secret and most sacred mystery of his heart; to whom, I say, as to another David, he made manifest the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom [Psalm 50:8], and granted him not to be ignorant of the mystery which none of the princes of this world knew [1 Corinthians 2:8]; to whom, finally, it was given to see what many kings and prophets desired to see and did not see, and to hear what they did not hear [Luke 10:24]; and not only to see and hear, but also to carry, to lead, to embrace, to kiss, to nourish and to guard." Thus he. It is plain from the foregoing, then, that Joseph was illustrious in both kinds of nobility.

From this also the holiness and the excellent character of David himself are made plain. Joseph did not have that holiness as a new gift in his family, but possessed it as received from his forefathers. Virtues, too,

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are partly from nature (Job 31: "From my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother's womb" [31:18]) and partly from habit (Psalm: "With the holy you will be holy" [17:26]). Therefore Joseph's holiness excels, first, because of his chaste lineage, according to the verse: "How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for its memory is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men" [Wisdom 4:1]; and the Psalm: "The generation of the righteous shall be blessed" [111:2].

Second, Joseph's holiness excels as one surrounded on every side by radiant gems. Behind, it shines with most illustrious nobility; before, with deepest humility; above, with most excellent dignity; below, with most pure freedom from sins; within, with most magnificent purity of virtues; on the right, with most ardent charity toward God; on the left, with ineffable kindness toward his neighbor.

Chapter VII. Objections against the Nobility of St. Joseph

But nobility of the flesh, praised with such feeling in St. Joseph, does not seem to agree with the mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures.

First, because Joseph was chosen to discern the truth of the Word of God. But of that choosing it is said in 1 Corinthians 1: "Not many wise according

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to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the base things of the world and the contemptible, and the things that are not, God has chosen" [1:26–28]. Therefore nobility does not seem to be rightly praised in Joseph, God's chosen one.

Second, the same is confirmed by the authority of the Gloss on that saying of the Apostle: "God came humble, seeking the humble, not the lofty"; and among the latter mortals reckon the nobles.

Third, it is argued: the humility of God was supreme in the work of the incarnation. But it seems a greater humiliation of God to choose a putative father who was not noble than one who was noble. So nobility does not seem rightly commended in Joseph.

Fourth, nobility seems to be nothing other than ancient wealth, as the Philosopher says in the fourth book of the *Politics*. But Joseph was poor, since he sought his living by the craft of woodworking. So nobility is not truly praised in him.

For a clearer solution of these, note that a man's nobility is considered in three things: in its cause, in its substance and in its effect. In its cause, if it takes its beginning from a noble origin; and this shone most excellently in St. Joseph. For in his origin a threefold dignity was found: the first bodily, the second spiritual, the third heavenly; the first royal, the second priestly, the third prophetic, and this last heavenly, because

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to foretell the future is a gift of God. For David was a king, Abraham a patriarch, Nathan a prophet, and from them Joseph drew his origin.

In substance, that is, in his own person, he likewise possessed a threefold nobility. For he was just in mind, by dignity the spouse of the Queen of heaven, and by office the foster father and putative father of God. In effect, too, he produced for the whole universe a threefold effect of most illustrious nobility. For he received the Savior of the world into his house, led him safe through long stretches of land by his service, and fed him for many years by his own labor and toil. These are the nine rays of the nobility of the most holy Joseph, by which his most excellent nobility is made plain to mortals more clearly than the sun.

To the first, then, the answer is that the divine Paul is speaking of the preachers through whom the world was to be converted to the faith. It was fitting that they be common and unlearned men, so that what God worked through grace and their ministry might not be ascribed to their power, wisdom or dignity, and so the cross of Christ be made void [1 Corinthians 1:17]. Hence the Gloss there says: "Unless the fisherman had faithfully gone before, the orator would not humbly have followed." But it was not fitting that the King of kings should be brought up in domestic household life by one ignoble in mind or body. Nor was it right that he whom thousands of thousands of angels serve [Daniel 7:10] should choose an ignoble putative father; nor that he who chose as mother the Virgin

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whom the sun and moon and all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem admire should allow her to be espoused to a man unworthy because ignoble.

To the second it must be said that humility is not opposed to nobility, but is its beauty and wonderful ornament, according to the verse: "The greater you are, the more humble yourself in all things" [Sirach 3:20]. God seeks most especially those who are humble and noble, as the most blessed Virgin Mary says: "Because he has regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" [Luke 1:48].

To the third it must be said that in the work of the incarnation the supreme humility of God was shown in his taking flesh ("He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" [Philippians 2:7]); in his humble way of life ("Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart," Matthew 11 [11:29]); and in the most violent affliction of his passion (Lamentations 1: "Attend and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow" [1:12]). Yet he did not always use works that displayed outward humility, but more or less as was fitting. For he taught with power, worked miracles and rose victorious from the dead. So God's humiliation in the incarnation would not have been greater if he had chosen an ignoble father, because his greatest humility appeared in the things mentioned; in such a work it was not fitting to act otherwise; and nothing was lacking to the divine humiliation when he took human nature.

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To the fourth it must be said that Joseph was poor in abundance of riches, but noble by the excellence of his constitution, which is the foundation of all nobility; and this has been declared more than enough. So Joseph went without riches to avoid superfluity, and had them for necessity. Nor is seeking one's living by the work of one's hands contrary to a man's nobility, but rather, very often, to his baseness. For no one should boast of any kind of nobility who is unable to eat bread in the sweat of his brow [Genesis 3:19]. For nature, the mother of nobility, abhors the idle man and tries to extinguish him as far as she can, since, as the Philosopher testifies in the second book of *On the Heavens*, "everything that has a work exists for the sake of its work." And the same in the third book of *On the Soul*: "God and nature do nothing in vain."

Chapter VIII. The Gift of the Twofold Name of St. Joseph's Father

The Evangelists give Joseph's father two names. Matthew says: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary" [1:16]. But Luke says: "Being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, who was of Heli, who was of Mathat, who was of Levi, who was of Melchi" [3:23–24]. On this account, as Jerome testifies, Julian the Apostate [Julianus Augustus]

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throws in our face the disagreement of the Evangelists. Africanus and Eusebius of Caesarea discussed this more fully.

There is a threefold solution of this question. The first concerns the letter, and is found in the *Ecclesiastical History*, which says: "Mathan and Melchi, at different times, each begot a son by one and the same wife, named Estha. For Mathan, who descends through Solomon, had first taken her as wife, and died leaving one son, named Jacob. After his death, since the law does not forbid a widow to marry another man, Melchi, who traces his descent through Nathan, being of the same tribe but not of the same family, took Mathan's widow as wife, and from her he had a son named Heli. Thus Jacob and Heli, from different lines of fathers, become brothers by the same mother. One of them, Jacob, taking the wife of his brother Heli, who had died without children, at the command of the law [Deuteronomy 25:5–6], begot Joseph, by nature his own son; which is why it is written: 'And Jacob begot Joseph.' But according to the precept of the law Joseph is made the son of Heli, because his brother had taken her to raise up seed for his brother.

"In this way the genealogy is found correct and complete, both that which Matthew lists and that of Luke, who indicated with sufficiently sound judgment the legal succession, which consists in a kind of adoption on behalf of the dead, taking care in successions of this

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kind not to say that anyone 'begot.'"

Likewise Augustine says in *On the Agreement of the Evangelists*: "It was more fitting for him to be called the son of the one by whom he had been adopted than to be said to have been begotten by one from whose flesh he was not born. But Matthew, saying 'Abraham begot Isaac' and continuing in this way until he said 'And Jacob begot Joseph,' showed clearly enough that he had brought forth, in the order of generations, the father by whom Joseph had been not adopted but begotten. Yet even if Luke had said that Joseph was begotten by Heli, not even that word should trouble us. For it is not absurd to say that someone has begotten, not in the flesh but in charity, one whom he has adopted as his son." Thus Augustine.

The second solution of this question is reduced to allegory, which the same divine Augustine, also in *On the Agreement of the Evangelists*, explains in these words: "Rightly did Luke, who narrates the generations not from the beginning of his Gospel but from the baptism of Christ, and assigns him rather as a priest in the expiation of sins, take up the origin by adoption; because it is through adoption that we are made sons of God, by believing in the Son of God. But through the carnal generation which Matthew follows, the Son of God was rather made man for our sake. Luke shows clearly enough that he called Joseph the son of Heli

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because he had been adopted by him, since he called Adam the son of God [Luke 3:38], who, through the grace that he afterwards lost by sinning, was established as a son in paradise." Thus Augustine.

Eusebius likewise says: "Matthew, beginning to write before the conception of Mary and the carnal birth of Jesus, fittingly, as in a history, sets out first the carnal descent; hence he derives the generation downward from those above. For when the Word of God took flesh, he was descending. But Luke leaps to the regeneration effected through the washing [of baptism], and there sets out another succession of generations, and, raising it up from the lowest to the first, he also renounces the memory of the sinners whom Matthew listed, because whoever is reborn in God becomes a stranger to his criminal parents, being made a son of God and of those who led an honorable life according to God. For so it was said to Abraham: 'You shall go to your fathers' [Genesis 15:15], not carnal fathers indeed, but fathers in God, because of likeness in uprightness." From these same words of Eusebius an anagogical solution can be drawn as well.

The third answer is moral. Of it Chrysostom says: "Because this part of the Gospel consists in a series of names, they think nothing precious can be gained from it. So that this may not happen to us, let us try to examine this passage too. For from bare names one may draw a rich treasure, because

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names indicate many things. For they savor both of the divine clemency and of the thanksgivings offered by women; for when they obtained sons, they gave them a name from the gift." The Gloss, then, interprets Heli as "my God" or "ascending"; "who was of Mathat," that is, "giving sins" [i.e. forgiving]; "who was of Levi," that is, "added."

Chapter IX. The Gift of Sanctification in the Womb

On the gift of St. Joseph's sanctification in his mother's womb, three things come to mind to be said: what in this matter is a matter of opinion, what is devout, and what is to be asserted as Catholic.

For a clearer understanding of these, note that there are four kinds of things that may be put forward concerning matters that pertain to faith: two extremes, and two means composed of the extremes.

The first is entirely certain: what has been expressly determined, and is called Catholic. To this belong the things contained in the Sacred Scriptures understood according to the letter. Hence Damascene says: "All the things handed down through the Law and the Prophets, the Apostles and the Evangelists, we receive, venerate and acknowledge, seeking nothing beyond them." Likewise Augustine says to Jerome:

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"To the books of the Scriptures alone, which are called canonical, have I learned to pay this honor, that I most firmly believe that none of their authors erred in anything in writing."

The second kind is entirely uncertain, the opposite of the first. I would call it uncertain both as to authority and as to its meaning; this is called apocryphal without qualification. But if some saying has a certain meaning but not authority, we call it apocryphal in a certain respect.

The third is what is neither supported by a definite statement of the Sacred Scriptures, nor by necessary reason, nor is clear by its own evidence, but can be urged by certain probable reasons. This we call a matter of opinion, as are many opinions of the Doctors.

The fourth is what is not expressed in the Sacred Scriptures, nor manifest by its own evidence, but is so urged by consequence from the Scriptures and by strong reason that no certain authority of any Scripture or any effective reason opposes it; and it is said to be devoutly believed.

I say, then, that it has not been determined as Catholic teaching that St. Joseph was sanctified in the womb. For the Sacred Scriptures do not assert it, no necessary reason proves it, and the holy Roman Church has not determined it, to which recourse must always be had when a hidden Catholic truth is in question,

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as is found in Causa 23, question 4, the chapter *Quoties* and the chapter *Haec est*.

But that St. Joseph was sanctified in the womb can be shown, by the following arguments, to be among the things that are matters of opinion or are devoutly believed.

First: every sanctification in the womb was either because of the excellent future dignity of the one sanctified, or because he was ordered to Christ, the Holy of Holies. But both of these excelled in St. Joseph. For he was just, as the Holy Spirit testifies, and was ordered above all men, earlier and more immediately, to Christ. So it seems that St. Joseph was sanctified in the womb.

Second: Jeremiah is read to have been sanctified in the womb [Jeremiah 1:5] because of his more explicit prophecy of the Christ to come. So likewise St. Joseph may be said to have been sanctified because of the most explicit knowledge of Christ that he had above all men.

Third: if John the Baptist is believed to have been sanctified in the womb because he pointed him out with his finger, why should St. Joseph not also be believed to have been sanctified because he brought up that

same Christ?

This is confirmed. For the Apostle says, 2 Corinthians 3: "He has made us fit ministers" [3:6]. So if he sanctified servants, why not also the putative father, so that he might both be thought to be and be a fitting father?

Fourth: if the mother is believed to have been sanctified on earth, in the womb,

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in a high degree of holiness because of the dignity of her son, why may not Joseph also be believed to have been sanctified in some degree of holiness, he who was chosen by God to be called the father of God?

Moreover, this befits the parity of the marriage of the Blessed Virgin and Joseph, even though it was fitting that the same most blessed Virgin should surpass him in many other things.

Further, the angels, ordered to the service of God, shone with all the purity and holiness suited to their nature, so that they might be worthy of such service. But Joseph was chosen by God among all men and among the blessed spirits to render familiar services to the Son of God. Why then should he not be said to have been sanctified in the womb, since this is not repugnant to the nature that flows down from Adam?

This is confirmed, because Joseph was the first whom the Holy Spirit canonized in the New Testament, calling him "just," as is found in Matthew 1 [1:19].

Nor are there lacking devout faithful who assert that Theophilus wrote that Joseph was most holy from the womb, and that Chrysostom said Joseph was thrice holy: in the womb, in life and in death. John Gerson too, in a sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, says that the Jerusalem office composed in honor of St. Joseph contains the statement that he was sanctified in the womb, as John the Baptist was.

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Although I have not read the opinions mentioned above in Theophilus or Chrysostom, since I have not carefully turned over each of their volumes, I nevertheless assent to those in whom I read them, since their profession and writings show that they are not unfaithful witnesses.

Chapter X. Objection against the Gift of Sanctification

But against the reasons given above it is argued as follows.

Blessed Dionysius says in chapter 4 of *On the Divine Names*: "We must not dare to say or think anything about that super-substantial Godhead, nor about the things that depend on its mere will, beyond what has been expressed to us in the Divine Oracles." But the sanctification of the divine Joseph depends on the mere will of God, and is not expressed in the Sacred Scriptures; therefore it is in no way to be asserted.

The answer is that the things expressed in the Sacred Scriptures are certain and Catholic. But things impressed in those same Sacred Scriptures may be held as opinion and devoutly believed with fear and trembling. These are things that stand probably on the basis of the Sacred Scriptures in syllogistic form, formally or virtually. For they lie hidden, covered and shut away, as it were from the glory of the illustrious. Among these must be reckoned the sanctification of St. Joseph

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in the womb. Blessed Dionysius was speaking of things expressed. For who, in these last times, would forbid a Catholic, most obedient to the Roman Pontiff, to inquire by arguments into the unknown holiness of the divine Joseph? I have seen theologians who did not think much of the merits of Blessed Joseph. If they had been willing to argue from the words of the Gospel to the greatness of his merits, bringing their understanding into captivity to the obedience of Christ [2 Corinthians 10:5], they would rather have cried

out: "Great indeed is the most holy Joseph, and like the sun he shines for perpetual eternities [Daniel 12:3], in nature, in marriage, in office, in dignity and in service, surpassing all the fathers of the Old Testament as much as a father has greater authority with a son than a servant has."

Chapter XI. The Gift of Beauty

That the divine Joseph was adorned with an excellent body, as befits a man of most illustrious soul, is shown by the following reasons.

First. A figure and a sign must bear a likeness to what is signified and figured. But all the men who prefigured Joseph in Sacred Scripture were beautiful, such as Abraham, Joseph the son of Jacob, and David. Therefore Joseph too was beautiful.

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Second. The body is ordered to the soul, so that a nobler body is owed to a nobler soul. Therefore beauty of body follows beauty of soul. Therefore where there was perfect beauty of soul from the beginning to the end of life, by God's arrangement, it is reasonable that there was also perfect beauty of body.

Third. Nature is a power implanted in things that produces like from like, unless it is hindered or goes astray. But Blessed Joseph was of the beautiful progeny of David, and nature was not hindered and did not go astray, since God so willed, who brought every dignity of David's progeny to its end in Joseph and the Blessed Virgin. Therefore Joseph was beautiful.

Fourth. The works of God are perfect [Deuteronomy 32:4], and it is fitting for the bride to be like the bridegroom. But the Blessed Virgin was most beautiful. Therefore so was Joseph her spouse.

Fifth. Chastity and virginity are more praiseworthy in the beautiful. Therefore St. Joseph was beautiful, whose virginity was most highly praised.

Sixth. A beautiful and perfect company is disfigured by the deformity of one member. But the company of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and Joseph was beautiful and perfect; Christ was beautiful above the sons of men [Psalm 44:3], and the Blessed Virgin most beautiful. Therefore it must be asserted that St. Joseph too was beautiful.

Further, Joseph was the last of the patriarchs and the end of the whole Old Testament.

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Therefore he must be reckoned beautiful, lest we say that the beauty of divine things ended in deformity.

Chapter XII. Objections against the Beauty of St. Joseph

But it may seem to some that bodily beauty should not be asserted of Joseph.

First, because it is proved by no testimony of the Sacred Scriptures; and that teaching seems empty which, disputing about such things, does not keep to the Divine Scripture.

Second, it is not fitting to praise men glorious in holiness for things that are vain and an occasion of sin. Such is beauty of body. For it is said in the last chapter of Proverbs: "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain" [31:30]; and "Because of beauty many have perished," Ecclesiasticus 9 [9:9]. Therefore beauty ought not to have been praised in Blessed Joseph.

Third, the just are distinguished by outstanding humility, which flourished in Christ, the most just; Matthew 11: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart" [11:29]. But St. Joseph is called just, and was adorned with the highest humility; that is why he was chosen by God as spouse of the most humble Virgin. Therefore the causes of the highest humility were found

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in St. Joseph. But deformity is a cause of humility. Therefore Joseph was deformed.

Fourth, the same seems to befit the humility of the Savior, who chose a poor father who sought his living by woodworking. Therefore the putative father of Christ ought to have been deformed.

I reply that beauty consists in three things: in the size of the body, in the elegant arrangement of the limbs, and in the comeliness of the coloring. But beauty in a man is of one kind, in a woman of another; hence womanly adornment is unbecoming in a man, as the Poet says: "Far from us be young men groomed like women: manly beauty loves to be tended in moderation" [Ovid, *Heroides* 4.75–76].

We must therefore suppose that Joseph had the size of body that befits an excellent man; likewise that he was neither too fleshy or stout, nor drawn thin with leanness, nor wasted, but well balanced. For balance results from an equal proportion of all the humors. If you consider that whoever chooses a man for a work must give him the tools of the work, without which he cannot carry it out: Joseph was chosen by God to make long journeys, to bear labors without failing, to render services ceaselessly and for many years to Christ as an infant and a boy, and also to serve the tender Virgin, who shrank from running about from house to house and loved the solitary life. Had Joseph been given a body that was not

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well balanced, he could not have accomplished such things when illness came upon him. We must therefore believe that Joseph had a well-balanced body.

You will say: God can heal the sick when he wills, and keep the weak unharmed for long periods. But we must not have recourse to miracles where the order of divine providence and the course of ordinary power can be kept, especially when that is more fitting. And if you consider more deeply why God placed these things in the body of Christ and in the Blessed Virgin his mother, you will confess the same of St. Joseph for the same reason.

To the first, then, it must be said that there are several causes why the Sacred Scriptures made no mention of the beauty of St. Joseph.

The first is the end of the Sacred Scriptures, which is to instruct men in the virtues, not leading them away from God but leading them to God, as the supernatural end of the rational creature. But bodily beauty has been the cause of sin for many. So for this purpose the topical rule is more to the point, which asserts that the argument from authority in the negative is ineffective.

The second cause is the form or manner of treatment of the Divine Scriptures, which is lofty, brief and full of meaning. And Joseph's beauty is praised implicitly when they relate

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his noble genealogy, God's choosing of him for so illustrious a work, and his most excellent virtues.

The third cause is on the part of the agent. For the holy Evangelists, exceedingly enlightened by the most brilliant light of Joseph's spiritual virtues, omitted his bodily beauty, which lay hidden in the twilight of natural things, as something very small. But we little dogs gather up the crumbs that fell from our masters' table [Matthew 15:27] and do our best to eat them.

The fourth is the material cause of the Scripture of the New Testament, which is Christ, who is God. Therefore spiritual things are described more and more in the New Testament, and bodily things in the Old.

To the second it must be said that beauty was in Joseph to perfect nature and to increase grace. Bodily beauty is good in its kind. As for the occasion of sin, there is no need to be concerned, because it is passive scandal; and nothing is so good that the wicked do not happen to take occasion of sin from it and be scandalized. Luke

7: "Blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me" [7:23]. The wicked even take occasion of sin from the goodness of God. Hence the Gloss on the Psalm, "How good is God to Israel, to those who are of upright heart" [72:1], says: "But to the perverse he seems perverse." The demons likewise take scandal

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from the most beautiful justice of God. Psalm: "The pride of those who hate you ascends continually" [73:23].

To the third it must be said that there happen to be three causes or occasions of humility. The first is from within only, that is, from nature. The second is from without only, namely from grace. The third is both from without and from within together. But grace is the more perfect cause, since it is more perfect than nature. Therefore deformity in St. Joseph would have added no degree of perfection to his most excellent charity and humility.

To the fourth the answer is that the Savior's humility would not have been greater if he had chosen a deformed putative father. For humility in the putative father, as has been said, was more perfect; and more perfect humility also increases grace and in no way diminishes it.

Chapter XIII. The Gift of Virginity

Holy theologians prove, by reasons and by the authorities of the saints, that Joseph must have been a virgin in fact, and by a conditional vow of heart and lips.

The first reason draws its force from the Gospel. For Joseph was just, and fornication does not befall a just man; nor did he have any other

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wife; and the Blessed Virgin remained a virgin forever. Therefore Joseph too was a virgin. And by vow, because chastity remained between them by common consent, according to Blessed Jerome against Helvidius. Blessed Mary had consecrated her virginity to God; for virginity, as Blessed Augustine says, is praised not because it is virginity but because it is dedicated to God. She did this first in her heart, however, because at that time marriage was preferred to virginity, and she perhaps did not yet know whether this pleased God. Afterwards she expressed it in words, when she was assured by the angel, and St. Joseph her husband consented.

That St. Joseph's vow was conditional is proved. For Joseph, among men, was the boundary or horizon of the New and the Old Law, as the dawn is between day and night. His vow had to savor of the New Law as regards virginity, and of the Old insofar as he added a condition. Again, because it was forbidden by the law not to take care to leave seed upon the earth, we must not believe that Joseph vowed virginity unconditionally, but under the condition, if it pleased God.

The second reason. It was fitting for persons ordered immediately to the humanity of Christ to be virgins, as appeared in the Blessed Virgin, in John the Baptist and in the Evangelist. But Joseph was ordered more immediately to the humanity of Christ than other men. Therefore he must be reckoned a virgin.

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The third reason. Joseph was distinguished by the gift of the noblest fatherhood. Therefore he had the conditions of the noblest fatherhood, among which virginity is counted, which befits the divine fatherhood. This is confirmed because Joseph acted in the place of the heavenly Father on earth.

The fourth reason. God is better, more excellent and more perfect than the sensible world. But the governing of the sensible world was committed to the angels, who because of their purity are called virgins. Therefore it

is right to believe that Joseph too was wholly a virgin, to whom was committed the governing and care of the immortal God made flesh.

The fifth reason. The New Testament consecrates virginity and places it above the married. But St. Joseph is the first whom the sacred page of the New Testament proclaims just. Therefore we reasonably judge that he was a virgin.

The sixth reason. In the familiar service of Christ, Joseph was equal to the angels. Therefore he was a virgin, in imitation of the angels.

I would go further and say that Joseph's virginity was nobler, more gracious, more useful, more glorious and more wonderful than the virginity of the angels. For the virginity and chastity of the angels is from nature, but St. Joseph's from grace: therefore it is nobler. Again, that of the angels is necessary, but this is voluntary: therefore it is more gracious. Further, the chastity of the angels is not

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meritorious, but this is: therefore it is more useful. Again, that of the angels is in an impassible nature, but this in fragile flesh: therefore it is more wonderful. Finally, St. Joseph's virginity is more perfect because it is in soul and in body, but theirs in spirit only.

As for the authorities of the saints by which we assent more firmly to the virginity of St. Joseph, it will be enough to cite the Master of the Sentences, in book 4, distinction 30, who, quoting the words of Blessed Augustine, says: "Blessed Mary resolved in her heart to keep a vow of virginity, but she did not express the vow itself with her lips. She submitted herself to the divine disposition: she resolved to persevere as a virgin unless God revealed otherwise to her. Committing her virginity, then, to the divine disposition, she consented to carnal union, not desiring it, but obeying the divine inspiration in both respects. Afterwards, together with her husband, she expressed it with her lips, and both remained together in virginity." Thus he. The holy Doctors and men of most illustrious talent who interpret the Master of the Sentences follow, approve and confirm this same opinion. St. Thomas asserts the same in a special way in the Third Part, question 28, article 4.

Chapter XIV. Objections That Joseph's Vow to Keep Virginity Was Not Conditional

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That the vow made by St. Joseph was not conditional, as was said at the beginning of the preceding chapter, is argued by some with these arguments.

First, St. Joseph's vow of virginity is said to have been conditional because he vowed "unless God should dispose otherwise." But this condition is understood in every vow, however absolute, because no one should offer anything to God unless God himself wills it, nor should anyone offer in a disordered way. Therefore, with this condition so understood, the vow will stand simply absolute.

Second, there is no reason for asserting that St. Joseph's vow was conditional except that, had he vowed simply, he could not have contracted marriage. But this does not prevent it, because those two things are compatible. First, because two who contract with the intention of immediately vowing chastity truly contract; this is plain in this most holy spouse Joseph, who, as Matthew 1 says [1:20], was instructed by the angel to take Mary as his wife, whom he was nevertheless never to know carnally, but to remain with her in the vow of virginity. Second, because if an adulteress has power over the body of her husband and is perpetually deprived of its use because of

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her sin, much more can it be that a woman be given to another whom she knows she will never know, for some honorable cause. Therefore the vow of virginity made by St. Joseph seems to have been absolute.

Third, just as one contracts absolutely who, after an oath to contract a betrothal, has vowed virginity simply, if he contracts by words of the present tense, even though he intends to enter religion at once, so it seems we must say in the case of St. Joseph, since the case is the same. Therefore his vow to keep virginity was simple.

For a clearer answer to the arguments, know that St. Joseph's vow to keep virginity was twofold, as was the vow of the Blessed Virgin. The first was before his betrothal, and it was conditional and merely mental. The second was after his betrothal to the Blessed Virgin, before the angel Gabriel came to greet her; and this was absolute, and not only mental but also verbal, and in agreement with the Blessed Virgin he vowed perpetual virginity. This is the truth of St. Augustine and of the Master of the Sentences, which St. Thomas follows in book 4, distinction 30, question 2, article 1, subquestion 2, in the solution of the second objection, saying: "The Blessed Virgin, before she contracted with Joseph, was divinely assured that Joseph was of a like resolution; and so in marrying she did not expose herself to danger." Thus St. Thomas.

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To the first, then, Peter de Palude answers, in the thirtieth distinction of the fourth book of the *Sentences*, that although the condition of the divine will ought to be understood in every vow and resolution, it is a mark of perfection to express it; and so it was here. Thus Peter, and well said.

So to the argument it must be said that although an absolute vow stands with such a condition understood habitually and not actually, and not expressed in words, yet if that condition is actually understood, willed and expressed, the vow is not absolute but merely conditional. And such was the vow of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph before their mutual betrothal, except for the spoken expression that followed after the betrothal, as was said above.

To the second, the minor is denied. For a vow to keep virginity made absolutely before the contracting of marriage, and likewise a condition of keeping virginity inserted into the contract of marriage, makes the marriage null. So if St. Joseph had made such a vow, he would not have contracted a true marriage with the Blessed Virgin, or he would have sinned in attempting it, as is found in St. Thomas, book 4, distinction 30, question 2, article 1, subquestion 2, reply to the first.

To the first proof, it is said that consent to carnal union, if it pleases God, makes a true marriage. This can exist between sterile persons who lack the power

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of intercourse; likewise, and much more, between those who are able but unwilling to come together. So too there would be a true baptism if someone intended to be baptized, even though he did not care about the reality of the sacrament for which the sacrament of baptism was principally instituted. That is why St. Thomas says, in the place cited: "The Blessed Virgin, before she contracted with Joseph, was divinely assured that Joseph was of a like resolution; and so in marrying she did not expose herself to danger. Yet nothing of the truth of the marriage was lost because of this."

Likewise Peter de Palude says on book 4: "The Blessed Virgin consented not only to living together in one house, but also to conjugal union under a condition, if God should command her."

To the second proof, the likeness is denied. For in that first case, a woman after an absolute vow of continence has neither the power nor the authority to give her body to a carnal spouse by her own authority without sin, either absolutely or under a condition. If, however, this were done by the authority of God or of a prelate, it would be otherwise.

St. Thomas also says in the place cited, in the solution of the third objection, that carnal union fell implicitly under the Blessed Virgin's consent, as an act is implicitly contained in a potency. But the potency for carnal union is not contrary to virginity, nor does it diminish its purity at all, except by reason of the act; and that act was never

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in the Blessed Virgin's intention; rather, she had already been assured that the act would never follow. Thus he. The same must be said of St. Joseph, as far as this resolution is concerned.

To the third it must be said that one who contracted after a vow of virginity, even after a betrothal confirmed by oath, since he firmly resolves to keep continence, would sin. First, because he would mock and deceive the woman, who thinks the right to her husband's body is given to her; likewise one who contracts with such an intention, actually and explicitly added in his consent, does not truly contract marriage but only feignedly. Second, because he commits sacrilege by abusing a sacrament of the Church. Third, because he commits a deceit and a lie in deed. Nor is he a perjurer who abandons an oath by the authority of the law (§ *Qui satisdare coguntur*, last law). Therefore, answering formally, the likeness is denied, and it is denied that the case is the same.

Chapter XV. The Gift of the Carpenter's Craft

The divine Joseph practiced among mortals the craft of the carpenter, working in wood. For the Jews threw it up to Christ: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" [Matthew 13:55]. And the Savior, when somewhat older, often helped him

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out of filial obedience, as is devoutly and very reasonably believed. Hence the Lord Jesus was called a carpenter by the Jews, as is found in Mark 6: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" [6:3].

Likewise Anselm says: "Do not think that any madness will come upon you if you contemplate him (that is, Jesus) at Nazareth as a boy among boys, if you see him obeying his mother and helping his foster father at his work." And Basil: "From his earliest age, obedient to his parents, he bore every bodily labor humbly and reverently."

That St. Joseph practiced this craft is shown to be most fitting in many ways.

First, it was fitting that the guardian of the tree of life should practice this craft of woodworking, by practicing which Noah restored the human race.

Second, Chrysostom says on Matthew: "Mary was espoused to a carpenter because Christ, the spouse of the Church, was to work all the salvation of men through the wood of the cross."

Third, it was fitting for Joseph to practice woodworking because of the seemliness of the material. Wood is a clean and beautiful material, easily worked into any shape. It is also a common craft, which townsfolk and country people need, and there is no class

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of men that does not use its workmanship. So Joseph, since he was to earn a living for the Son of God by his craft and to go to various regions of the world, was rightly chosen by God as a carpenter.

Fourth, the woodworking craft is likewise useful everywhere, and freer than the others from suspicion of cheating.

Fifth, nobles or soldiers seldom come to carpenters,[1] because of the humbleness of the craft; if they need one, they call the craftsman to themselves. All this suited wonderfully the peaceful life of the ever most blessed

Virgin, who sought solitude.

Sixth, add that men and women are accustomed to serve a carpenter in little things most gladly, because every household needs the daily help of the carpenter's craft.

Seventh, finally, by the woodworking craft a wandering family's beds, kitchen and stable are put together most easily; and the Mother of God and her Son needed these things in their long exile.

The faithful should therefore contemplate our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, through each stage of his life up to thirty years, living among men as if he were a mere man, yet with a certain excellence and majesty of bearing. For he spent the greater part of the day in the temple or in the synagogues, to teach that this way of life is the most excellent, and more and more suited to the end

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of man. But at home he neglected none of his duties to his mother. He comforted Joseph, toiling at his woodworking, with divine words, humble service and the brightness of a cheerful face. O how often did Jesus say to Joseph as he toiled: "O my most loving father, for these labors I will give you eternal rewards. For in this world I myself shall promise distress and labors to my elect. Countless men will undergo hard things, not at all shrinking from cruel fates, so that they may obey me."

And Joseph to him: "O son, O God most high, do not these labors receive rewards more than enough in the sweetness of your speech alone? For your voice is exceedingly sweet to me; your words are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb [Psalm 18:11]. O if it were allowed to make the beauty and divinity of your majesty known to men, I would strive to have temples and altars dedicated to you. But your will is better than every sacrifice. Receive, Son of God, the labors that I perform in this carpenter's craft, you who in your immense goodness chose me as your putative father. Angels serve you on high, and on earth a carpenter. You are the most happy beatitude of the blessed spirits, and now you do not disdain to give comfort to a man who is a craftsman."

Therefore St. Bonaventure says: "The Lord, then, having returned from Egypt with his parents to the city of Nazareth, was subject to them and lived there with them from then

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until the beginning of his thirtieth year. Nor is it found in the Scriptures that in all that time he did anything, which seems very wonderful. What then shall we meditate that he did, lest the Lord be said to have stood idle so long a time and done nothing? For if he had done anything, why would it not have been written like his other deeds? Those who are not wise could say such things about God. But pay close attention here, for you will be able to see plainly that by doing nothing he did great things. He withdrew from the company and conversation of men. He went to the synagogue and stood there, placing himself in a better and more hidden spot. He returned home and stayed with his mother, and sometimes helped his foster father. Going and returning, he passed among men as if he did not see men. Happy Joseph sought a living from the craft of woodworking, and Our Lady worked for pay with the distaff and the needle. She prepared food for her spouse and her son, and did the other necessary things, for she had no servant. Have compassion on her, then, because she had to work and toil with her own hands like this. Have compassion on the Lord Jesus, because he faithfully helped and worked at what he could. See him doing humble services about the house." Thus St. Bonaventure.

[1] Perhaps read "the woodworking craft," because of the context that follows (Editor).

Chapter XVI. The Gifts of the Virtues That Surrounded St. Joseph's Way of Life

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St. Joseph's way of life shone with seven heavenly titles: it was moral, devout, religious, virginal, angelic and divine.[1]

For in prudence he was another Joseph [the patriarch], whether when that Joseph lived among his brothers, or when he was sold into Egypt, or when he gained authority in Pharaoh's house. St. Joseph, the father of the Savior, with no less excellence, living among Jews and Gentiles in his native city, kept his fathers' divine law; and as an exile in Egypt he did not forsake the way of the Lord. Made putative father of the Son of God and spouse of the Queen of the world, he embraced the way of prudence with greater care. St. Joseph is proved just by God's own testimony. St. Joseph's justice was likewise prefigured in Noah, the just man. Because he was just and perfect, as Genesis 6 says, Noah walked with God [6:9] and steered the ark at God's command, in which the human race was saved. This is Noah who received in his hands the dove bearing a green olive branch, the sign of God's mercy [Genesis 8:11]. He saw the sign of the covenant between God and man [Genesis 9:13]. But the mysteries that Noah's deeds signified under a shadow came to pass for St.

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Joseph under the true sun. For by his justice he merited to be the spouse and head of the most blessed Virgin, who was prefigured in Noah's ark. He attended with the holy service of his hands upon her, as she carried in her bosom the incarnate Word of God, the sign of man's reconciliation with God. He saw with his eyes the sign of the covenant between God and man, that is, Christ, and rejoiced, no longer fearing a flood upon human nature. Prudence likewise shone out in St. Joseph's way of life, by which he remembered the past, penetrated the present with lofty insight and considered the future in advance. This is explained above all by the words of the Gospel: "Joseph, being a just man and not willing to expose her, was minded to put her away privately" [Matthew 1:19]. But these things will be explained more fully in their place. And who will maintain that a virginal man was intemperate on any day of his life? He was also strong as death [Song of Songs 8:6], his great heart keeping Christ unharmed against the persecuting tyrants.

St. Joseph's way of life must also be reckoned devout, richly adorned with every kind of piety. Piety is threefold: common, virtuous and divine. Of the common kind Blessed Augustine says, in the tenth book of *The City of God*: "In common usage the name of piety is often applied to works of mercy. I think this has come about because

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God especially commands these things to be done, and testifies that they please him in place of sacrifices, or more than sacrifices. From this usage it has come about that God himself is called pious."

Virtuous piety, as Cicero testifies, is that by which dutiful service and careful respect are given to those joined to us by blood and to those devoted to our country.

Divine piety is the one counted among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas says, on the third book of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 1, that piety as a gift consists in a certain benevolence toward all beyond the human measure; while religion renders worship to God.

There can be no doubt at all that St. Joseph's way of life was devout with the common kind of piety: he, as St. Bonaventure says, sought a living from the craft of woodworking, and there is no doubt that it was for himself, for the Blessed Virgin and for Christ. Who will doubt that Joseph, if he could perhaps help his neighbors in anything, even the wicked, gave them his aid? For he had an inner spirit teaching him such things. He had as wife the most blessed Virgin, most loving, ignorant of nothing; he had, finally, Christ, true God, praising works of mercy, urging them on him and helping him. If with the holy you will be holy [Psalm 17:26], why should Joseph not have become most devout with the most devout? But as for dutiful service and careful respect toward those joined to him by blood, namely Christ and the Blessed Virgin,

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we think that we can never worthily set them out in any kind of writing. Joseph thought attentively, keenly and prudently, so as not to fail in anything toward the most blessed Virgin and the infant Christ; and he carried these things out with more care, more grace and more fervor.

No one of sound mind doubts that his way of life was also religious. For if religion offers worship to God, then St. Joseph's way of life was most religious, since he served Christ, the true God, day and night. Blessed Ambrose said it is credible that Joseph was just and perfect in all good works. They also report that Blessed Jerome said it was St. Joseph's custom to rise at midnight to pray with the Blessed Virgin. Those who serve God with gladness will maintain that this is very reasonable.

The way of life of the most blessed Joseph was likewise virginal, in vow, in word and in deed. He had a vow of virginity, as has been said; and his way of life, spotless and strong in virginity, followed upon it in word and in deed.

For Joseph's conversations with the Blessed Virgin were constant, and she touched everything with her purity. It is without doubt delightful to spend time among philosophers and theologians, because their talk is more often about the highest things. So sweet is it that one philosopher, even as he breathed his last, desired to hear a disputation,

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being exceedingly delighted with that kind of discourse. If you want the reason, here it is. The natural happiness of the human mind, as Aristotle testifies in the tenth book of the *Ethics*, is when we reach higher things with the intellect, and especially the separate substances, and God above all. Hence the same Aristotle says, in the twelfth book *On Animals* [*On the Parts of Animals* I.5]: "We desire more to know a little about honorable and most lofty things, even if we know it only probably and by topical argument, than to know much, and with certainty, about less noble things."

Joseph, then, was a man of brilliant mind, which grace perfected more and more, as did the frequent appearance of angels, whose property it is to enlighten. He experienced knowledge of the loftiest things in his spouse, whose words were sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

It is reasonable, therefore, that the divine Joseph did not stay away long from such conversations. O happy man! O most chaste breast! O virginal mind, which experienced such consolations of companionship among mortals!

But now let us speak of his angelic way of life.

It was angelic in character, in company, in intellect, in will, in office and in contemplation. The character of the blessed Angels shines with complete purity, excels in divine wisdom and burns with heavenly charity. These three were plain in the Angels who appeared to Abraham, Genesis 18:

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purity in food and drink; wisdom in the revelation of hidden things, when they foretold that Isaac would be born; charity when they showed that they loved Abraham, in the person of God, who said: "Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" [18:17]. The same things were shown by the Angel Raphael in the company of Tobias: purity in his dress, wisdom in his counsel, and charity when he said: "I seemed indeed to eat and drink with you, but I use an invisible food and drink, which cannot be seen by men" [Tobit 12:19].

So Joseph's character must be called angelic, ever breathing the purity of virginity, expressing divine wisdom as he most prudently carried out the angels' counsels, and, burning with divine charity, handling the true God with his hands. Will anyone who stays long before a great fire grow cold? But our God is a consuming fire

[Hebrews 12:29], and Joseph stood before him every hour. Since the Gospel proclaims that angels appeared to Joseph many times, we are compelled to confess that he enjoyed the company of angels. We argue that he was on familiar terms with them, because they were accustomed to call Joseph by his own name and surname, saying: "Joseph, son of David" [Matthew 1:20]. The intellects of the angels are most brilliant by nature, and also by mutual illumination and by the divine vision. Aristotle says in the second book *On the Soul*: "Those who are soft, that is, of noble flesh, are apt in mind." Joseph was most noble;

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therefore he was most excellent in intellect. He also frequently received illuminations from Angels, as we read in the Gospel. He was likewise taught by the most blessed Virgin and by Christ. What king, I ask, unless he were out of his mind, would entrust what was most dear to him to be governed by a man who was not most wise, most skillful and most faithful? God, whose wisdom is incomprehensible, gave Christ, the end of the whole universe and more precious than the whole universe, to St. Joseph to govern, guard and nourish. With right reason, then, I would affirm, believe and, compelled by that very reason, commit to writing that he shone with the most brilliant mind among all the men of his time. Hence Joseph's will burst into divine flames of charity, by which all his works, words, movements and services were most excellently adorned.

The choir of Angels always stands before God, and some of them are sent to minister for those who receive the inheritance of salvation [Hebrews 1:14]. Do you think Joseph ever of his own accord left the presence of Christ, whether in his infancy, his boyhood, his adolescence or his youth? He likewise served that same Christ with great jubilation of heart, for the sake also of those who were to receive the inheritance of salvation. It follows that he led a life given to the contemplation of Christ, who is God; and even when absent on the various business

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of the household, he enjoyed Christ in mind, so that an angelic way of life shone out in him. For it is written of the Angels: "For they always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" [Matthew 18:10].

Finally, Joseph's way of life was divine, above all mortals who have been from the beginning of the world and will be until its end. For it was divine in company, in familiarity, and perhaps also in charity. In company: Joseph bore the person of God the Father, the maker of all things through the Word, while he was thought to be the father of that same Word incarnate. He likewise lived with Christ, who is God, with whom for many years he ate and drank and lived under the same roof. He was also the spouse of the most blessed Virgin, in whom the Holy Spirit, true God, dwelt most fully. St. Joseph's company among mortals, then, was divine, in office, in dwelling and in marriage.

We praise and venerate the fathers of the Old and New Testaments because they had company with God. God spoke to Noah. Angels appeared to Abraham, bearing the person of God. Jacob saw in his sleep the Lord leaning on the ladder. God spoke to Moses mouth to mouth, as a friend speaks to a friend [Exodus 33:11]. Samuel, as a boy, heard the voice of the Lord calling him; and in later years he became so great through God's frequent address that he anointed the kings of Israel. David was caught up by the divine Spirit. God appeared to Solomon in his sleep, and endowed him with wisdom

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above all mortals. The Prophets saw the Lord under various images, and for that reason were called Seers [1 Samuel 9:9]. The Apostles lived with Christ, their teacher and master. Is Joseph, then, to be reckoned inferior to these in his divine company? By no means. We argue this above all from his familiarity with Christ, who is God. For he saw God as a little infant one day old, and adored him; I do not hesitate to say that he at least kissed his feet. He did everything for him as a parent, according to the law of Moses. He carried him into Egypt and nourished him there with his mother for seven years. O how often must we believe that Joseph,

with great mind and burning faith, took the infant Jesus in his arms, marveled at him, kissed him, venerated him as God, and loved him from his inmost heart as an only son, powerful in all love and dignity!

And when the Son of God began to utter human words, with what joys must we think Joseph exulted? O how often he hugged the little boy in his arms as he spoke, and then, trembling, adored him! Consider, I beg, how divine St. Joseph's way of life was. In divine company, familiarity and charity it seems to us, who know divine things from sensible ones, that he in a certain way surpassed the Angels themselves. For the Angels on high are subject to God; but Joseph was set over him, since he was called his father.

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The Angels tremble before God; Joseph embraces him, holds him tight in his arms and kisses him. The Angels always receive gifts from God; Christ Jesus received food from Joseph. The Angels teach divine things; Joseph carries in his arms the infant God, as he longs to utter words, smiles at him, caresses him and is at hand for him. From this it is made plain that Joseph's way of life was also divine in most ardent charity. Moreover, if God loves those who love him [Proverbs 8:17], Joseph must be reckoned a friend of God because of his holy way of life. For whenever one of the saints is loved by the Lord, he is called a friend of God. For example, in the Old Testament Moses was called a friend of God because of his meekness (for he was the meekest of men [Numbers 12:3]), Exodus 33 [33:11]. Because of David's humility God found a man after his own heart [Acts 13:22]. Again, God loved John the Evangelist because of his virginity, and he was called the disciple whom Jesus loved. Again, we read in John 11 that the Lord loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus [11:5], and it is clear that this was because of their hospitality. Further, Blessed Nicholas was called a friend of God because of his mercy. But all these things were in St. Joseph most excellently. For he was of such meekness and humility that he was chosen as the spouse and perpetual virgin [companion] of that woman whose humility God regarded, who is proclaimed the mother of piety and meekness.

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He practiced hospitality and mercy toward God, and with such cheerfulness that God himself chose Joseph's house and enrolled himself in his household. From these things it becomes plain, clearer than clarity itself, that all the particular virtues that excelled in the way of life of other men were not lacking to Blessed Joseph either, but were present in him in the most excellent degree.

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[1] The author, however, lists and explains only six titles (Editor).

Chapter XVII. The Gift of Modesty in St. Joseph's Dress

Modesty is the virtue by which we moderate the care of our clothing and all the furnishing of our house. The rule of this moderation is twofold: one moderates according to what befits one's own person; the other according to what befits the business, places and people with whom one has to deal or stay. Hence Ambrose says, in the first book *On Duties*: "This is to keep the beauty of living: to give to each person and sex what befits it. This is the best order of conduct; this is the adornment suited to every action." Such things befit one who fears God, since they are witnesses of the truth of his life. And truth of life makes a man such outwardly as he is inwardly. For, as Wisdom testifies, Ecclesiasticus 19: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man by the meeting of his face" [19:26]. Therefore the Apostle commands,

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Philippians 4: "Let your modesty be known to all men" [4:5]. Now a man's dress is found to be of many kinds: the dress of vanity, the dress of superfluity, the dress of the middle way, the dress of sufficiency, the dress of humility and the dress of simplicity. The dress of vanity has to do with boasting; superfluity of adornment adds greater immodesty to it. Hence the divine Augustine says: "Cosmetic paint is against

modesty." The dress of the middle way is that to which all are bound according to their common state, whether they are perfect or imperfect. The dress of humility is that of the saints. Its extremes are the dress of sufficiency, which is content with what is necessary and fixes the things that pertain to life; and finally the dress of simplicity, which is content with whatever comes and shuts out anxiety about living.

Since, then, we believe that Joseph was always just and a virgin, he did not use the dress of vanity or superfluity. For Jerome says: "Women clothed in silk and purple cannot put on Christ; adorned with gold, pearls and necklaces, they have lost the ornaments of the heart." Likewise the Gloss on Luke 16, on the words "There was a certain rich man" [16:19], says: "If there were no fault in the wearing of costly clothes, the Lord's word would not so carefully state that the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen was tormented in hell

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beyond remedy." The divine Joseph's dress, then, was the dress of humility, and of such perfection that at times it kept to the dress of sufficiency, at times to that of humility.

These things are proved by reason. First, because it befitted a most holy man, sprung from saints and ordered to the Holy of Holies, to wear the dress of the saints. Second, because he had both the name and the reality of "just"; and it belongs to justice to conform the inward to the outward. Third, because he was a craftsman, and that craft calls for humble dress. Nor was Joseph's dress of humility separated from the dress of sufficiency, since he planned, sought out and kept the necessary things for his divine household. But as he traveled through desert places and lived among the Egyptians, he cast his means of living upon God. Therefore he knew how to abound and how to suffer want [Philippians 4:12].

But against the foregoing it is urged, first, that the dress of the middle way befitted St. Joseph. First, because the virtue of humility consists in a mean, and holiness is never separated from virtue. Second, because conformity consists in the middle way; and conformity especially befitted Joseph, who was nourishing the Savior of all for all, according to the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 9: "I became all things to all men, that I might gain Christ" [cf. 9:22]. So it seems that the dress of the middle way was St. Joseph's dress.

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To this it is said that, just as grace does not take away nature, but perfects it, makes it godlike and communicates supernatural being to it, so the dress of humility perfects the dress of the middle way. So they are not distinguished from each other as one thing from another, but as the imperfect from the perfect, and as a triangle from a square. Hence all the arguments are granted, but what is implied in them is denied, namely that the dress of the middle way was not the dress of St. Joseph. For it was, but more perfect, since sufficiency, humility and simplicity perfected it, made it beautiful and raised it to a higher state, while the middle way was kept in the purity of its own nature.

If it is objected, second, by asking what St. Joseph's clothes were like, of what length or color, the answer is that, according to the Philosopher, art cannot determine the mean in particulars of this kind. For Plato bids one who comes down to individuals to stop, since singulars are infinite and there is no science of them. In such matters grace is more powerful than art. We say, then, that by the anointing of the Holy Spirit Joseph knew how to wear the dress of the middle way and of humility, in keeping with the men of his age.[1]

[1] All these things, however, could be determined to some extent from archaeology, as is more than sufficiently plain (Editor).

The Second Part

Prooemium to the Second Part

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As I am about to describe the marriage of a great sacrament [Ephesians 5:32], I think it must be noted most attentively, and considered more deeply at the very threshold, that the works of the immortal God contain nothing unseemly, nothing unpleasing and nothing imperfect, even though their depth is often hidden from the blinking eyes of mortals. God himself accomplished the marriage of our first parents amid the delights of the earthly Paradise, and from it the other marriages of the human race received divine laws. The virgin woman is like *hyle*,[1] that is, matter; the man plays the part of form in nature. When matter is joined to form, something new arises, on which quantity imposes very graceful and beautiful limits; and these at once are filled with countless qualities, which, like things springing from the earth, strive to pour out charming flowers.

The sacred text of Genesis sets this forth: "Therefore," it says, "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh" [2:24]. Therefore, with the counsel of a great and thoughtful mind going before them, the fathers of the Old Testament devoted wives to their sons,

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through whom Christ was to descend through a long line of blood. What shall we, enlightened by the spirit from above, judge to have been done in the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God [Romans 11:33] when a spouse was chosen for the supreme Mother? How great a match between the two was devised! With what careful weighing was the nobility of their characters balanced, so that those in heaven, those below and the highest of earth-born men might both marvel at and revere the bond of their marriage! This is the marriage of Mary ever Virgin, Queen of heaven, daughter of David, wedded, with God as mediator, to Joseph, likewise of the house and family of David. So, as the great order of the ages comes round again, a new progeny is now sent down from high heaven [Virgil, *Eclogue* 4.5–7]. The throne of that supreme majesty conferred on Joseph as much dignity, purity, beauty and excellence as we believe by the sure light of faith, though it is not yet sufficiently known to sick mortals. And now, then, let us open the heavenly secrets of so great a marriage, and let the divided arrangement of this second volume discourse of the greatest things in a humble style.

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[1] Hyle, ὕλη, that is, matter (Editor).

Chapter I. The Gift of the Marriage of St. Joseph and the Most Blessed Mary Ever Virgin

That there was a true marriage between Joseph and the most blessed Virgin is shown by the following propositions.

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The first is: Blessed Mary and Joseph, notwithstanding the vow of virginity made by each, contracted a true marriage.

The first part of this proposition has been proved in what was said before. The second is proved by what St. Thomas says in the Third Part, question 29, article 2: "A marriage, or wedlock, is said to be true from the fact that it attains its perfection. Now the perfection of a thing is twofold, first and second. The first perfection of a thing consists in its very form, from which it receives its species. The second perfection consists in the

operation of the thing, by which the thing in some way attains its end.

"Now the form of marriage consists in a certain indivisible union of souls, by which each of the spouses is bound indivisibly to keep faith with the other. The end of marriage is the begetting and bringing up of children. The first of these is attained through conjugal consent; the second through the other works of husband and wife by which they serve one another in nourishing their offspring.

"So we must say that, as to the first perfection, the marriage of the Virgin Mother of God and Joseph was entirely true, because both consented to conjugal union, though not expressly to carnal union except under the condition 'if it pleased God.' Hence the Angel too calls Mary Joseph's wife, saying to Joseph, Matthew 1: 'Fear not to take Mary your wife' [1:20].

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Expounding this, Augustine says: 'She is called his wife from the first troth of betrothal, though he had not known her, nor was to know her, by intercourse.' But as to the second perfection, which comes through the act of marriage, if this is referred to the carnal union by which offspring is begotten, that marriage was not consummated. Hence Ambrose says on Luke: 'Do not be troubled that Scripture often calls Mary a wife; for it is not the taking of her virginity but the testimony of the marriage and the celebration of the wedding that is declared.' Yet that marriage also had the second perfection as regards the bringing up of the child. Hence Augustine says in his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence*: 'Every good of marriage was fulfilled in those parents of Christ: offspring, fidelity and sacrament. We acknowledge the offspring, the Lord Jesus himself; fidelity, because there was no adultery; sacrament, because there was no divorce. Only marital intercourse was not there.'" Thus he. He says similar things on book 4, distinction 30, question 2, articles 2 and 3.

The second proposition: That marriage was lawful. St. Thomas proves this on book 4, distinction 30, question 2, article 1, subquestion 2, reply to 1, saying: "After a vow of virginity made absolutely, no one can consent to marriage without sin. For if it is a solemn vow, no true marriage is made; but if it is a simple vow,

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the marriage that follows is true, but those contracting it sin. But the Blessed Virgin's vow was not solemn but simple, expressed in her heart; nor absolute, but under a condition, as is plain from the text. And therefore she could, without sin, by a special counsel of the Holy Spirit, whose disposition fell conditionally within her vow, consent to marriage." Thus he. He sets out the same in the Third Part, question 29, article 1. From these an argument of this kind can be formed: That which has many reasons of fittingness and nothing against right reason is lawful. But the marriage of the Blessed Virgin and Joseph was of this kind. Therefore it was entirely lawful. The same must be said of St. Joseph's vow, as appeared above. The many reasons of fittingness will be discussed more fully below.

The third proposition: The aforesaid marriage needed no excusing, as others do.

For a clearer understanding of this proposition, note two points from the teaching of St. Thomas on book 4, distinction 31. The first is that marriage, because of the loss that a man suffers in it, needs certain goods that excuse it. For in marriage he suffers a loss of reason, both because of the vehemence of the pleasure by which reason is absorbed, and because of the tribulation of the flesh [1 Corinthians 7:28] which married people must bear from anxiety about temporal things.

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These goods are offspring, fidelity and sacrament.

The second is that by these goods marriage is excused from sin, and not without them. It is said to be excused here because they make the act good. For they make it not only good with the goodness of virtue, inasmuch as they set it in the mean, but also holy, because of the indivisibility of the union, which signifies the union of

Christ with the Church. But if these are removed, the act of marriage is always some sin.

With these premises the proposition is proved. When the cause ceases, the adequate effect of the cause ceases. But the cause why marriage has certain goods that excuse it was not present in the marriage of Blessed Mary and St. Joseph, since neither suffered any loss from that marriage, but rather received great good. Therefore it was not necessary that it have any goods to excuse it and make up for the damage.

The fourth proposition is: After her betrothal the Blessed Virgin was taken into his house by Joseph before the solemn celebration of the wedding.

St. Thomas holds, in the Third Part, question 29, article 2, reply to 3, that this agrees better with the words of Matthew the Evangelist, saying: "As Chrysostom says on Matthew, the Blessed Virgin was so betrothed to Joseph that she was also kept at home. For just as in a woman who conceives in her husband's house the conception is understood to be

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her husband's, so in one who conceives outside the house the conception is suspect; and so the good name of the Blessed Virgin would not have been sufficiently provided for by her betrothal unless she had also been kept at home. Hence when it says 'and not willing to expose her' [*traducere*], it is better understood as 'not willing to defame her publicly' than as referring to taking her into his house. That is why the Evangelist adds that he was minded to put her away privately, even though she was kept at home, because of the first troth of betrothal. But the solemn celebration of the wedding had not yet taken place, and for that reason too they had not yet come together carnally. Hence, as Chrysostom says: 'The Evangelist does not say, before she was led into the bridegroom's house; for she was already inside the house. For it was the custom of the ancients to keep betrothed women in the house many times.' And therefore the Angel too says to Joseph: 'Fear not to take Mary your wife,' that is, do not fear to celebrate your wedding with her solemnly. Others, however, say that she had not yet been brought into the house, but only betrothed. But the first agrees better with the Gospel." Thus he. Therefore Blessed Jerome, when he says against Helvidius, "Joseph was the guardian of Mary rather than her husband," understood "husband" from the conjugal act. And again when he says, on Matthew 1, "Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary": "When you hear 'husband,' let no suspicion

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of marriage come upon you." For he calls marital intercourse "marriage."

From the foregoing it follows that the marriage of St. Joseph and the ever most blessed Virgin was perfect, both as to its essence and as to the three goods, namely fidelity, offspring and sacrament; but not as to the second perfection, which is its operation as carnal union.

Chapter II. The Gift of the Fittingness of the Same Marriage

A twofold fittingness must be noticed in this heavenly marriage: first, that by which it was fitting for the most blessed Virgin to be betrothed; second, that by which, by the high counsel of God, she was given to Joseph and to no other man among the countless crowds of men who were then under heaven, or had been since the founding of the world, or will be until the day of judgment.

St. Thomas declares the first fittingness in the Third Part, question 29, article 1, saying: "It was fitting for Christ to be born of a betrothed virgin, both for his own sake, for his mother's sake, and also for our sake. For Christ's own sake, for four reasons. First, so that he might not be rejected by unbelievers as illegitimately born. Hence Ambrose says on Luke: 'What could be laid to the charge of the Jews or of Herod, if they seemed to persecute

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one born of adultery?' Second, so that his genealogy might be traced through a man in the customary way. Hence Ambrose says on Luke: 'He who came into the world had to be enrolled according to the custom of the world. And it is the person of the man that is sought, who asserts the dignity of his birth in the senate and the other councils of the cities.' The custom of the Scriptures also teaches us, which always seeks the origin of the man. Third, for the protection of the child once born, lest the devil should contrive more vehement harm against him. And therefore Ignatius says that she was betrothed so that her childbearing might be hidden from the devil. Fourth, so that he might be nourished by Joseph. Hence he was also called his father, as being his foster father.

"It was also fitting on the Virgin's part. First, because by this she was made free of punishment, namely that she should not be stoned by the Jews as an adulteress, as Jerome says. Second, so that by this she might be freed from disgrace. Hence Ambrose says on Luke that she was betrothed lest she be branded with the disgrace of violated virginity, for whom a swollen womb would seem to show the mark of corruption. Third, so that Joseph might render her service, as Jerome says.

"It was also fitting on our part. First, because by Joseph's testimony it was proved that Christ was born of a virgin. Hence Ambrose says on Luke: 'The husband is brought in as the richer witness of her purity, since he could both have been grieved at the injury

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and have avenged the shame, had he not recognized the mystery.' Second, because the very words of the Virgin Mother asserting her virginity are made more credible. Hence Ambrose says on Luke: 'Mary's words gain more faith, and the motive for lying is removed. For an unmarried woman with child would seem to have wanted to cloak her fault with a lie; but a betrothed woman had no motive for lying, since childbearing is the reward of marriage and the grace of the wedding for a woman.' These two things pertain to the firmness of our faith. Third, so that excuse might be taken away from virgins who through their carelessness do not avoid disgrace. Hence Ambrose says: 'It was not fitting that virgins who live with an ill reputation should be left the veil of an excuse, that the Mother of the Lord too seemed to be defamed.' Fourth, because by this is signified the universal Church, which, though a virgin, is betrothed to one husband, Christ [2 Corinthians 11:2], as Augustine says in his book *On Holy Virginity*. There can also be a fifth reason: since the mother was both betrothed and a virgin, both virginity and marriage are honored in her person, against the heretics who disparage one or the other of these." Thus St. Thomas.

The second fittingness was because of the nobility of his family, because of St. Joseph's purity, because of the sublimity of his virtues and because of his familiarity with the angels.

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Joseph was of the most noble stock of Abraham and David, to whom the promise of Christ's birth was made. And no one like Joseph was found among their sons, who had been more excellent than the other men of the world. This is plain because the Holy Spirit consecrated them by the testimony of the Divine Scriptures, setting their character before us as an example. Nor was it fitting that Abraham be granted such a marriage, since he took several wives. So Abraham only saw the day of Christ: he saw it and was glad [John 8:56]. But Joseph saw the days, years and ages of Christ, not in spirit only but with the eyes of the flesh, and is believed to have rejoiced more than Abraham. The same must be said of the other fathers until the coming of Christ. For they either shed human blood, like Moses and David; or were very rich, like Isaac, Jacob and the kings of Israel; or did not conceive a vow of virginity: and so, compared with Joseph in purity, they fell short. In the Savior's time there were John the Baptist and the Evangelist; but even if their merits were equal, which is doubtful, being of the same age and kinship prevented the same. Among the men of his time, then, the most blessed Joseph alone was found, by God's judgment, whose nobility was joined to purity and sublimity of virtues. And familiarity with the Angels favored these, which befitted the betrothal of the most blessed

Virgin.

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It was also fitting on our part that St. Joseph be joined to so great a wife, so that we may not despise men for their poverty or the lowliness of their work; for very often they are dearer to God and more and more loved by the Angels.

Again, so that we may know that God's choices are one thing and men's another. For God chose the contemptible things of the world in great affairs, as is said in 1 Corinthians 1 [1:28]; but men choose satraps and nobles.

Again, so that, striving to please God by our inner character, we may take care to shine above all before God and the Angels, leaving aside the opinion of men, as we are taught by the holy examples of the divine Joseph.

Further, so that we may understand that the lily of virginity in the male sex is consecrated by God and by the Angels. Likewise, so that from the divine Joseph's way of life we may learn to ascend to familiarity with the angels.

Further, so that we may leave aside the secrets of God, which are unsearchable to us mortals. For the thoughts and counsels of God are farther from the thoughts of men than heaven is from earth [Isaiah 55:9].

Chapter III. The Gift of St. Joseph's Age at the Time of His Betrothal to Blessed Mary

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It is a question among many who venerate the divine Joseph whether Joseph, at the time of his betrothal to the Blessed Virgin, was young or old. Since the Sacred Scriptures are silent on this, some have recourse to reasoning and try to prove that Joseph was young.

They argue thus. First: it is fitting for the bride to be of the same age as the bridegroom; but the Blessed Virgin was then quite young; it is credible, therefore, that Joseph was then young.

Second: the Blessed Virgin was betrothed so that the mystery of the Son of God might be hidden, and consequently that he might be thought by men to be the son of Joseph. Therefore he was at least of an age suited to begetting. But old age is by no means such an age. Therefore he was young.

Third: Joseph was chosen by God at an age at which he could serve the most blessed Virgin and the infant Christ, going to distant regions and there acquiring food and the other necessities for himself and the Blessed Virgin by his own labors and his own skill. But youth was suited to these things, not old age. So Joseph was then young.

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Fourth: the Gloss says this on Isaiah 62, "The young man shall dwell with the virgin" [62:5], for it says: "That is, Joseph with Mary." And almost all interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures follow that Gloss. Therefore St. Joseph was then young.

On the opposite side is the custom of the Church, which shows the image of St. Joseph in the form of an old man. And such a custom seems to have flowed down to us from the ancient fathers. This is confirmed because some holy Doctors call him an old man, such as St. Vincent of our Order of Preachers, in his sermons on the Nativity of the Lord. The lord Albert the Great supposes the same, *On "Missus est,"* chapter 39. Therefore St. Joseph was then an old man.

I reply. Concerning the solution of this question, since we have nothing in the text of the Sacred Scriptures, two things must be done: first, some things must be set out beforehand; second, the question must be answered directly and the answer confirmed by reasons.

On the first point, note that the name of old age or youth signifies a quality of an animal together with time. Now time is among the relative things. And among relatives, some are said to be such absolutely, others by comparison, like great and small. For a grain of wheat will be called large in comparison with a grain of millet, and small in comparison with a mountain, as the Philosopher

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says in the *Categories*, in the chapter on relation. So I say that a man is sometimes called old absolutely, for instance because he is of an advanced age; and sometimes by comparison, as when a man of forty is compared with a boy. And the common usage of speech among men has this, which is chiefly attended to in the meanings of words. For, as the Philosopher testifies, we must speak as the many do, but think as the few.

Note second that it is proper to the Divine Scriptures to signify several things, even literally, under one word, as Blessed Augustine says in book 11 [12] of the *Confessions*. And therefore, where the literal sense of some doubtful point can be had under one word signifying many things, that sense must be followed if it is reasonable. For example, it is doubted whether the Angels were created before the sensible world; and the answer is no, since Scripture says: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" [Genesis 1:1]. For "in the beginning" is expounded as "in the Son," "at the beginning of time" and "before all things." So, because of that many-sided expression "in the beginning," we can follow a reasonable answer to the question raised.

Note third that there are three opinions about St. Joseph's age when he betrothed the most blessed Virgin. Some assert that he was young, handsome and conspicuous in every virtue.

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Others say he was an old man with a beard, and in some way unhandsome; and theirs are the reasons cited above. Some hold a third and middle way, affirming that he had then passed youth and reached the age of manhood, strong in his powers and comely in body, as befits the age of manhood. And I am glad to follow this opinion, because it conforms to the manner of speech of Sacred Scripture, is very reasonable and likely, does not despise the other opinions, answers their objections learnedly and in some way saves them. For the Sacred Scriptures call Joseph the *vir*, the husband [or man], of Mary, so that his age may be indicated, his marriage confirmed and the excellence of his virtue commended. For *vir* is derived from *virilitas*, manhood. So, in the customary manner of the Sacred Scriptures, indeed in a manner proper to them, those three meanings were signified by the name *vir*.

Nor let it trouble you that a certain doctor asserts that the name *vir* signifies not age but virtue. That is true if you add "only." For not age alone is signified, but the office of marriage and excellence of virtues are expressed together by a single name.

This opinion is also reasonable. For it is a principle of law that if there is doubt about the size of a number, law and judge alike should fix the middle number. For example, if there is doubt whether someone is bound to give another twenty or thirty, the judge should have the middle sum paid. Similarly, there is doubt

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whether at the time of his betrothal to the most blessed Virgin St. Joseph was young or old; the middle age, which is the age of manhood, should be taken. He was therefore a man, and is always called *vir* by the Sacred Scriptures. That is the first reason.

Second: Joseph was then of the age at which he was strong in gravity, prudence and fortitude, especially in men's opinion. But this is manhood alone. Therefore he was then a man.

Third: the age of manhood suited the age of the Blessed Virgin, namely that her husband should be a man. The Lord loved her modesty so much that he preferred that some should doubt his birth rather than his mother's most honorable purity. Joseph, therefore, was then a man.

Again: his journey to Egypt, the seven years' stay he made there, his return, the labors he bore in bringing up the Savior and in guarding the Virgin Mother, argue that his age was probably that of manhood.

Further: what do you think the Egyptians would have said if they had seen a handsome young man leading the majesty of so great a virgin, especially since the people of Egypt always pursued the Hebrews with immense hatred? So that the peace of the most blessed Virgin, as she brought up the infant God, might be provided for with the highest joy and reverence, God gave her a man of such an age that the Egyptians would be compelled to venerate him rather than disparage him.

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This is the age of manhood. For they would have persecuted a young man with wicked words, and laughed at an old one. A fitting age, then, was chosen: the middle age, which is manhood. Nor in this matter must we always have recourse to what God could have done, or the blessed angels, who attended the Savior with most special care. For, as St. Thomas says in the third book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, chapter 90: "All that God does, he does by the order of divine providence. In providence there are two things, namely the devising of the order and its execution. The execution of what concerns men is done by the angels by enlightening, and by men by working outwardly." So we must not have recourse to miracles except in extreme cases.

Therefore the answer to the first is this: if the sense of the proposition assumed is taken strictly, it follows that St. Joseph must have been a boy, since the Blessed Virgin was then almost a girl. It must therefore be understood with a grain of salt, that the bridegroom is of an age with the bride when they agree in appearance, age, friendship and the opinion of men: in age, not equal in number of years, but according to what befits the sexes, as was the case in this most holy marriage. Add that whatever God commands by a common or a singular precept befits each person. And this marriage was instituted by God's command.

In answer to the second, the first consequence

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is granted, but the second is denied, for the reasons given above.

To the third it must be said that although youth is stronger for labors, manhood is generally more enduring, since by then a man has acquired health in the manner of a habit, which is among the things hard to change. So it was fitting for St. Joseph to be of the age of manhood, for he had to bear great things for many years.

To the fourth it must be said, first, that St. Joseph was young in the bloom of his age, not in the fewness of his years. Second, I say that that sense is mystical, and from it alone no effective argument is drawn, as St. Augustine and Blessed Thomas say. Third, it is said that the example cited about Joseph and the Blessed Virgin holds only as to their living together, which the Prophet foretells there. And it is enough for all examples to be verified in some respect; it is not necessary that they be verified in all.

To the argument on the opposite side it is said that the age of manhood, being midway between youth and old age, shares the conditions and names of both extremes. So the divine Joseph could be called both old and young. Old in comparison with the Blessed Virgin, who was a girl, of divine but youthful appearance. Joseph was then bearded and of venerable appearance. He could also be called young because of his

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handsomeness, health, strength and constant labor. By these considerations the sayings of illustrious men are respectfully upheld.

Chapter IV. The Gifts of the Wonderful Virtues Known in St. Joseph through His Marriage with the Most Blessed Virgin

It is now pleasing to draw out from what was said in the preceding chapters the wonderful virtues of St. Joseph.

The first: St. Joseph was the guardian of the legitimacy of Christ's birth. The blessed angels alone knew and guarded his legitimate birth from the eternal Father; but Joseph was the shield of his legitimate birth from his mother in time. With what authority before God and the angels must we believe St. Joseph shone, who was the impregnable shield of the most lofty mystery!

The second: he was the defender of the child Christ against the snares and cunning of the devil. Great indeed, and inexplicable to mortals, was the virtue of Joseph's strength, which could overcome the more violent harms of the devil. There is no power on earth that can be compared with the power of the devil [Job 41:24], nor any cunning or deceit; and he strove to use all of these against the child Christ with all the malice he could.

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Against him almighty God set the unknown virtues of Joseph. How strong, how lofty, with what great prudence Joseph shone, who protected and defended the infant and boy Son of God against the most strong, most cunning and most wicked devil! He also guarded the modesty of the Virgin Mother with such faith and wisdom that he even darkened the angelic intellect of the devil. For the devil's mind was overwhelmed by the majesty of Joseph's prudence. This guarding of virginal modesty was prefigured in Abraham, when he went down into Egypt and guarded Sarai's modesty against Pharaoh with most wise words, as is found in Genesis 12 [12:11–20]. The guarding of Christ was likewise prefigured in the same Abraham when he brought back Lot and all his substance from the hand of the four kings who were leading him captive, in the same book, chapter 14 [14:14–16]. The army of the kings is the whole crowd of demons; Lot is Christ; his whole household is human nature. He is the firstborn of all, appointed by God, who, clothed in human flesh, seemed to be captive. But Abraham, who rightly represents Joseph, numbered the ready servants of his virtues [cf. Genesis 14:14] and protected Christ; and this defense overflowed upon the whole human race.

The third: he was the nourisher of the Son of God. See how great were the virtues hidden in the most holy Joseph, by which he brought up the Son of God,

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fed him and clothed him. For the power of all the heavenly bodies, which they receive from the Angels who move the spheres, concurs in feeding and rearing the various kinds of living things. But Joseph nourished and fed the Word of God, through whom the heavenly spheres and the angels were made and are kept in being. Joseph was surely more than Joash, and was prefigured in him: Joash, who secretly nourished and fed an infant and finally made him king of Israel, as is found in the fourth book of Kings, chapter 11 [2 Kings 11].

The fourth excellence of the virtues known in St. Joseph through his marriage with the Blessed Virgin is that he was the sole witness of Christ born of the Virgin; and by this office he equaled the holy spirits, who are witnesses, messengers and revealers of the mysteries of God, and for this reason are called angels [messengers]. He spoke with the tongue of the heavenly bodies, of which it is said in the Psalm: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands" [18:2]. He was also endowed with the well-earned dignity of the Sacred Scriptures. For the Sacred Scriptures are called the testimony of the Lord, Psalm 18: "The testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones" [18:8]. Exceedingly faithful was Joseph, whose single testimony satisfied God and the angels, and to whom all the nations under heaven ought rightly to assent, the Lord confirming the word with signs that followed [Mark 16:20].

Likewise in this holy marriage the divine Joseph

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bore the type of the Son of God, the virgin and perpetual spouse of the Church. We venerate Peter and his successors because they act, or acted, in the place of Christ on earth; with equal veneration St. Joseph should be honored, who was a figure of Christ the greatest and acted in his place. Finally, O you who are married, who, living in the world, bear the tribulations of the flesh: St. Joseph is your patron against the heretics, defending you, protecting your state, and assuring you that you do not abandon the way of salvation because of the sacrament of marriage, or even because of the weaknesses of the flesh, which often separate you from the exercises of spiritual things. Though I speak little, I think great things of St. Joseph. My mind reasons from great premises to greater conclusions, which I try to explain in stammering words. In this matter there would be need of an elegant intelligence, a most acute understanding and a most skillful mind, with angelic illumination specially aiding and divine grace providing a most singular light; and this we wish for me and for you who read these words of ours. For I would believe that only such mortals can understand the divine gifts of St. Joseph.

Chapter V. The Gift of Most Excellent Justice

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In writing of the gift of St. Joseph's most excellent justice, besides what was said briefly above, I shall bring forward three things. First, why St. Joseph is called just; second, it will be shown that his justice was more excellent than the justice of the fathers of the Old Testament; third, I shall bring forward certain objections and solve them.

On the first point, note that St. Joseph is called just because of his perfect possession of all the virtues, as Blessed Jerome says, and because of his supreme devotion of faith in the Christ to come, as the Gloss testifies. The great Doctor Albert confirms Blessed Jerome's opinion, *On "Missus est,"* chapter 46, on the words "her husband" [*vir eius*], saying: "Joseph, then, was a man [*vir*] by constancy of fidelity, as regards justice; by the virtue of chastity, as regards temperance; by excellence of discernment, as regards prudence; and by vigor in action, as regards fortitude. And so in the word *vir* the excellence of the four virtues is indicated." In the following chapter the same great Doctor, giving the reason for the words "whose name was Joseph" [Luke 1:27], says: "So that he (namely Joseph) may be shown to be just before God, whose

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name is so markedly expressed in the Gospel, as though written in the book of life; so that he may be understood to be known to men, who is brought forward as witness of the virginity of the most blessed Virgin; so that his name may be worthily recalled to men's memory, who is taken up as the putative father of God." Thus Albert the Great.

On the second point, it is proved in many ways that Joseph's justice was more excellent than the justice of the fathers of the Old Testament.

First, Noah, Abraham and Isaac were foremost in justice among the ancient fathers. But they were figures of Joseph. Therefore Joseph, whom they prefigured, will be more excellent in justice.

Further, Abel was called just because God had regard to his sacrifice, and because he was simple, as is found in Genesis 4; and, as Blessed Augustine says in the first book [rather, the fifteenth] of *The City of God*, "in him the City of God took its beginning." But God showed not only that Joseph's gifts were acceptable to him, but also his house, words, acts, character, simplicity, prudence and manual work, choosing his house as his own dwelling and not shrinking from being thought his son.

Likewise, the divine Joseph was the end of all the just fathers of the Old Testament and the first among the fathers of the New. Therefore his justice must be judged to have surpassed the justice of the fathers of the Old Testament.

Further, the cherubim guarded the earthly paradise and the tree of life at God's command,

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as is found in Genesis 3 [3:24], lest any man should enter, especially Adam and those born of him. But Joseph, by God's appointment, guarded what was prefigured by the earthly paradise, namely the Blessed Virgin, and by the tree of life, namely Christ. Therefore his justice was found more glorious before God than the justice of the ancient fathers.

Again, virginity makes men equal to the angels. But Joseph is found a virgin among the fathers of the Old Testament, to whom, because of human frailty and to multiply the people of God, a plurality of wives was granted. Therefore St. Joseph's justice was more excellent.

Further, God gave commands to the ancient fathers; but God himself, made subject, obeyed Joseph. Luke 2: "And he was subject to them" [2:51]. Therefore Joseph's justice was incomparably higher.

Likewise, the ancient fathers who are praised by the Sacred Books are also described as having failed in some things: as appears in Noah drinking wine; in Abraham going down into Egypt with his wife Sarah, whom he asked to say that she was his sister, so that it might go well with him in Pharaoh's house because of her, Genesis 12; in Lot also, when drunk; and in many other fathers praised by the Sacred Scriptures. But Joseph is proclaimed just by the Gospel and is described as having failed in nothing. Therefore his justice was more illustrious.

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Again, Joseph is read to have been admonished and directed by Angels in all things, and by this gift he is believed equal to the fathers of the Old Testament. If you add to this Joseph's innocence, humility, poverty, his putative fatherhood of the Son of God and the dignity of his holy betrothal to the most blessed Virgin, you will confess, proclaim and affirm with more than certainty that among the ancient fathers there was not found the like of St. Joseph, who kept the law of the Most High [Sirach 44:20].

On the third point, there are many objections against St. Joseph's justice, taken both absolutely and by comparison.

Absolutely, because in planning to put Mary away privately he was either cruel or unjust. Cruel, because if he thought her innocent, why did he plan to put her away? Unjust, because he acted against the public good, which must always be preferred to the particular. For if he knew her to be guilty, why did he not think of observing public justice?

Further, given this account of that plan, what piety, what love was it to put away a Virgin of such holiness? But piety and the love of justice are always joined. So it seems he is not to be called just in this case.

To the first of these the answer is: if Joseph believed the Virgin innocent, it came from his great humility that he planned to put her away,

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unwilling to live with such holiness. Joseph could also then firmly have judged that God would provide the most blessed Virgin with a more perfect guardian; and it is wonderfully reasonable that this was what actually happened. Even had he suspected her of adultery, he was not compelled by the law to make it public; this was granted or permitted to him. And he could have been moved to this by the hope that the Virgin would repent, and that consequently it would not result in harm to the public good.

To the second it must be said that he was leaving the Virgin in act, not in affection. So piety and love persevered in St. Joseph throughout the whole course of that most lofty deliberation.

Chapter VI. The Gift by Which St. Joseph Was Present at the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin and Elizabeth

Although the Sacred Scriptures do not relate that anyone was present at the visitation of the most blessed Virgin and Elizabeth, there is no one of sound mind and Catholic understanding who would maintain that Mary, a virgin of Nazareth of tender age, left home alone. For it is believed that from Nazareth to the town of Zachary is about forty miles. Reason, then,

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and St. Joseph's office and authority compel us to believe that he was present at the visitation of Holy Mary and Elizabeth. For right reason does not agree that Joseph, on any occasion, abandoned the spouse he had received from God and allowed so great a virgin to undertake a long journey without him.

Second, Joseph was reasonably moved to this in order to congratulate his new kin on the new relationship, especially since Zachary and Elizabeth were noble and of great repute among the Jews. For men thought them a married couple of great virtues; and Zachary was a priest.

Third, Joseph knew (as is reasonably believed) that the aged Elizabeth was with child. And that conception was unusual and almost miraculous. So, that joy might be joined to joy, he wished then to see Elizabeth.

Fourth, it is reasonably believed that Zachary, struck dumb because of his unbelief, seldom or never left the house until the birth of his son the Forerunner. And it is reasonable that Joseph was not unaware of this. So, to gladden and comfort the old man with the news of the Virgin's new betrothal, he wished to accompany the most blessed Virgin.

Fifth, Joseph's office and his marriage to the Blessed Virgin compel us to assert the same. His office, because he was appointed by God as guardian and servant of the most blessed

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Virgin. Although we do not doubt that St. Joseph came to know this more and more after the first appearance of the angel, yet even before that, at the prompting of the Divine Spirit, he did not leave the Virgin. So the new governor did not abandon the spouse entrusted to him on so long a journey.

This is also confirmed by the authority of St. Bonaventure in his book *On the Life of Christ*: "O what a house, what a room, what a bed, in which such mothers, made fruitful with such sons, stay and rest: Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus and John! And there too are magnificent old men, Joseph and Zachary." What delight, I ask, was lacking to St. Joseph, whether while he accompanied his new wife on the journey, or while he stayed on in Elizabeth's service? Thus he.

When Joseph heard the voice of Elizabeth saying, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" [Luke 1:43], is it not right to believe that he was filled with new joys? He was therefore greatly astonished at his kinswoman's words. And while he marveled, his mind was called to understand the loftiest teachings by the voice of the Virgin, his spouse, as she began: "My soul magnifies the Lord" [Luke 1:46]. Not reaching these things with a clearer mind, he received great comfort with the aged Zachary, as much as could be had with a dumb man.[1] So when you hear the holy Gospel proclaim, "And Mary rising up went into the hill country" [Luke 1:39], understand: with Joseph her spouse as companion.

[1] So it reads in the first edition. It seems, however, that "not" should be removed (Editor). [That is: "Reaching these things with a clearer mind..."]

Chapter VII. The Gift of Most Prudent and Most Lofty Deliberation

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The Evangelist Matthew, about to describe the skill and acuteness of Joseph's most prudent deliberation, says: "When Mary the mother of Jesus was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things..." and so on [Matthew 1:18–20]. It is clear that very many doctors, most distinguished in intelligence, prudence and learning, have not yet grasped this most lofty deliberation clearly enough. This is plain if we consider their various opinions. Note, then, that when Mary withdrew from Elizabeth's service after three months, being a girl of tender age, her womb appeared more swollen, showing most openly that she was with child. When Joseph clearly discerned this, he marveled greatly and fell into a very subtle deliberation. Ambrose asserts that this was because Joseph suspected that Mary had committed adultery. Some say that St.

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Thomas seems to favor this opinion in the Third Part, question 29, article 2, reply to 3. This in no way appears so to me; for I do not see from which of his words I could draw it. But Origen and Remigius say that in that deliberation Joseph inclined to the other side. For, knowing that Christ was to be born of a virgin and that Mary was of the seed of David and of great holiness and innocence, he believed that she would be [that virgin], and therefore thought himself unworthy to live with her. Hence he was unwilling to expose her [*traducere*], lest he be compelled to live with her, which, being truly humble, he altogether shrank from.

Others, such as Blessed Jerome, say that St. Joseph's deliberation was in doubt. Hence the same Blessed Jerome says: "This is the greatest testimony, that Joseph, knowing her chastity and marveling at what had happened, conceals in silence the mystery he did not know." Following this opinion, as St. Thomas says on book 4, distinction 30, question 2, article 2, reply to the last, St. Joseph planned out of humility not to live with such holiness, and out of piety he was unwilling to expose her, that is, to defame her publicly, as he also says in the Third Part. But the Angel, appearing, bade Joseph not to fear, against that humility; and he said that the conception was holy, against the suspicion.

These are the subtle expositions of most illustrious men, and they suit every state of men. Carnal married people would

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cling to the first exposition, because, according to the Philosopher, as each man is, so he judges. But the chaste and innocent, who keep their virginity by a simple way of life in the sight of God, readily assent to the second opinion. For they know with what humility they follow the footsteps of God walking in the orchard of their minds [Genesis 3:8], not minding high things but consenting to the humble [Romans 12:16]. The prudent and the judges of equity at once follow the third opinion. For they will always ascribe the middle place to virtue and to equity; and contingent or probable reasons likewise rest in the middle.

But in this sublime deliberation we must first attend to the first movement, which is never imputed as a fault, because it is not voluntary and often begins from the flesh, or from what is imperfect. We must also consider the progress of the deliberation, where reason, rising up, rouses its powers, summons the reasons fighting on each side, examines them, scrutinizes them and considers them most attentively. And the mind is left in doubt in the midst of the armed reasons pressing upon it. But neither here is sin found, but merit, because it is counsel proceeding from a wise man, unless something else hinders the merit itself. At last the free mind inclines to whichever side of the contradiction it will, inviting the will to assent. When that happens, that judgment will be devout or impious.

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Since, then, this deliberation of Joseph was most lofty, we must not think that it lacked a most clear first movement, examination and judgment. We can say, therefore, that the first movement of this most eminent deliberation explains the first opinion, the progress of the deliberation the last, and the judgment the middle opinion. According to this judgment, then, we must understand the words of Chrysostom, who says: "O inestimable womb of the Virgin Mary! Joseph believed more in her virginity, and believed more that a virgin could conceive than that Mary could sin."

Each opinion has had most holy and most learned men as its holders, so that the Holy Spirit might bring authority to every part of this deliberation. Nor is any of the saints believed to have been deceived; rather, each separately explains things that would profit all the true and living members of the Church, and that they would agree to, and [what] would seem reasonable, at the persuasion of the Holy Spirit, who governs the body of the Church in the manner of governors.

Nor must that doctor who explained the first movement of this holy deliberation be believed less spiritual, since the interpretation of words is given for the benefit of the hearers, not of the speakers. Hence we sometimes see less perfect men interpret the Divine Scripture more acutely, as the Prophet also testifies, who says: "And his enemies shall lick the ground" [Psalm 71:9]. And again: "Why do you declare

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my justices, and take my covenant in your mouth? Seeing you have hated discipline, and have cast my words behind you" [Psalm 49:16–17]. Finally, the Gloss says of this deliberation: "In this is marked the mind of the wise man, who wills to begin nothing rashly." Likewise Chrysostom: "Joseph's gentleness is also marked: he told his suspicion to no one, not even to her who was suspected, but thought it over within himself." Thus he.

Chapter VIII. The Gift of the First Appearance of the Angel

The most holy heavenly spirits bestow their gifts on us in four ways, by God's disposition: namely by enlightening, by pouring in powers, by moving and by appearing. Appearing is threefold: by taking a body, by forming sensible images in the organs of the senses, and by a vision in sleep. Of enlightening, Blessed Dionysius says in chapter 4 of the *Celestial Hierarchy*: "The heavenly intellectual essences first bring forth the divine illumination in themselves, and carry down to us the manifestations that are above us." Of pouring in, Blessed Gregory says in the fourth book of the *Dialogues*: "In this visible world nothing can be disposed except through the invisible creature." Hence too the angels of God are called powers [*virtutes*].

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Psalm: "Bless the Lord, all you his powers, you ministers of his who do his will" [102:21]. Of moving, Blessed Augustine says in the third book *On the Trinity*: "Just as grosser and lower bodies are ruled in a certain order by subtler and more powerful ones, so all bodies are ruled by the spirit of rational life." The appearing of Angels by taking bodies is frequent in the Sacred Scriptures and very well known. Of forms impressed on men's senses we read in the fourth book of Kings, chapter 7: "For the Lord had made the army of Syria hear the noise of chariots and of horses, and of a very great army" [2 Kings 7:6].

The present appearance in sleep, which befell Joseph, was one of those to which the Sacred Scriptures lend faith.

Three things make this appearance illustrious, wonderful and beyond telling: namely its manner, its time and its effect. For a fuller knowledge of its manner, one must know that an enlightening Angel produces two effects in the man enlightened: one is the reception of truth; the second is judgment of the truth known through the enlightenment. Although sleep hinders judgment, it disposes more toward reception. And after a more effective impression of truth, when the senses are released, a more perfect judgment follows. Note likewise that God and the angelic nature act together with us and act upon us according to our mode. And

therefore, since Joseph was in doubt

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in that deliberation, and was oppressed by uncertainty of mind as if in a sleep of unbelief, as the Interlinear Gloss says, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep. The manner of this appearance, then, was illustrious by reason of the angel who made it and of Joseph who received it. It was wonderful, because it was in keeping with St. Joseph's state: for he was laboring in the sleep of doubt. It was, finally, venerable, because he understood that secret of the highest veneration, all doubt being driven away. No holy vision in sleep is more celebrated than this one, since no place for doubt remained in St. Joseph's mind; he knew the whole secret of the vision most profoundly, assented and at once obeyed the command of the angel who gave the order. Hence we do not read that Joseph was punished, but Zachary was, to whom the Angel said: "Because you have not believed my words, you shall be dumb and shall not be able to speak until the day of his birth" [cf. Luke 1:20]. Hence Joseph was granted many appearances in sleep. For he who venerated the divine gift in affection and in effect deserved to be visited and endowed with the same gift more often.

As to the time of this appearance, consider what it signifies. For although Joseph was pressed by his deliberation, he was not pressed by passion; his mind was quiet and intent on not opposing the divine will in anything. And the time of night, set apart for human rest, fittingly signified this.

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Finally, the effect of this appearance was threefold: first on the part of the angel, second on the part of Joseph, third on the part of the most blessed Virgin. This appearance honored the angelic nature, justified St. Joseph and gladdened the most blessed Virgin. This appearance likewise teaches us to ask for the benefits of the Angels, to venerate them and to take them as an example; to believe more fully in the holiness of the most blessed Virgin; and to behold her humility, which lay so hidden in her husband's thoughts, which she knew and kept silent about, when she could have excused herself, and indeed shown her wonders. The first effect of this appearance, then, is the angelic announcement itself; the second, St. Joseph's reception of the enlightenment; the third, the taking of the most blessed Virgin into his house. Which Angel did this the Divine Oracles do not say; but it can reasonably be believed that it was Gabriel. For it is reasonable that he who announced the Savior's conception also guarded its progress. This is Gabriel, who foretold the birth of St. John, and was the executor of all the mysteries of the incarnation of the Son of God. For this reason we hold that it was the same Gabriel at whose warning Joseph withdrew into Egypt and returned into the land of Israel.

Chapter IX. The Gift of the Privilege of Love, by Which Joseph Was Loved by the Blessed Virgin above All Other Mortals

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That the most blessed Virgin loved Joseph with a sincere and perpetual love above all other mortals is taught by the foundation of love, which is likeness. For like is loved by like; hence every animal loves its like [Sirach 13:19]. There was, then, between the Blessed Virgin and Joseph a manifold likeness, which was never found together in other mortals, nor will it ever be found, as we judge in Catholic faith.

The first was likeness of flesh; the second, likeness of most noble origin; the third, likeness of perpetual virginity; the fourth, likeness of divine betrothal; the fifth, likeness of mutual love; the sixth, likeness of mutual service; the seventh, likeness of heavenly election; the eighth, likeness of figurative signification; the ninth, likeness in love toward Christ and in his naming.

This is the threefold cord [Ecclesiastes 4:12] three times over, by which the heavenly mind of the Blessed Virgin was compelled to love her husband, St. Joseph, above all. In this sacred number nine that kind of

heavenly

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charity shines out in its own way, by which the nine blessed armies and choirs of Angels burn for God, love him and adore him. This nine-stranded cord likewise, binding together so much heavenly love, surpasses the eight degrees of love toward the law of the Lord of the one who walks blessed in it [Psalm 118:1], which the prophet David sings in the Psalms on the divine lyre and in a most lofty poem, sets forth and explains.

The first, then, is called likeness of flesh, which the divine law calls identity: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh," Genesis 2 [2:24]. But the flesh of other mortals is found to be nearly corrupt, unclean, weighed down with daily sins and ignorant of spiritual delight. St. Joseph's flesh was not so, but like the flesh of his wife: incorrupt because of perpetual virginity; clean because of his contempt for the filth of the flesh and his complete inexperience of it; free of the sin which the unclean flesh of married people continually brings forth. Nor was Joseph without heavenly contemplation, but devoted himself to its office with the highest delight, imitating the example of his spouse.

The likeness of the same nobility increased the Blessed Virgin's love for her husband. For the Blessed Virgin and Joseph drew their origin from Abraham and David by the same genealogy. We have learned, from the teaching of nature,

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from the accounts of histories and from long experience of the malice of our own times, that there is an immense force of love among those who have come from the same family. Drawn by it they live together, render one another services and take up arms. Add what the apostle Paul writes: "If any man does not take care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he is worse than an infidel" [1 Timothy 5:8]. But note that in wicked men love of kin lacks the rule of the virtues, while in the saints it is more ardent, more perfect and more holy. With what great love, then, must we think the most blessed Virgin pursued Joseph, who was of the same nobility and origin with her!

Indeed, if, as the Poet testifies, "love of character is sure," and as the Apostle says, "charity never falls away" [1 Corinthians 13:8], the Blessed Virgin pursued Joseph with greater love because she knew him to be a virgin and bound by a vow of perpetual virginity. Joseph delighted more in that virginity than wretched mortals in the delights of unclean flesh.

And when she considered and remembered that she had received Joseph as her spouse by the divine will, she was kindled more and more in heavenly charity toward him. The Virgin was not ignorant of that teaching which anyone, even of rude mind, can know with nature as guide: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" [Matthew 19:6]. So the Blessed Virgin said within herself: "O how guilty I would be before God and all the citizens

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of the heavenly Jerusalem if I did not love with the bowels of inmost charity the spouse given me by divine election! Rebecca loved her husband so much, though she went to him unknown across long stretches of land with a servant as her guide [Genesis 24]: why then shall I not love my spouse, given me by God, most holily, most ardently and most justly? I see likewise with how great a love he pursues me; and shall I not love him most vehemently?" For it is a well-worn proverb: "If you want to be loved, love."

The most blessed Virgin was of a most lofty heart and noble mind, whose property is to show in heart, word and deed a love in return to those who render services. And Joseph strove day and night to attend on his spouse with every service. Therefore the Virgin was moved with incredible love, which she made known to her husband Joseph in every way. O how reasonable it is that the Blessed Virgin served her spouse, obeyed

him most promptly, and addressed him every day most sweetly and lovingly! I believe indeed, O immaculate Virgin, and it is no vain faith, that you were ever fragrant with a most chaste love toward your most chaste spouse, who was most obedient to you. And I think that you loved him most sweetly above all patriarchs, prophets, leaders, kings and other saints. O gift of most happy charity, where peace and concord, charity and unanimity, kindness

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and gentleness were present! Surely there were no quarrels there, no suspicion of discord, no displeasure between you, divine spouses. Hence divine duties were carried out on both sides, fragrant with the mutual charity of each. O with what care the heavenly Virgin prepared food for her absent husband, set the table and kept the house clean; and how joyfully she welcomed him on his return! They did all things for love of Jesus, whom they beheld present, who, they knew, had chosen them by eternal providence to devote themselves to such things. For divine election produces a great fire of love; indeed it is its origin. The Blessed Virgin and Joseph knew, then, that they had been chosen by God so that a divine love might persevere between them, by which the cold hearts of the whole human race might be warmed.

Moreover, if we believe that Adam loved exceedingly the woman whom God had made from his rib, when he said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh," how much more must we believe that Joseph loved the Blessed Virgin, since they were prefigured by that sacrament! For the marriage of our first parents and the marriage of the most blessed Virgin and Joseph foreshadowed the indissoluble bond of holy mother Church, as the Apostle says: "This is a great sacrament... in Christ and in the Church" [Ephesians 5:32]. What, I ask, can or could be joined by a greater bond

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of love than the most holy fellowship of Joseph and Mary, which Jesus, the eternal love, instituted, guarded by his own presence, increased and perfected? The Patriarchs, in whose marriages great love was found, foretold this supreme love. This is that divine love, this the supreme charity, which alone brought forth the true God to the world, nourished him and clothed him. By this love the same true God willed to be thought and called the son of this most sacred marriage. So God came forth as man from the Virgin Mother, and willed to be thought the son of the husband of this ever untouched Virgin. Hence the divine Jerome, in his book against Vigilantius [rather, against Helvidius], speaks thus of the singular love of the Blessed Virgin toward Joseph: "You say that Mary did not remain a virgin? I claim more for myself: that Joseph himself too was a virgin through Mary, so that a virgin might be born of a virginal marriage. For if fornication does not befall a holy man, and it is not written that he had another wife; and if he was rather the guardian than the husband of Mary, whom he was thought to have had; it remains that he who deserved to be called the father of the Lord remained a virgin with Mary." Thus Jerome.

Chapter X. The Gift by Which St. Joseph Was the First, after the Blessed Virgin, to Adore Christ When He Was Born

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Before we describe the adoration shown to the newborn Savior by St. Joseph, we must note that the Lord's holy manger, on the day when the Son of God was born there of the Virgin, was a lowly place, set apart from the other dwellings; and near it, not far off, is the place where the Savior was circumcised. Three places, then, are to be remembered there. The first is where the virgin and mother bore Christ without pain. In that place our earth yielded its fruit [Psalm 84:13]; there truth sprang out of the earth, and justice looked down from heaven [Psalm 84:12]; there the bridegroom came forth from his bridal chamber [Psalm 18:6]; there the Virgin adored him whom she had borne; there likewise St. Joseph, first after the Blessed Virgin, adored

Christ; there the Virgin wrapped the Word of God in swaddling clothes.

The second place is the Lord's manger, not far off, but joined to the place just mentioned. There the Son of God was content to lie on hay; there he was fed with the Virgin's little store of milk; there the ox knew his owner and the ass his master's crib [Isaiah 1:3]; there the works of God were beheld in the midst of two animals [Habakkuk 3:2, Old Latin]; there the shepherds found him and adored him.

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The third place is where Christ was circumcised. There Christ shed tears and blood; there his name was called Jesus by Mary and Joseph. And know that this place is higher than the two mentioned before, as we find written by those who have seen the place.

That Joseph was the first after the Blessed Virgin to adore Christ is urged by many reasons. First, because Joseph awaited the most worthy birth of the Savior with the greatest desire. Second, because he was hardly ever far from the young Virgin with child. Third, because the Blessed Virgin, who knew what was to come, is believed in all likelihood to have advised Joseph that the true God, who should have been welcomed with the most magnificent preparation of the whole world and with the exulting joy and delight of the human race, since he was being received naked and in a very poor hovel, should at least be received with the fervent adoration of his mother and putative father. So when Joseph saw the infant God come forth from the womb and saw the Virgin adoring, we do not doubt that he fell prostrate to the ground. For he was driven to it by a most vehement inner desire, by the most holy outward example of the Virgin, by the most glorious sight of the divine infant and by the heavenly light that filled the night.

This adoration was without any doubt more acceptable to God than every sacrifice, and more excellent, more pleasing and more venerable than any worldly preparation, any kind of rejoicing or any gifts.

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Must we not believe that the Angels then sang divine canticles on high, while the divine Joseph heard with his bodily ears and exulted, or rather fell into ecstasy for excess of joy? Moreover, if a multitude of angels sounded forth more loudly and sweetly to the simple shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" [Luke 2:14], why must we not believe that the same or rather greater things happened while the most blessed Virgin and Joseph were adoring? Nor is it an obstacle that the Gospel is silent on this, since it was silent about greater things which we are not afraid to say it passed over. For Mary and Joseph seem less suitable witnesses to unbelievers concerning the Savior's doings, especially those that concern the dignity of Mary and Joseph together; but believers, who know the consolations of angels, which for the most part shun publicity and are shown by them in secret, meditate, confess and believe greater things.

As for the rest, what thanks Joseph rendered in his mind to our Savior we leave to the Catholic and thoughtful reader to ponder. For such mysteries are rather to be veiled in silence than laid open to the weak and hoarse follies of mortals.

Chapter XI. The Gift of Giving the Most Holy Name of Jesus

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No small dignity was conferred on Joseph by the angelic embassy, by which the angel charged him, saying: "You shall call his name Jesus," Matthew, chapter 1 [1:21]. For by giving and proclaiming this most holy name, Joseph opened the heavenly secret to the world; he acted in the place of the heavenly Father; he made known the hidden things of the Holy Spirit, which had been concealed in mystery in canticles and prophecies; he was the colleague of the most blessed Queen of the world, his wife; and he reached the sublimity of angelic majesty. For it is the custom among men that fathers have the authority to give names to

their sons. But Jesus was the Son of God the Father. So in this dignity St. Joseph acted in the place of the heavenly Father. When the sons of kings are baptized, at which time Christians are accustomed to give names to their children, who, I ask, announces the name of the child to be baptized in place of the royal fathers? Is it not another king, or the king's envoy, or some great man? At that time, then, there was no one greater, no one more pleasing, no one more illustrious before the heavenly Father than St. Joseph. He is the Enos of the New Testament, who began to call upon the name of the Lord, as is written of the old Enos in Genesis 4 [4:26].

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The Holy Spirit, speaking through the mouths of the prophets, expressed the most blessed name of Jesus in the various voices of different riddles. For we read in Isaiah 7: "His name shall be called Emmanuel" [7:14]. Likewise in chapter 9: "His name shall be called Wonderful, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace" [9:6]. And again: "Call his name, Take away the spoils; make haste to take the prey" [8:3]. Messiah, a name that means Christ, is well known among the Hebrews. In the Canticle too it is written: "Your name is as oil poured out" [Song of Songs 1:2]. And in Luke, chapter 1, it is said: "And he shall be called the Son of the Most High" [1:32].

These mysteries Joseph opened to the blind world by the single giving of the name of Jesus. Do you not think, I ask, that the instrument of the Holy Spirit must be highly esteemed? We venerate the prophets; we praise Solomon and admire him, tasting the sweetness of his books; and we conclude by right reason that Joseph is not unequal to them. Indeed he excels in dignity as much as clear light excels twilight. And since the name of Jesus was announced by the angel Gabriel first to the most blessed Virgin and then to Joseph, when Joseph gave it on the eighth day he took the angel's place entirely.

But here it remains to be asked whether Joseph, as colleague of the most blessed Virgin, shared with equal authority in giving the name of Jesus. That he did share in it no one should doubt. For paternal authority required this, as did the angelic embassy, and finally the immaculate

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purity of the most blessed Virgin. He shared in it before men as the first; but before God and the angels this giving of the divine name belonged to the most blessed Virgin alone, because she alone among men had true right over Christ. The name of Jesus, then, was given by God, the Angel, Mary and Joseph: by God by bestowing the reality of the name, by the Angel by foretelling it, by Mary by commanding it, and by Joseph by carrying it out. Let no one, I beg, be disturbed by the excellence of Joseph that is drawn from the giving of the name of Jesus. For this manner of arguing is taken from the Gloss on Luke 2: "It was not fitting," it says, "that so glorious a name should first be uttered by a man, but by a more excellent nature, lest man should seem the contriver of this name." By the same reasoning, then, it ought first to have been given by a man more worthy than the rest. And those who do not agree in mind with the great dignity of this most holy father are found to be less perceptive, or blind in the light of faith; they are weak and sick.

Chapter XII. The Gift of the Manifold Appearance of the Angel

Matthew the Evangelist, in chapter 2, reveals the manifold appearance made to Joseph

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in these words: "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell you. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him. Who arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and withdrew into Egypt; and he was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was

exceedingly angry; and sending, killed all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice in Rama was heard, Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not," and so on [Matthew 2:13–18].

Since great mysteries lie hidden here, by which we can both know the highest gifts of St. Joseph and be instructed in divine teachings, we shall follow up two things as briefly as the depth of the matter allows. The first concerns divine knowledge, to which the human mind rises more effectively, more sublimely and more widely when endowed with the gift of angelic vision. The second will be a distinct enumeration of the things that follow from this same frequent appearance.

The divine knowledge that comes to mortals

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we shall explain more easily by a clearer proof of the following propositions.

The first proposition is: It is implanted in human reason by nature that it can know sensible things, intelligible things and God, their creator. It is also drawn by natural desire to know these things.

The root of this truth is man's commonality with every creature made by the immortal God. For he has being with stones, sensation with brute animals and understanding with angels. These are the seeds of virtues which the philosophers proclaimed to be in us by nature's doing; by them we can acquire the habits of all arts and sciences, and by them, under the same impulse of nature, we strive to reach these things. Hence Cicero says: "We have often said, and it must often be said: by nature we are most eager, or most desirous, because the honorable seedbeds of the virtues are inborn in us; so that if it were permitted to open them out and to aspire to happiness, nature herself would lead us there. But we often blunt the little sparks implanted in us by nature." Thus Cicero. If it had befallen him at some time to share, by God's power, in the light of the grace of Christ, whose secrets it is impious for mortals to pry into, with what abundance of eloquence must we think he would have spoken! For the praise of his virtues I could wish that the soul of Cicero were kept under the clemency of the divine throne, under the justice, I say, of God, the most merciful King of all, so that if at some time

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he attained the fruit of Christ's mercy, which we, wholly fearful, in any case do not know, he might obtain pardon for the Roman error.

The second proposition is: Human reason, because of the power of its nature, can be affected by divine grace, so that, adorned with the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity, it may know things about God and creatures, or know them in a way, that it can by no means know by the power of nature alone.

This proposition is explained. For human reason, carried only by its own power, even with the help of the habits of the arts and the practice of studies, cannot grasp the light of this truth: "God is three and one"; and: "The Word was made flesh" [John 1:14]. But purified by the fire of faith and enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit, it will say with the heart's mouth, with the angelic Thomas Aquinas: "Nothing can be believed more truly" [*nil hoc verbo veritatis verius*]. The poverty of human nature is compared to Zacchaeus, who, as the Gospel testifies, being little of stature, climbed a tree so that he might see Jesus [Luke 19:3–4]. The power of nature and of grace is likewise signified by the two young men, of whom the younger asked his father for the portion of substance that fell to him [Luke 15:12]. Hence the Gloss on Luke 15 says: "Imparting to the faithful the portion of his grace that they desire; bestowing on unbelievers only the benefit of natural intelligence." This is that heavenly gift of grace which Blessed John the Apostle exalts beyond measure in very few words, saying: "Let the anointing which you have received abide

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in you, and you have no need that any man teach you" [1 John 2:27].

The third proposition is: Divine truth presents itself to be discerned by the human mind in seven ways: as shining, as reproving, as calling, as punishing [purifying], as perfecting, as gladdening, and as raising above the common state of wayfarers, or making godlike.

Each is explained without difficulty. Blessed Augustine describes shining truth in the fourth book *On the Trinity*, saying: "Some wise men of the world were able to carry the gaze of the mind beyond every creature, and to touch, in however small a part, the light of unchangeable truth." The perfection of the natural powers and a more vehement affection toward God, once known, follow this light. But this love is kept within the limits of nature.

Truth as reproving is known by those who have learned that man has existed in two states. The first state was of original justice; the other is of nature stripped and of the miseries we feel here, because of the guilt of original sin. The philosophers were ignorant of this truth, which would without doubt have appeared to them if they had been willing to believe. And this is the state of the Jews living under the law of Moses.

Truth as calling is that which is perceived, in the voices of the prophets and in the sound of Christ and the Apostles, by those who are choked in the delights and cares of this world [Luke 8:14].

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Truth as purifying, especially from original guilt, is that which baptism first brings about, and then the other sacraments of the Church.

The light of heavenly grace perfects inwardly and outwardly, begetting godlike knowledge in man. Gladdening truth is the feast of those who contemplate, of which it is said in the book *On the Soul and the Spirit*, which is ascribed to Blessed Augustine: "The light of the soul is God, with the abundance of his sweetness. The good of the flesh is the world, with human delight. But the world is outward, and God inward. For nothing is more inward than God, nothing more present than he. He is more inward than every rest. He is above all things. Turning back, then, from this world to God, and as it were turning back upward from here, we must pass through ourselves to God; that is, enter into ourselves, and not only enter into ourselves, but in an ineffable way pass beyond ourselves by that entering. He who goes deeply within, and penetrates inwardly, transcends himself; he ascends from here to God. Let us therefore gather our heart from such distractions and call it back to eternal joys, or at least restrain it from unlawful and vain thoughts, so that at some time we may be able to fix the ray of our thought on the light. For this is the [life] of our heart, when it contemplates its God and is sweetly refreshed by him through its contemplation; and he is ever sweet to it to desire, to praise

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and to love, and ever delightful. For nothing seems more excellent for the blessed life than that, with carnal desires and senses shut away, one should become, as it were, outside the flesh and the world, turned in upon oneself, and, made a stranger to the desires of mortals, speak to oneself alone and to God." Thus he.

Finally, truth raising above the common state of men is that by which the mind of man, whether in the body or out of the body [2 Corinthians 12:2], reaches the angels, and God himself, or divine things, by an understanding of a like form. This is divided in many ways, as will appear in the following proposition. Note that the seven degrees of divine truth just mentioned are like the ordered species of numbers, of which the higher contain all the lower.

The fourth proposition is: Truth raising above the common state of men was manifold: that of Adam, of the Prophets, of John the Baptist, of Joseph, of the most blessed Virgin Mary, of John the Evangelist on the

Lord's breast, and of Paul.

This distinction of truth known, on the part of the object and the manner of knowing, is not given according to specific formal reasons, for two perhaps were of one species; but according to subjects and times, so that, by things known outwardly, we who are joined to the body may be raised above the common state of men and

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walk in twilight, we who cannot look upon the brightest light.

The Gloss on Genesis 2, "The Lord cast a deep sleep upon Adam" [2:21], speaks of Adam's vision, saying: "That ecstasy was sent upon him so that the mind of Adam, entering the sanctuary of God, might understand the last things, as a sharer in the angelic court."

The vision of the Prophets is sometimes through sleep; sometimes through the impressing of images impressed by God in the imagination, while outward sensation ceases, according to the words of Ezekiel [rather, Isaiah 6:1]: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and the whole earth was full of his majesty"; and sometimes through enlightenment of the intellect alone, such as shone out singularly in David.

The divine knowledge of John the Baptist is devoutly believed to have been an acceleration of the use of reason, so that, shut in his mother's womb, by a divine miracle he both knew and adored the Son of God. This is that leaping which his mother Elizabeth felt when she said: "For behold, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy" [Luke 1:44].

Joseph's vision, as the holy Gospel testifies, was through many dreams; and it was most excellently perfected by the presence of the Mother of the Son of God, and by the Son of God himself, whether carried in his mother's womb or as an infant already come forth from the womb.

The vision of the most blessed Virgin, although it was

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manifold, is told with particular care when she is greeted by the Angel.

Of the vision of John the Evangelist on the Lord's breast, Blessed Augustine says: "Contemplating the power of the Godhead more clearly than the rest, flying with the Lord to heaven, he drank a draught of heavenly wisdom from the fountain of the Lord's breast more clearly than the rest." This is understood with respect to the other Evangelists.

Finally, of the vision of Paul it is said in the Gloss on 2 Corinthians 12 that the Apostle saw God with that life with which he is to be seen for eternity. The Sacred Writings relate very many things similar to these, which are easily reduced to the visions mentioned. Therefore, once these are known, we do not doubt that the rest are plain.

Nor should we pass over the fact that extrinsic accidents make one kind of vision more and more dignified, as a vision in sleep in one who has been accustomed to the outward appearance of angels. For this reason Joseph's vision is magnified by the presence of the Son of God and of the Blessed Virgin. For the vision of our Lord Jesus Christ, since it contains in itself, that is, objectively, the vision of one who comprehends, because he was always a comprehensor; and the height of all mysteries, because of the union of the Word with human nature; and the vision of the Trinity, by reason of the Godhead, reasonably strengthens all the visions to which it is joined, makes them more worthy and raises them higher.

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This is confirmed by a philosophical reason. For although Aristotle in the third book *On the Soul* compares the sensitive with the intellective, because as the sensible is to sense so the intelligible is to intellect, they differ among other things in this: the nobler intelligible does not destroy but perfects, so that once it is known lesser objects are discerned more effectively. So the knowledge of Christ, God and man, joined to another knowledge, not only magnifies it but makes it godlike, because the one understanding and the thing understood are the same.

The fifth proposition is: For a man to be raised perfectly above the common state of men to some degree of the sevenfold truth mentioned, three things are required: purification, recollection within oneself, and estrangement.

This is explained. Just as, for the introduction of a new natural form into a subject, there must be separation from the contrary dispositions by the introduction of others, so it must happen in the rational soul that is to be raised above the common state of man. It must be purified from three things: from fault, from punishment and from bodiliness, as far as possible. This purification is brought about by an excellent degree of charity. Hence it is said in Wisdom 9: "The corruptible body weighs down the soul" [9:15]: body, bodiliness; weighing down, punishment; corruption, fault. Nor is it an obstacle that in the Lord Jesus Christ there was enjoyment [of God] where there was nevertheless bodiliness

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and punishment, because the union with the divine nature overcame and took away these impediments.

The second thing required to raise a man above the common state is recollection within oneself. For the human soul, insofar as it is a certain nature and the form of the body, is naturally joined to three things: to images, to passions and to diverse operations. Of its binding to the images and likenesses of bodily things, Aristotle says in the third book *On the Soul*: "One who understands must contemplate phantasms." And Augustine says in his book *On the Trinity*: "The mind errs, then, when it joins itself to these images with so great a love that it even thinks itself to be something of this kind." And a little further on: "For hence arises the shame of error, when it cannot separate the images of sensible things from itself so as to see itself alone. For they cling to it wonderfully with the glue of love. And this is its uncleanness: for while it strives to think of itself alone, it thinks itself to be that without which it cannot think of itself." The first recollection, then, of a soul that would pass beyond the world is withdrawal from bodily images. Of subjection to the passions the same Blessed Augustine says, in the book *On the Spirit and the Soul*: "The soul is joined to the body by certain affections and by a kind of friendship, according to which friendship no man ever hated his own flesh [Ephesians 5:29]. For it is its companion, although it is weighed down by its company. For by an ineffable condition

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it loves it, loves its companion, and therefore cannot be free. It is vehemently affected by its pains; it fears destruction, though it cannot die. It feeds on the gazing of the eyes, delights in the hearing of sounds, takes pleasure in sweetest odors, is refreshed by abundant feasting; and although it makes no use of these things, yet it is affected with heavy grief if they are taken away." Thus Blessed Augustine.

Of the various operations of the soul the same says, in the same book *On the Spirit and the Soul*: "The soul is called by various names according to the affections of its body. It is called soul [*anima*] when it gives life; spirit when it contemplates; sense when it perceives; mind [*animus*] when it is wise; mind [*mens*] when it understands; reason when it discerns; memory when it remembers; will when it consents."

From these three, then, the soul is recollected into itself: by abstraction from bodily images, by the cessation of the body's passions and by the union of its operations. Of the union of acts Augustine says: "Sense turns into imagination, imagination into reason, reason into intellect, intellect into intelligence, intelligence into

God."

The third thing required for the same is elevation, which comes about through three things. For it comes about with nature striving, grace raising up and God drawing.

The goad of present miseries, the defects of our knowledge and the desire for the highest perfection dispose toward the striving of nature.

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The sacraments, virtues and gifts dispose toward the raising up of grace. To being drawn by God the bride in the Canticle invites us: "Draw me after you" [Song of Songs 1:3]. "No one," says the Savior, "can come to me unless my Father draw him" [John 6:44].

The sixth proposition is: Approach and conformity to God follow God's drawing, by which men are called godlike.

To explain this proposition, note that in natural things natural motion is more intense the nearer it is to its proper place. And this is produced not only by approach, but also by likeness to its proper place. And so in natural things it is enough for natural motion to change the relation of the moving thing to its place, and by this alone it becomes near. But in voluntary things it is not enough for natural motion to change the position of the power itself toward its place, without the place itself. The reason is that in natural things the place is only the mover; but in voluntary things the place of the powers, which is God, is mover and cooperator.

The term of this approach, then, is the perfect conformity of the divine and human will, and godlike affection.

Three things dispose to this godlike condition: works of instruction or edification, works of patience or suffering, and works of counsel or supererogation. Of works of instruction it is found in 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 10 [rather, 16:13] that after the anointing of David as king,

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the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied. Likewise the divine Augustine says: "This is the law of divine providence, that no one is helped to know or share grace except by those above him." Works of patience are figured in Job, of which the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 12: "For power is made perfect in infirmity" [12:9]. Works of supererogation are described in a special way in Mark 10: "Amen I say to you, there is no man who has left house..." and so on [10:29]. After this sixfold order follows the sabbath of the soul that knows God and exults in him. 1 Peter 1: "Believing, you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls" [1:8–9].

Applying these things, then, to St. Joseph's angelic visions, we believe that they were adorned by God with the highest gifts. We can know and reach these gifts only by reasoning more deeply. But the mirror of our riddle [1 Corinthians 13:12] is found to be rather dark, the light of our intellect being likewise dimmed because of its union with natural things. Yet we must gather from the words of the Gospel how much dignity is in these visions of Joseph; and, referring each of them to ourselves for our profit and experience, let us look at once upon the gifts that serve the praise of the divine Joseph and our own profit.

Seven things truly follow upon the angelic vision when it is perfect, that is,

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not for justification but for preservation. The first is enlightenment about the incarnate Word; the second, veneration of holy mother Church; the third, contempt of earthly things; the fourth, lofty knowledge of divine providence; the fifth, the spirit of understanding of the Sacred Scriptures; the sixth, the envy of the devil and his followers toward one adorned with an angelic vision; the seventh, outward affliction, whether inflicted by

men, or by nature, or in any way by God.

Consider, then, that these seven always followed upon each of these visions of Joseph and were found in Joseph. Enlightenment about the incarnate Word is hinted at when the Evangelist says, "Arise, and take the child"; for what he did in deed perfected his intellect more in the knowledge of the Word of God. "And his mother": the mother is holy Church, who daily both bears and nourishes her children, and attends them in the manner of a most loving mother. "And fly into Egypt": because he who despises his own country for the love of God shows that he hates all earthly things. "And he was there until the death of Herod," who was a witness to, and an enemy of, the divine providence that governs all things. "That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet," namely Hosea [11:1], who was one of the writers of the Sacred Scriptures and a prophet of great utterance. Herod's anger signifies the envy of the devil, and his

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savagery denotes outward afflictions. Therefore it follows: "Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and sending, killed all the children that were in Bethlehem." Very many mysteries lie hidden in the words of the Gospel, which we leave to the enlightened reader to meditate on more sweetly and to open up more widely.

Chapter XIII. The Gift of the Inexplicable Delight That Joseph Enjoyed from Living with Christ and the Blessed Virgin

Great is a man's delight when he sees a son begotten by himself and lives and dwells with him. First, because in him the desire for perpetuity is in some way fulfilled, as the Philosopher says in the second book *On the Soul*: "The most natural of works for living things that are perfect and not maimed, or that do not have spontaneous generation, is to make another like themselves, so that they may share, as far as they can, in the everlasting and the divine. For all things desire that, and for its sake do whatever they do." Second, because parents hope for profit from their children. Third, because they glory in their children's virtues and goods as in their own.

But since the divine Joseph judged with most certain faith that Christ was the greatest and true God, he was filled with unimaginable

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delight, since not only did he share in the divine and immortal, but he whose being is divine and immortal had arranged to be thought his son; and from him Joseph hoped thenceforth for immortality with a most ardent heart and with great and excellent prudence. Very many have thought it almost the highest good to be granted by nature most noble offspring. What joys, then, do we believe Joseph experienced when he perceived that the source of all nobility and good was being nourished and guarded by him? Joseph had long since learned many teachings of the Holy Scriptures, which, through the enlightenment of the angels, the conversation of the most blessed Virgin and the presence of the Word of God, who enlightens every man that comes into this world [John 1:9], he knew to speak of Christ, who is God.

So according to the various ages of Christ he experienced different consolations, which, not unmindful of the Sacred Scriptures, he turned over in mind and voice.

Begin from the Savior's first infancy. In that age Joseph sometimes contemplated the infant Jesus asleep. "Behold, he of whom it is written, 'He shall neither slumber nor sleep' [Psalm 120:4], has fallen asleep and is sleeping. A wonderful thing! This is the bridegroom, beautiful above the sons of men [Psalm 44:3], of whom it is written in the Canticle: 'I sleep, and my heart watches' [Song of Songs 5:2]. In you, then, O Jesus, the humanity you have assumed sleeps, and the heart of your divinity ever watches." If perhaps he heard the little one crying with that divine voice,

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he was moved with fear and said: "Behold, our God, made like us, cries, and thunders in the clouds." O how often, kissing the infant most sweetly, he said: "O happy kisses, which the holy fathers of the human race longed for through so many and such long ages! For this is he whose kisses are longed for at the beginning of the Canticle: 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth' [Song of Songs 1:1]." Sometimes Joseph gazed at the divine infant and, melting with joy, said: "Your cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's, your neck as jewels [1:9]. Behold, you are fair, my beloved, and comely [1:15]. My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands. Your head is as the finest gold. Your eyes are as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit beside the plentiful streams. Your cheeks are as beds of spices. Your lips are as lilies dropping choice myrrh. Your hands are turned and as of gold, full of hyacinths. Your belly is of ivory, set with sapphires" [5:10–14].

And turning over in his mind these things, which are written in the Canticle full of great mysteries, he joined the mystical senses to Jesus Christ. On the one hand he repeated the words that signify, on the other he attended to the thing signified; he rejoiced in them, exulted and was as it were caught up above man's powers into the divine nature.

And when the infant Jesus began to utter words with his mouth, he said: "How sweet and comely is the voice of my beloved! This voice is his of whom

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it is written: 'God speaks once, and does not repeat the same thing' [Job 33:14]. Behold, he repeats it ten times and more. This is the voice of him who spoke in the prophets. But this is a human voice, which I perceive with my ears; the divine speech, unceasing from eternity, one and indivisible, I do not hear: but the Father who is in heaven hears it, and the Holy Spirit too, and the angelic army of the blessed spirits."

If I should wish to follow the whole life, through the course of many years, which Joseph most attentively observed in Christ's infancy, boyhood, adolescence and youth, the chapter would of necessity swell into a great volume. Who, I ask, would not believe that Joseph burned when he touched Jesus, who as fire had come to cast fire on the earth, willing that it be kindled [Luke 12:49]? So I leave these things to be brought to light by the most ardent flames of a contemplative soul.

Of his life with the most blessed Virgin, likewise, I think I must keep silence; it can be perceived by the faithful contemplator through the same fire of the Holy Spirit. For, as Blessed Jerome testifies, the fellowship of Joseph and the most blessed Virgin was a flowering and wholly spotless affection. For to have the most blessed Virgin of angelic holiness, to see her, to stay with her, to work with her, to live with her and to eat with her, with the Son of God standing by, is an altar of heavenly exultation and rejoicing.

Chapter XIV. The Gift of Equal Praise of the Most Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph in the Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple

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Luke the Evangelist, describing the great and wonderful mystery of the loss and finding of the boy Jesus in the temple, makes it most clearly evident that God endowed Joseph and the most blessed Virgin with equal kinds of praise.

The first kind is the common dignity of parent; the second, equality in the same not knowing; the third kind is the anxiety of a like labor; the fourth is the gladness of one goal; the fifth is the honor of the same answer; the sixth kind of praise is the delight of one journey; the seventh is the sublimity of equal obedience.

These kinds of praise are expressed most lucidly, not by uncertain signs or things gathered here and there, not in a metaphorical manner of speaking, not by an exposition long and laboriously devised, not by a forced interpretation of words; but by the simple manner itself of the Sacred Scriptures and the bare narration of the history.

For the common dignity of Jesus' parents is repeated twice when the Evangelist says: "When his parents went up to Jerusalem" [cf. Luke 2:41–42]; and again: "And his parents knew it not" [2:43];

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and again: "Your father and I have been seeking you sorrowing" [2:48].

Equality in the same not knowing is attributed to Joseph and the most blessed Virgin when it is said: "And his parents knew it not." So Joseph and Mary did not know that Jesus had remained in Jerusalem. Likewise they did not know whether he was in the company or not; but each supposed what was not so: Mary thinking that he was in the company of the men with Joseph, Joseph supposing that he was in the band of women with Mary his mother. Nor is this not knowing to be imputed as a fault, since it came about neither through a failure of care nor through imprudence: for they watched over the care of the divine child with the highest charity, all their zeal and all their mind. It was therefore God's will that, amid their highest care for the Son of God, now a boy, they should lose that same son, so that from his absence the glory of God, the merit of the parents and the most lofty counsel of divine providence might all be made evident together. The darkness of this not knowing, then, was like the darkness of summer nights, which, in the absence of the sun, supplies dew to the things that grow from the earth, by which they are nourished, put forth leaves and bear more and more fruit. To not know, then, is sometimes a merit, not a fault; as is to be anathema from Christ for one's brethren [Romans 9:3], for his glory, at the command of the divine will. And when it is said, "And they understood not

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the word that he spoke to them" [2:50], this indeed favors our purpose, but needs a deeper explanation.

The third kind of praise is the anxiety of a like labor, as the Evangelist says: "They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance; and not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple" [2:44–46]. And a little further on the divine mother, expressing the anxiety of their common sorrow, said: "Behold, your father and I have been seeking you sorrowing." Equal labor, equal sorrow, equal care flowed from a like charity.

The fourth kind of praise is the gladness of one goal. For seeking Jesus by different paths but with one affection, they found him together. Hence the Evangelist says: "And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors" [2:46]. Those who seek Jesus equally and find him equally are worthy of equal praise. Do not, I beg, refuse an allegory here for a moment. The journey, the affection, the labor are the various increases of the virtues, by which journey we make our way to God, as the Lord said to Abraham: "Walk before me" [Genesis 17:1]. The goal is the glory of God, which God has prepared for those who love him [1 Corinthians 2:9]. Hence it was said to Abraham by the Lord: "I am your reward exceeding great" [Genesis 15:1]. So by the allegorical sense let us argue that Joseph, together with the Blessed Virgin, found Christ with those above, the Virgin herself

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going before; which her speech alone in the Gospel announces to us, when she says: "Son, why have you done so to us?" [2:48]. And rightly this joy of the glad goal came after three days, because this fourth kind of the same praise is found after the third. But enough of this.

The fifth kind of equal praise is the honor of the same answer. "How is it," he said, "that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" [2:49]. By this answer Jesus venerates Joseph and the Virgin with the common dignity of parent. "And how is it," he says, "that you sought me, O my father and my mother?" This is a singular passage of the Gospel, from which we surmise that Christ always addressed St. Joseph by the name of parent. And the most blessed Virgin hints at this manner of Christ's speech more expressly when she says, "Behold, your father and I." She called Joseph husband, but Jesus called him father. The name of spouse was familiar to the Virgin, but to Christ the word "parent" was constant. Therefore the Virgin, following the custom of Christ's familiar speech, said: "Behold, your father and I have been seeking you sorrowing."

There follows the sixth kind of praise, which is called the delight of one journey. "And he went down with them," says the Evangelist, "and came to Nazareth" [2:51]. Think, once the author of joy was found, once the heavenly boy was found, once God himself was found, with what joys, with what delight of mind

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and with what words they rejoiced, exulted and leaped for joy as they walked and returned home. The Virgin held the boy's right hand, Joseph his left, as if fearful lest they lose him again. And if they did not fear his loss, at least they enjoyed his presence, which they had lacked for three days. And perhaps, for the greatness of their sorrow, one day had been to them as a thousand. Imagine that the sun of this visible world had not risen for two or three days, so that mortals had seen no light but that of night, as the poet relates, saying, "And the impious ages feared eternal night" [Virgil, *Georgics* 1.468]: on the third day, then, what do we believe men's thoughts, fears, sighs and anxieties would be? What prayers, I ask, what tears, what voices, what cries would rise to heaven? Jesus, a boy of twelve years, was dearer, more delightful and more pleasing to his divine parents than the sensible sun, since they held with more than certainty that he was the creator of the sun itself. When he was lost, then, how much do we believe they grieved, especially on the third day! When they saw him, with how great delight do we judge they were filled alike! The same, then, was the delight of the one journey, the same exultation, the same rejoicing of mind.

Finally, the last of the praises we have set down is the sublimity of equal obedience. This argues that St. Joseph was of a greater dignity than any human minds can devise. For who can

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understand the majesty of him who commanded God, and to whom God himself was subject? They are of dull mind who [deny] that the gifts granted by God to Joseph are special, arguing the highest holiness, innocence, charity and glory. "And he was subject to them," says the Evangelist [2:51].

But here it is asked: this subjection was either public only, or domestic and hidden only, or both, which that act of obedience done before the doctors compels us to assert, when, leaving them, he went down with his parents as one subject to them. If, then, it was open and public, why was it not made known to us? Why were those acts not expressed in the Sacred Scriptures, so that we might take a rule of life from them? But so great was these parents' veneration of their son Jesus that his acts of obedience were of the most lofty order. Human understanding would not have grasped them, because it is without such charity. But if anyone is fervent with the Holy Spirit, he will perceive very many things that cannot fittingly be expressed in a series of words. We confess that angel obeys angel among those above, and we do not know the manner, because the acts of that obedience are of another order than ours. The understanding, love and reverence of Joseph and of the most blessed Virgin, and the divinity alone in Christ, which had chosen them as parents, affirm these inexplicable things to us, cry them out and show them more clearly than the sun. They are among

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those of which John the Evangelist writes: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" [John 21:25]. It is not to be wondered at, then, if things inexplicable to the world were not written, since no mortal could imitate them either. But what can be imitated was committed to writing: "And he was subject to them," says the Evangelist.

But since we, stammering, strive to echo the lofty things of God, let a man of excellent mind and Catholic soul draw near to the deep heart [Psalm 63:7], and enter the inner rooms of the house of Christ, which the boy, the adolescent and the young man Jesus inhabited, obedient to Joseph and the Virgin Mother; let him, bright with faith, climb its threshold. Let him imagine Christ now speaking to his parents, now seated at table, sometimes helping them at their work, now lying in bed or rising, walking about, sitting with his parents and speaking to them; let him examine each thing, never unmindful that it is done by a divine Person; and he will judge that I have indeed touched the house, but cannot express its inner rooms; and he will not doubt that those who think otherwise are blind.

Chapter XV. The Gift of St. Joseph's Special Love for Christ

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That Joseph loved Christ, who is God, with a love with which no one has ever loved a son or a friend, reason compels us to assert, his works persuade us, and the Catholic mind, enlightened by the inner spirit, believes, affirms and proclaims.

First, all things desire God, as holy theologians prove; and the more God is known, the more he is loved. But Joseph knew Christ, true God, perfectly according to the state of mortal man. Therefore he loved him with an ineffable love.

Second, the beauty of a son kindles the love of a loving father. But Joseph beheld, embraced and kissed Christ, beautiful above the sons of men, on whose lips grace was poured out [Psalm 44:3]. Therefore he loved him with an unimaginable love.

Third, the hope that a son will become a great man vehemently increases a father's love. But Joseph believed with living faith that Christ was true God, and hoped, according to the angelic promises, that he would be the Savior of the world. Therefore he loved him most vehemently.

Fourth, Abraham was a figure of Joseph, Isaac of Christ. But Abraham loved Isaac with a special love. So likewise Joseph loved Christ.

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Fifth, Solomon was loved by his father, who knew that he would be king after him and that he prefigured Christ. Therefore Joseph too, who believed greater things of Christ, loved Christ with a special love.

Sixth, Joseph always served Christ and his mother, and faithfully, avoiding no danger and fleeing no labors. Therefore his love for Christ was special. "For love, if it exists," says Gregory, "works great things; and the greater they are, the greater it is"; and "greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for another" [John 15:13]. We believe that St. Joseph did all these things most ardently for Christ.

Enter into your heart, O faithful one, and consider most carefully that Joseph desired the coming of Christ no less than the ancient fathers longed for it, saying: "O that you would rend the heavens and come down!" [Isaiah 64:1]. "Do you think I shall last? Do you think I shall see? O, if that birth might find me!" Kindled with equal desires and an ineffable ardor, Joseph longed to see the infant Jesus. And when he came forth from the womb of the Virgin Mother, and was seen and adored by Joseph, he wounded his heart with a scar of eternal wounding that would never fade. This the way of the divine goodness without doubt teaches us he

did, for it wounds and kindles those who draw near to it. And from that hour on we do not doubt that Joseph put on the new man. He who before was pure and holy was thenceforth purer

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and holier. O how often Joseph carried the infant Jesus in his arms, languishing with love of him! O how often, when Jesus was now speaking and showing reason, Joseph said to him: "What do you ask of me, O my son? O immortal God, nod, bid, command, for he whom you order to be thought your father exults and glories in being your servant. Who will not love you, most beautiful, most wise, most strong, most powerful, most loving? For you are true God. You are the wisdom of the Father. You are the brightness of glory [Hebrews 1:3]. You are the salvation of the human race. I adore you, O my son. I love you, and I long to be loved by you. Receive the service which I strive to render to you and to your most holy mother. Where I, mortal and weak, fail, deign to grant [what is lacking]. O sweet consolation! O fountain of love, my soul has melted in you [Song of Songs 5:6] for the sweetness of your love." With such words of most vehement love the most sweet voice of Joseph[1] resounded, and his face seemed more joyful. Therefore there is no doubt at all that he loved Christ with a special and unimaginable love. Grant one intent on Christ Jesus the Lord, loving him; grant one who longs for him: and he will declare that all these things are clearer than light, needing no proof, but the sweet meditation of a lover.

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[1] The first edition has "of Jesus" (Editor).

The Third Part

Prooemium to the Third Part

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Meanwhile, borne on by a favoring wind, and now gazing at sky on every side and sky everywhere, adorned most richly with the shining stars of the gifts of the divine Joseph, let us follow, as from the stern, the most glorious gifts of his blessings. Although our little boat would hardly dare to carry the powers of so great a majesty safely through the raging sea and the roaring rocks, yet with the sparks of a great spirit it does not refuse to overcome fortune and the steep waves; it attempts, it tries, it strives.

Moreover, when you consider whether talent avails, and whether what we read as said by Libanius the sophist is not idle: "To those who are so minded, things are wont to turn out as they wish", a teaching which the heavenly Scriptures show to be by no means doubtful when they say, "Those who in the morning watch for me shall find me" [Proverbs 8:17], then our rather bold hope is not to be judged rashness in any way. With a small oarage indeed we run through the harsh realms of Thetis; but let the burning hand of an untiring mind spring forth, while it drives the prow over the sea, and let it go on the more boldly against it, wherever fortune shall allow me.

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The breath of the power on high will be given, by which at last, having passed through the great perils of the sea, the first way of salvation may be opened to me from this volume.

But we are obliged to say a very few things beforehand about the blessing which the Sacred Volumes repeat so often, so that what is to be said may be understood more clearly than light. St. Thomas Aquinas, our own, whose angelic teachings we always strive to follow, says in the First Part, question 72: "The blessing of God signifies the conferring and multiplying of his gifts." Wherefore it is one thing for God to bless, another to bless God, another to speak blessing to God. For God's blessing is to produce good in created things, or to bring good things into being. To bless God is to do good and to be exercised in his justifications. But to speak blessing to God is to confess his praises. "It is good," says the prophet, "to give praise to the Lord, and to sing to your name, O Most High" [Psalm 91:2]. Man's blessing, therefore, is the acknowledgment of the gifts of God and of his majesty. Many and various blessings of the immortal God are read in the Sacred Books, by which the fathers of the Old and New Testament excelled; and these the most blessed soul of Joseph alone possessed together, so that he might be the spouse of the Queen of heaven and be thought the not unrenowned father of the Son of God. When the treasury of the blessings has been opened, therefore, we shall wonder more and more at the most lofty dignity

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of Joseph's holiness, we shall extol it with praises, and we shall strive to make it known to all the bounds of the empire of the Church militant, praising the name of the Lord. But now let us enter the bounds of this sacred undertaking.

Chapter I. On the Gifts of the Blessings in General, and of the Blessing of the Sabbath Day

There is no doubt at all that each of the blessings expressed in Sacred Scripture was given to Joseph from heaven by God, if we consider as attentively as possible the end of the Holy Scriptures, his most holy way of life, and also each of his heavenly gifts. The end of the Sacred Scriptures is Christ, for the Lord says: "For they wrote of me" [John 5:46]. The excellence of a way of life lies in its likeness to the same Christ. The gifts

of men, too, receive their glorious dignity from their end, which is eternal life. Let us search the Scriptures, then, and set before the eye of the mind whatever blessings there are, and it will become plain to us that St. Joseph received the rich fruits of them all.

"And God blessed the seventh day, because in it he had rested from all the work which he had done" [Genesis 2:3]. O how often, Jesus, you rested in Joseph's lap, holding his neck in your arms, clinging to his breast and shoulders! God therefore rested in Joseph bodily.

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He rested spiritually through the gift of sanctifying grace. He rested in trust, betrothing his mother to him. He rested in care, calling him father. He rested in gladness, living by his labors. Truly Joseph is that great Sabbath day on which the glorious God rested from all the work which he had done.

But since we strive to argue from what is handed down in the faith in order to prove the dignity of Joseph, let those know that they will be ridiculous and weak of wit who do not contemplate such things in the Divine Scriptures. And this I would say to the studious. For the unlearned who talk are not to be greatly regarded, lest the arrows of children become our wounds [cf. Psalm 63:8]. Now, then, let us recount the blessings of the fathers of the Old Testament, which proclaim with a heavenly voice the gifts of Joseph.

Chapter II. On the Gifts of the Blessings of Our First Parents

It is written in Genesis, chapter 2 [rather, 1:28], that God blessed our first parents in these words: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth." A threefold gift is signified in this blessing: of fruitfulness, of subjection, and of dominion,

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which, according to the allegorical sense, shone forth most gloriously in Joseph. For the doctors expound the earth as the Blessed Virgin; therefore it will not be absurd to understand Adam as Joseph. He, a virgin, rejoiced in the fruitfulness of his virgin spouse before and after childbirth, and in her fruit, whose fragrance gladdened heaven, took away the reproach of barrenness from the whole world, and brought glory worthy of fruitful works. He had the same earth, that is, the Blessed Virgin, subject to him, because he was her true husband and was set over her who was the Lady of the angels. By this headship Joseph ruled over his own thoughts, which are tossed through the ocean storms of this world; he was set over the unstable affections that follow human nature, and, governing well the senses of the body, he subjected them as the animals of the earth. By this office of rule Joseph overcame those who hold the kingdoms of the underworld; he had the angels of heaven serving him, and over the animals, that is, over men who do not use reason, he was set by his holiness. "The first man, Adam, was of the earth, earthly; the second from heaven, heavenly" [1 Corinthians 15:47]. Adam was set over the earthly paradise; Joseph was set over Christ God, by whom paradise was made; he was likewise set over the most Blessed Virgin, who was prefigured in that same earthly paradise. Adam was cast out of paradise because of sin; Joseph received greater things day by day, because of the increase of grace. Adam was the stumbling block of the whole

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commonwealth of mankind; Joseph, through Jesus his son, as he was thought to be, took away that stain and every deformity[1]. Adam sinned because of his wife; because of his spouse Joseph received from God a dignity and grace unknown to mortals. Adam found death; Joseph nourished Christ, who is life. Adam's wife was taken from his side; to Joseph the Queen of the world was joined in marriage. Adam knew and saw from afar the great sacrament of Christ and the Church [Ephesians 5:32]; Joseph not only understood Christ, but also saw, fed and nourished him, and he merited to have as his spouse the most Blessed Virgin, patroness of

the holy Church.

[1] The first edition reads "deformem", for which we have adopted "deformitatem", unless you find something better (Editor).

Chapter III. On the Gift of the Blessing of Noah

God also blessed Noah, as we read in Genesis 9, and his sons, and said to them: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth" [Genesis 9:1], and much else like the blessing of Adam and Eve. But two things are added there which we must not pass over drily.

The first is when the Lord says: "As the green herbs

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have I delivered them all to you: saving that flesh with blood you shall not eat" [Genesis 9:3–4]. The earth is the most Blessed Virgin. The earth is also Sacred Scripture, in which things that preserve life spring up. According to the interpretation of the allegorical sense, God indeed delivered spiritual goods to St. Joseph, saving that he did not eat the flesh of Christ Jesus with the blood, as is now done in the Church. For the Body of Christ which he carried in his arms he never swallowed with his mouth, nor did he drink the Blood; for St. Joseph died before the institution of the Sacrament of the Altar. But the other animals he ate with a sound palate. For he understood the prophets, he penetrated the psalms, and he was not ignorant of the riddles of the patriarchs, since the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin, and Christ himself, the greatest, interpreted them. O how often, Joseph, whether at home or on a journey, the most Blessed Virgin cooked the meats of the prophets and set them before her spouse to eat, when she interpreted their sayings by her own spirit! But he did not eat flesh with blood, for God so willed, who wished Joseph to observe the things of the Law.

The second is when the Lord said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I give between me and you. I will set my bow in the clouds of heaven, and it shall be the sign between me and the earth. And when I shall cover the sky with clouds, my bow shall appear in the clouds. And I will remember my covenant which I made with you, and with

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every living soul that quickens flesh; and there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh" [Genesis 9:12–15].

For a clearer understanding of these words, following the allegorical sense, it must be recalled that in St. Joseph's time the devil had covered the whole earth with the waters of ignorance, of unbelief and of vanity. For the Romans, princes of almost the whole world, were most empty idolaters; and the Jews, because of their sins, were found exceedingly ungrateful to God. For this reason they lived under the rule of unbelievers, and in the end they fastened Christ to the cross. There were, however, a few, as is very reasonable, who, keeping the natural law in faith in divine providence, or living under the Law of Moses in faith in the Christ who was to come, merited to be saved. These were like Noah, who, as Josephus says, continually besought the Lord not to destroy the whole earth again with the waters of a flood. For they besought and awaited the coming of the Lord in the flesh, according to the word of the prophet: "O that you would rend the heavens and come down" [Isaiah 64:1].

Secondly, it must be noted that the rainbow signifies Christ, as St. Thomas teaches especially in the third Quodlibet, question 14, article 1. And no one doubts that clouds in the Divine Scriptures indicate the saints. For though they are earthly in body, yet in mind they are raised above earthly things, and by their conduct, words and writings they temper the heat of earthly things.

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They also give earthly men the power to bud forth. By these things it is shown that clouds most fittingly signify the saints. Who is found so blind and so little discerning that, having noted these things, he does not see that the gift of this blessing of Noah shone forth more and more in St. Joseph? In their time the most Blessed Virgin and Joseph were clouds, and by their excellence higher than the other clouds, and in them Christ the Rainbow was set. Once this has been seen, a universal flood is no longer to be feared, for he himself says: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" [Matthew 28:20]. St. Joseph, therefore, obtained the gift of the blessing of Noah. And lest you waver in these things, O reader, and so that even as one slow to believe you may reach unveiled the height of St. Joseph's supreme dignity, remember that by the common opinion of the doctors the ark of Noah signifies the Blessed Virgin: therefore Joseph likewise was a figure of Noah. And since the thing figured flourishes with a greater gift than the figure, he is slothful and sick in understanding who does not believe that the blessing given by God to Noah is found more perfectly in the heart of St. Joseph.

Chapter IV. On the Gift of the Blessing of Jacob

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We read in Genesis, chapter 27, that Isaac, taught by the Holy Spirit, blessed his son Jacob in these words: "God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine and oil. And let peoples serve you, and tribes worship you. Be lord of your brethren, and let your mother's children bow down before you. Cursed be he that curses you; and let him that blesses you be filled with blessings" [Genesis 27:28–29].

This blessing contains five things: abundance of necessities, dignity of goods, the favor of peoples, the removal of evils, and the bestowal of good things.

For a deeper understanding of the first blessing, according to the allegorical sense, remember that in Sacred Scripture Christ is signified by the words dew and rain, for the Psalmist says: "He shall come down like rain upon the fleece" [Psalm 71:6], and "as the dew of Hermon" [Psalm 132:3]. The Church likewise sings: "He shall come down like dew into the womb of the Virgin." We recalled above, too, that the earth signifies the most blessed Queen of the world, whose fatness was humility in temporal things, which the Lord regarded [Luke 1:48]. Christ is also the corn from which bread is made in the Church, of which it is likewise said in the psalm: "By

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the fruit of their corn and oil they are multiplied" [Psalm 4:8]. He himself is the wine of which it is written: "Drink, O friends, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved" [Song of Songs 5:1].

Again, the dew of heaven is the grace of contemplation; the fatness of the earth, the grace of action: from these come the corn of faith and the wine of hope that gladdens the heart, as Paul teaches in Romans 12: "Rejoicing in hope" [Romans 12:12]. Lastly, there flows the oil of charity. And by the things mentioned are also understood whatever things are of use to the body. It is plain that the divine Joseph enjoyed all of these.

Note, however, that Joseph did not have an abundance of bread, but of corn. For Christ was not yet bread, but corn to be ground by the sufferings inflicted by the Jews. That is why Christ, before his Passion, called himself a grain of wheat, saying: "Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remains alone" (John 12) [John 12:24]. The second blessing, which we have called the dignity of goods, is set forth in these words: "Let peoples serve you, and tribes worship you. Be lord of your brethren." The peoples are the Gentiles, the tribes the Jews, the brethren the Christians. Again, the peoples are the common folk of the Jews, the tribes their heads, the brethren the patriarchs and prophets. The Gentiles who were called to the faith served St. Joseph by showing him honors, by bestowing gifts, by writing books. Jews

and Christians alike

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venerated blessed Joseph as the spouse and chief reverencer of the most Blessed Virgin, as the putative father of the Savior, and as his most loving nourisher. Lastly, among the patriarchs and prophets Joseph is held as lord, because of his open vision (for many kings and prophets desired to see what Joseph saw, and did not see it [cf. Luke 10:24]), because of his supreme perfection, and because of his most glorious title. For he was called the father of God, and he was the spouse of the Queen of the world.

The third blessing is indicated by these words: "And let your mother's children bow down before you." These are beyond doubt the Jews who believe in Christ, and the nations living in Syria and the eastern regions, who have been accustomed to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph with solemnities and great joy. And now in the western regions the Holy Spirit has sown in the minds of the peoples that they should show singular honors to St. Joseph. By this veneration, we do not doubt, many evils are removed from the Catholic faith, and the faithful are endowed with many good things, through the merits and prayers of most holy Joseph. Bless, therefore, O peoples, St. Joseph, that you may be filled with blessings.

And indeed, when the foregoing has been noted even lightly, it is clearer than light that the excellence of the five blessings of Jacob was found in blessed Joseph. Nor are the five blessings, comprised under a threefold number, less explained thereby; rather they are united more

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and more, so that by sharing their rays they shine forth exceedingly gloriously.

Chapter V. On the Gifts of the Blessings of Each of the Sons of Jacob

The blessings of the twelve sons of Jacob recounted in Sacred Scripture, in Genesis chapter 49, are famous, and they indicate the properties of the virtues, which are truly blessings. But although all are contained under the title of blessing, some of them are prophecies, and rather curses than blessings. Let us therefore pursue only those that are truly blessings.

It is said in Genesis 49: "Juda, your brethren shall praise you; your hand shall be on the necks of your enemies. The sons of your father shall bow down to you. Juda is a lion's whelp. To the prey, my son, you are gone up. Resting you have couched as a lion, and as a lioness: who shall rouse him? The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent; and he shall be the expectation of nations, tying his foal to the vineyard, and his ass, O my son, to the vine; he shall wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of the grape. His eyes are more beautiful than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk" [Genesis 49:8–12].

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By these words the properties of charity are fittingly signified. For by Juda charity is understood. And charity is the most worthy of the virtues: because of its priority, since it is the greatest [1 Corinthians 13:13]; because of its power, since it informs the others; and because of its usefulness. For it crushes vices, extinguishes sensuality, conquers demons, joins to Christ, and unites to the true and living members of holy Mother Church: all of which you will find contained in a magnificent sense in this blessing, if you meditate on it more attentively. And since the charity of most holy Joseph was great, the rich properties of this blessing also shone forth in him. Add that, according to the literal sense of that blessing, the blessing more glorious than the others is the birth of the Christ who was to come, the fruit of which no one of the tribe of Juda received more abundantly, more joyfully, or more sweetly than Joseph. The blessing of Juda, therefore, is found more sublime and more fruitful in Joseph.

Next comes Zabulon, by whom, as the Master of Saint-Amour expounds, zeal for souls is signified, whose properties are to hate sinners, to appease God, to bear evils patiently, to live gently among the wicked, and to receive from God interior illumination and spiritual gifts: all of which you will understand to be signified mystically when Jacob says: "Zabulon shall dwell on the seashore" [Genesis 49:13], and the rest. And in most innocent Joseph, the nourisher of Christ,

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the Victim of the whole world, even amid persecutions, whom the angels did not cease to admonish in what was needful, no one has any room left to doubt that the gift of this blessing was bestowed most gloriously.

Another son of Jacob was Issachar, by whom, as the Gloss says, interior joy is signified. His blessing, considered more deeply, expresses the properties of that interior joy.

The first is that interior joy shuts out false delight; the second, that it crushes vain disturbance; the third is the reward of labors; the fourth, that it steadies the mind; the fifth, that it strengthens the soul; the sixth, that it humbles man; the seventh, that it lifts the soul to suspension [cf. Job 7:15]; the eighth, that it looks upon the land [cf. Genesis 49:15]; the ninth, that it feels rest; the tenth, that it ascribes and renders glory to God.

It has pleased me to enumerate these properties more distinctly, because, with the exception of the most Blessed Virgin, I would believe that no mortal rejoiced with so great a degree of interior joy as St. Joseph, because of the heavenly presence of the Virgin his wife, because of the infancy and boyhood of Christ, and because of the singular guardianship of the angels. But, devout soul, turning to interior things and meditating on these, you will always think higher things of St. Joseph than those which we sound out with stammering, and do not unfold in writing; but we show that the will to express them is present. For my mind thinks the greatest things of St. Joseph, and

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believes them most surely; but it leaves them to be contemplated by those better disposed, and refers them to others to be distinguished; it by no means promises to explain them fully.

There follows the blessing of Dan, set forth in these words: "Dan shall judge his people, like another tribe in Israel" [Genesis 49:16]. The Gloss: "By the office of Dan we lay hold of, reprove, condemn and chastise enticing thoughts. For rightly is he called Dan, that is, judgment." To one who considers what we wrote above about the most lofty thought of St. Joseph, it is plain how very gloriously he obtained the fruit of this blessing. This is the Dan who at the future judgment is to judge the people of Israel, with a judgment of confession, of comparison and of approval. Surely no father of the Old Testament will reprove the tribes of Israel for greater ingratitude than Joseph, since they so cruelly crucified the Savior of the world, who was nourished by him among the Jews. He himself too, with his spouse, suffered countless distresses from the Jews. Rightly, then, is the blessing of Dan to be ascribed to St. Joseph.

The blessing of Gad is this: "Gad, being girded, shall fight before him, and he himself shall be girded backward" [Genesis 49:19]. Those who enter into battle against piety may rightly be said to be girded backward. Joseph, then, waging a just war against the tyrants who stood up against the Lord and against his Christ [Psalm 2:2], fighting with prudence, by the divine

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counsel seeking foreign lands and dwelling humbly among strangers, proved to be another Gad.

There follows the blessing of Naphtali: "Naphtali, a hart let loose, giving words of beauty" [Genesis 49:21]. From the Gloss it is gathered that by Naphtali is understood the contemplation of invisible things through visible ones, together with teaching. For the hart, raised up from the earth and yet not leaving the earth, most fittingly suggests that kind of contemplation.

Consider that, after his wife, Joseph is the first to whom this blessing belongs in the highest degree. For since God was made man so that through a man we might know God, and the consideration of visible nature might draw us to invisible things, there is no doubt that the most blessed Queen of the world and Joseph obtained the fruit of this blessing: with whom the same God made man dwelt, by whom he was nourished, and whom, after the manner of speech, he first consoled. O most blessed Joseph, if you are a hart, how do you give words of beauty? For harts have no speech. But you speak in the way in which you are described as a hart. You are a hart by the imitation of the work, but you give words by the blessing of contemplation. You are truly for us a day uttering words of beauty [cf. Psalm 18:3].

How beautiful are your words, O blessed father, for with you he learned to speak of whom it is written: "Grace is poured abroad in your lips: therefore has God blessed you for ever" [Psalm 44:3]. He, I say, who makes the tongues

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of infants eloquent [Wisdom 10:21], resting in your arms and clinging to your breast, began to speak. Wherefore you may rightly be called Naphtali, giving words of beauty.

But now we must speak of the blessing of Asher, which is set forth in these words: "Asher, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties to kings" [Genesis 49:20]. Asher is interpreted "court". The bread is Christ, for he himself says: "I am the living bread" [John 6:51]; of whom it is likewise said in Psalm 44: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows" [Psalm 44:8]. Wherefore the dignity of this blessing belongs very fittingly to St. Joseph. For he was the court of the most Blessed Virgin, whose majesty the gate of the temple called Beautiful signifies [Acts 3:2]. Christ likewise, the fat bread, now yields dainties to kings. Hence the Gloss says: "O what is his bread! O what are his dainties, which savor only to such kings! Surely these kings have now gone in to the wedding; they now sit at that eternal banquet, and now they feed on that bread of angels in eternal delights; now they are inebriated with the torrent of pleasure [Psalm 35:9], and still they hunger insatiably for the dainties of Asher." Thus the Gloss. Beautifully, then, does the blessing of Asher belong to St. Joseph.

Now we ought to speak of the blessing of Joseph the son of Jacob, had enough not been said above by the mouth of St. Bernard.

Therefore, last of all, we must treat of the blessing of Benjamin, set forth in these words:

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"Benjamin, a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil" [Genesis 49:27]. This blessing contains three things. The first is the rescue of all the lost from guilt; the second, the rejoicing in grace over that rescue; the third, the rejoicing of each and all in glory. And since these three things were accomplished by the power of Christ, their fruit also is owed in a special way to St. Joseph, because he was his constant nourisher, and because he was the chief lover and venerator of him and of the things done by him. By these things, then, it becomes plain that the blessings of the sons of Jacob truly belong to St. Joseph.

These things will become clearer to one who contemplates more loftily that Christ was prefigured by the patriarchs, signified in their deeds, and covered by every letter of Sacred Scripture. When you have stripped it of its veil, you will behold the son of the most Blessed Virgin and of Joseph, as he was thought to be. Therefore this is expressed by that same letter, by the will of God, who made the letter, and who joined to himself St. Joseph, holy above all the men of the world.

Chapter VI. On the Gifts of the Two Blessings of Balaam

We read in Numbers, chapters 23 and 24, that Balak, king of the Moabites, summoned Balaam through messengers to curse the people of Israel, who were about to fight

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against him. But he, moved by the Spirit of God, four times did not curse them, but blessed them.

The first blessing regarded the present state of the people of Israel at that time; the second, its past; the third, its future; and the fourth expressed the cause of the blessings rather than a new blessing. The first, then, is expressed in these words, Numbers 23: "From the top of the rocks I shall see him, and from the hills I shall consider him. The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and know the number of the stock of Israel? Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to theirs" [Numbers 23:9–10]. This blessing sets forth, in the mystical sense, the happy life of a most perfect man, which has five conditions.

The first is loftiness of way of life. And this is twofold: either by imitation of the angels, whence he says, "From the top of the rocks"; or by the example of holy men, who are customarily called hills in the Divine Scriptures. And this way of life is strengthened and perfected by the contemplation of God; therefore there follows, "I shall consider him."

The second condition is separation from the wicked, whether they be demons or men. This is set down where it says, "The people shall dwell alone."

The third condition of the most perfect life is perfection of actions, whether interior or exterior. For exterior actions are always troubled by the dust of earthly things,

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according to the Savior's word: "Martha, Martha, you are careful and are troubled about many things" [Luke 10:41]. But interior action, clear and one, brings forth many, according to the psalm: "Day to day utters speech" [Psalm 18:3]. And this is more rightly signified by the name Israel, the exterior by Jacob. Hence it is said: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and know the number of the stock of Israel?"

Hence the fourth condition is the multiplication of the seed, that is, of the spirit, as has been declared.

The fifth is rest at the end. And this is twofold: a good death, and beatification. Wherefore there follows: "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to theirs."

These blessings belong most excellently to St. Joseph. For he was of an angelic way of life, because of his godlike virtue, his freedom from sin, and his heavenly virginity. For to live in the flesh beyond the flesh is not human but angelic. And the second necessarily accompanies the first. Excellence of actions, likewise, both interior and exterior, was found in St. Joseph, because of his life with Christ and the Blessed Virgin, because of his singular love for them, and because of his faithful service. This too was followed by the fourth, which is the multiplication of spirits, by which he attained an angelic, virginal and divine familiarity. At last he rested in a happy

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end, because of the efficacy of his most holy life, because of the presence of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and because of his true patience in sickness. By these things it is plain that St. Joseph obtained more glorious fruits of the first blessing of Balaam than the people of Israel itself.

The second blessing is set forth in these words, Numbers chapter 23: "There is no idol in Jacob, neither is there an image god to be seen in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the sound of the victory of the king in him. God has brought him out of Egypt, whose strength is like to the rhinoceros. There is no soothsaying in Jacob, nor divination in Israel. In their times it shall be told to Jacob and to Israel what God

has wrought. Behold, the people shall rise up as a lioness, and shall lift itself up as a lion; it shall not lie down till it devour the prey, and drink the blood of the slain" [Numbers 23:21–24]. This blessing, in the allegorical sense, belongs magnificently to St. Joseph. It contains many parts, of which we must speak one by one.

The first is sincere worship of God: and St. Joseph was never stained by idolatry.

The second is the divine presence; therefore it is fittingly said, "The Lord his God is with him," and in ways wonderful and unaccustomed, to be revered even by the angels themselves. For God was with him as a son with his father, as an infant with his nourisher, as a subject with his superior.

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The third is knowledge of the deeds of God, whence there is added: "And the sound of the victory of the king in him." This victory was that by which Christ triumphed over the devil, as the Lord says: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" [John 12:31]. Its sound was heard by Joseph through a deep knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, through the revelation of the angels, and through the sight and touch of the outward senses.

The fourth is divine assistance in tribulations, which Joseph experienced in the flight from the face of Herod, in the stay in Egypt, and in the return to the land of Israel. Therefore there follows: "Whose strength is like to the rhinoceros." For this animal, endowed by nature with one horn on its forehead, is found to be very strong, surpassing the other four-footed beasts.

The fifth is supreme purity of heart, by which he trusted in the Lord with all the desires of his soul, despising those aids which are opposed to the divine will. Joseph was in no way anxious about future things, except insofar as they depended on the clear will of God. But most mortals are accustomed to labor under this fault: because, laden with crimes, they seek the help of strange gods. In their ignorance they worship idols, because they think the true God their enemy. Hence among them flourish the worship of gold, the pride of an arrogant mind, and delight in earthly things. They wander through curious teachings so as to be able to know the future concerning themselves. But with the divine

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Joseph there was never an idol, for he desired nothing earthly except according to God's will. He abhorred soothsaying, for he believed with unshaken mind that his God has care of all things. And since he knew the same immortal God to be the maker, governor and provider of all things, he rightly trampled divinations underfoot.

The sixth is a sure knowledge of his own virtues. For a fuller understanding of this it must be noted that the knowledge of spiritual things which is had by the common way of faith, and not through a singular elevation or illumination of the mind particularly from God, the knowledge, I say, of spiritual things which do not concern human salvation, is gained over a long succession of times, so that faith may have its place and those things may be believed more surely; as was evident in the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, in the manner of the incarnation of the Word of God, in the knowledge of the most lofty dignity of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the authority of the Roman Pontiff. For if the infant Church had been a searcher into such great mysteries, it might perhaps have been overwhelmed by the glory [cf. Proverbs 25:27]. Therefore that which was enough at that time sufficed for the human commonwealth, with some knowledge of the inner manner. The same has happened concerning the excellence of the holiness of the divine Joseph. For it lay hidden from the faithful, content with the name of spouse of the Blessed Virgin, nourisher of the Son of God, and his putative father. In these, however, we can behold the manners of the height of that same holiness,

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at least with a vision mixed with darkness, that is, in general. But "in their times it shall be told to Jacob", that is, among the faithful devoted to the active life, "and to Israel", namely among contemplatives distinguished in talent and endowed with learning, "what God has wrought" in St. Joseph. And it is said rightly and thoughtfully, "in him", because the things done outside him became known along with the knowledge of the Word of God made flesh; but the things done in him, only in their own times, which are the last times, in which the holy Roman Church has consented that St. Joseph, spouse of the most Blessed Virgin, be venerated with public solemnities. I myself know volumes of men who, though simple, are nonetheless good; I have also seen men endowed with talent striving with all the zeal of their souls that, in their times, it may be told what was done by God in St. Joseph.

The last part will be the immense rejoicing that is to come in the Church militant over the sure knowledge of the holiness of the divine Joseph. For the Holy Spirit will not cease to move the hearts of the faithful, until the whole empire of the Church militant, rejoicing, honors the divine Joseph with new veneration, founds monasteries, and erects churches and altars in his honor. And these things are mystically designated by fitting images.

Chapter VII. On the Gifts of the Remaining Blessings of Balaam

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The third blessing of Balaam is expressed in these words, Numbers chapter 24: "How beautiful are your tabernacles, O Jacob, and your tents, O Israel! As woody valleys, as watered gardens near the rivers, as tabernacles which the Lord has pitched, as cedars by the waterside. Water shall flow out of his bucket, and his seed shall be in many waters. For Agag his king shall be removed, and his kingdom shall be taken away. God has brought him out of Egypt, whose strength is like to the rhinoceros. They shall devour the nations that are his enemies, and break their bones, and pierce them with arrows. Lying down he has slept as a lion, and as a lioness, whom none shall dare to rouse. He that blesses you shall also himself be blessed; he that curses you shall be reckoned accursed" [Numbers 24:5–9]. In these words is described the unspeakable blessing of the beauty of St. Joseph. For the various gifts that make up one holiness can be called beauty, a name the Holy Spirit often used in the Canticle. The first spiritual gift found in St. Joseph, then, is said to be the integrity of all the virtues. For the first thing that makes up bodily beauty is the integrity of the

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members; for things that lack some member are by that very fact deformed. And the integrity of all the virtues shone forth in blessed Joseph: on the side of the practical intellect, signified by Jacob; on the side of the speculative intellect, by Israel; on the side of the sensitive affection, which is rightly called a shady valley, because it always opposes the darkness of the flesh to the illumination of things above; on the side, lastly, of the intellective appetite, which is subject to God while it is delighted by heavenly watering; and on the side of God the giver, by whose right hand firmness and strength are found in the acts of the virtues, so that they may turn to the glory of their author.

The second thing that makes up bodily beauty is called the proportion of the members. And in the virtues this proportion is the excellence of the operations that proceed from them. For it is exceedingly shameful if from a great heap of virtues only slight operations proceed, even good ones, since a great fire is wont to give great heat. The works of the divine Joseph were most lofty, like the cedars of Lebanon, whose seed or fruit falls only into minds abounding in the gift of divine graces.

The last thing that makes up bodily beauty is brightness; for we are accustomed to call colored things beautiful. Christ the sun indeed shone in the works of St. Joseph, by reason of the time. This light was known in the failing of the kingdom of the Jews in Joseph's time;

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in the flight, too, the exile and the return from Egypt; and in the prudence and fortitude with which he kept the Son of God safe against the fury of persecuting kings. Hence it followed that Joseph's enemies and all their strength were devoured by the nations, namely the Romans. And the divine Joseph, dying, lay down as a most mighty lion, most fully armed in faith in Christ the Lion. None of the demons dared to disturb Joseph's rest, although he descended to the Limbo of the Fathers, because in the great power of God he announced the coming of the giant running the way [cf. Psalm 18:6] of the life of mortals. Lastly, the brightness of the knowledge of the dignity and fame of the divine Joseph will be great in the last times, in which he who curses him will himself be cursed with greater curses, because of the known majesty of the Son of God, who deigned to call Joseph father. And shall not he who blesses St. Joseph be filled with blessings? For it is impossible that one who blesses him who is most deserving, most loving and most powerful should not be filled with blessings.

Lastly, the fourth and final blessing of Balaam, which is rather the cause of blessing than a blessing, is the description of the coming of Christ, expressed in these words: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel" [Numbers 24:17], and the rest. We do not doubt at all that the excellence of St. Joseph has as its cause the incarnation of Christ and the marriage

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of the blessed Virgin. For in order to be fit for so great an office, Joseph received from above an incredible sum of the gifts of God.

Chapter VIII. On the Gifts of the Blessings Given by Moses to the People of Israel Keeping the Commandments of the Lord

The blessings of God given through Moses to the people of Israel keeping the commandments of the Lord are written in Deuteronomy, chapter 28: "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the droves of your herds, and the folds of your sheep. Blessed shall be your barns, and blessed your stores. Blessed shall you be coming in and going out. The Lord shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to fall down before your face; one way shall they come out against you, and seven ways shall they flee before you. The Lord will send forth a blessing upon your storehouses, and upon all the works of your hands; and he will bless you in the land that you shall receive. The Lord will raise you up to be a holy people to himself, as he swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in his ways. And all the people of the earth shall see that the name

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of the Lord is invoked upon you, and they shall fear you. The Lord will make you abound with all goods, with the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your cattle, and the fruit of your ground, which the Lord swore to your fathers that he would give you. The Lord will open his excellent treasure, the heaven, that it may give rain to your land in its season. And he will bless all the works of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, and shall not borrow of any one. And the Lord shall make you the head and not the tail; and you shall be always above, and not beneath" [Deuteronomy 28:3–13].

According to the mystical sense, these blessings shone forth in the divine Joseph. For he was blessed in the city, that is, in the soul, which is compared to a city. He was blessed in the field, to which the body is likened. He was blessed in the fruit of his womb, which is the capacity of the rational soul, and this through the begetting of the habits of all the virtues. He was blessed in his cattle and flocks, that is, in the excellent disposition of the interior and exterior senses. He was also blessed in Christ, who was the fruit of his ground,

that is, of the Blessed Virgin his wife. St. Joseph was likewise blessed in his barns, that is, in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with which he was filled for preserving, increasing and magnifying his spiritual life day by day. He was blessed in the coming in of tribulations, through patience, and in the going out,

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that is, the deliverance, through gladness. And Joseph's enemies fell before him through the crushing of their power, as is evident in the demons; and also through temporal punishment, as in the kings who persecuted him, whose downfall he saw and whose destruction he escaped. By one way, that is, the suggestion of the devil, they came against him, and, driven back by a manifold power, namely heavenly and earthly, which is likewise manifold, they went down vanquished to the underworld. After his enemies were vanquished, the divine Joseph, being at rest with the Queen of the world and with Christ God, received increase in his storehouses, that is, in the interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in the constant works of his hands, which ministered to Christ the immortal God. Therefore he was blessed in the land, that is, in the Blessed Virgin, whom he received as his wife. After these things, the Lord raised up St. Joseph to himself, to the honor of his name, as the head and special patron of the empire of the Church militant. Before the day of judgment, too, it shall come to pass that all peoples will know, venerate and adore the name of the Lord, and the great gifts which God himself placed in St. Joseph and willed to lie almost hidden for long ages. Wherefore the name of St. Joseph will abound with the gifts of all the goods of the earth. They will build temples in his honor, they will celebrate feasts, and the peoples will vow vows to him and pay them. For the Lord will open the ears of the heart's

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understanding, and great men will search out the interior gifts of God hidden in St. Joseph, and they will find a most excellent treasure, such as they did not find among the holy fathers of the Old Testament. And this will come about through a special illumination by the holy angels. Lastly, to the peoples who invoke St. Joseph he will give that same loan from heaven, and he himself, abiding in the majesty of his glory, will receive a loan from no mortal. In the calendars of the saints the name of St. Joseph will be sung, and he will no longer be in the tail, but at the head. For a principal and venerable feast will be made of him. For the Vicar of Christ on earth, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, will command that the feast of the putative father of Christ, the spouse of the Queen of the world, a most holy man, be celebrated in all the bounds of the empire of the Church militant. Wherefore he who in heaven was always above will not be beneath on earth. When all these things have been carefully noted, it becomes plain that the said blessings are found in St. Joseph as much more clearly as spiritual things are more excellent than earthly ones, and interior things than exterior.

These things require a mind not bound to custom, but one that uses the clear light of understanding. For a mind made bright with the clear light of understanding will not doubt that he whom the immortal God deigned to call father was adorned with unspeakable heavenly gifts.

Chapter IX. On the Gifts of the Blessings Given by Moses to the Sons of Israel

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After this we must look at the blessings given by Moses to the sons of Israel, as we read in Deuteronomy, chapter 33. He says to Reuben: "Let Reuben live and not die, and be he small in number" [Deuteronomy 33:6]. And the Gloss adds: "Most great in faith."

Four blessings are touched on here: the first is life through grace; the second, freedom from actual sin through innocence; the third is excellence of dignity through God's choice, which falls to few; the fourth is the majesty of faithfulness through the highest knowledge of the loftiest things. We do not doubt that these shone forth in the divine Joseph.

There follows the blessing of Judah: "Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him in unto his people. His hands shall fight for him, and he shall be his helper against his enemies" [Deuteronomy 33:7]. By these words, likewise, four blessings are indicated: the first is the hearing of prayers, by which it is signified that blessed Joseph will be a continual mediator between God and men; the second is the bringing in unto the people, by which it is indicated that he is the constant preserver of the elect in this world, unto his people, until he has brought them in; the third is the defense

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of himself in this world, against the devil, the flesh and the allurements of the world itself, through grace, and against tyrants through prudence; the fourth is the protection of others: of his own people, that it may receive in the flesh lesser evils for its blindness, that it may rise from its hardness and take away the veil from the Law of Moses [cf. 2 Corinthians 3:15–16], and at last know that Jesus is the true Messiah; and of the whole Christian people, a protection by help against the wrath of the Son of God, by intercession in gaining good things, and by example.

Next we must speak of the blessing of Levi, which is: "Levi, your perfection is from the holy man, whom you proved in the temptation and judged at the waters of contradiction; who has said to his father and to his mother: I do not know you; and to his brethren: I know you not; and they have not known their own children. These have kept your word, and observed your covenant. They shall set down your judgments, O Jacob, and your law, O Israel; and they shall put incense in your wrath, and holocaust upon your altar. Bless, O Lord, his strength, and receive the works of his hands. Strike the backs of his enemies, and let not them that hate him rise" [Deuteronomy 33:8–11].

Nine blessings are set down in these words: the first is perfection of life, where it says "perfection"; the second is loftiness of teaching, where it says "your"; the third is the rearing and keeping of Christ, where it says "from your holy man"; the fourth is the renunciation of all things, where it says "who has said to his father"; the fifth is the fulfillment of the commandments and

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the counsels, where it says "who keep your word"; the sixth is intercession for others, where it says "they shall put incense"; the seventh is glorying in suffering, where it says "Bless, O Lord, his strength"; the eighth is reward for works, where it says "receive the works of his hands"; the ninth is the destruction of enemies, where it says "Strike the backs".

All these shone forth most excellently in St. Joseph. For he was most perfect in life and most lofty in teaching; he nourished Christ; he kept true poverty of spirit and spurned all things that would unlawfully delight the senses; he fulfilled all the commandments and counsels; he is the common intercessor for others, as he was also the nourisher of the Savior; he bore sufferings with an even mind; he remains glorious among the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and by his intercession a great way is opened to us of overcoming the incitements of the demons, the flesh and the world.

There follows the blessing of Benjamin. He says of Benjamin: "The best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in him; as in a bride-chamber shall he abide all the day long, and between his shoulders shall he rest" [Deuteronomy 33:12]. Beyond doubt this blessing belongs in the highest degree to this one holy man, Joseph. For above other men he was the best beloved of the Lord, so that the Lord willed to be born of his virgin wife and deigned to call him father. In the bride-chamber of St. Joseph, too, he dwelt as an infant, a boy, an adolescent and

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a young man. On his shoulders, beyond doubt, the same Lord Jesus sat as an infant, and in his arms he rested.

There follows the blessing of Joseph. "Of the blessing of the Lord," he says, "be his land, of the fruits of heaven, and of the dew, and of the deep that lies beneath; of the fruits brought forth by the sun and the moon; of the tops of the ancient mountains, of the fruits of the everlasting hills; and of the fruits of the earth, and of the fullness thereof. The blessing of him that appeared in the bush come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the Nazarite among his brethren" [Deuteronomy 33:13–16].

The blessing of Joseph surely shines more brightly in most holy Joseph. It contains eight things. The first is a foretaste of the divine sweetness, and this is what he says, "Of the fruits of heaven, and of the dew": fruit insofar as it refreshes the affection, dew insofar as it enlightens the intellect. The second is delight in the humanity of Christ, and this is "and of the deep that lies beneath". The third is refreshment in the works of Christ, and this is "of the fruits brought forth by the sun". The fourth is gladness over the graces of the Church, and this is "and the moon". The fifth is exultation over the graces and virtues of the ancient fathers, and this is "of the tops of the ancient mountains". The sixth is rejoicing with the perfect of later times, and this is "of the fruits of the everlasting hills". The seventh is exultation over the glory of the Church triumphant, and this is "of the fruits of the earth". The eighth is a share in the glory

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of the man Christ, and this is "The blessing of him that appeared in the bush".

It is plain that most blessed Joseph was the first among men to taste the sweetness of God made flesh. In that flesh he delighted, nourishing it, serving it, and defending it against its persecutors. He is believed likewise to have lived with Christ until the end of his life; for this reason he delighted in his works, playing with him in the world every day, as is said of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 [Proverbs 8:30–31]. He rejoiced too in the progress of the Church, because he had the highest charity toward it, and for it he nourished, struck with immense love, Christ the bread, its head and sacrifice. He exulted likewise in the holiness of the fathers from whom he took his origin, and whose perfection he possessed. He rejoiced, too, with the perfect of later times, to all of whom he handed on Christ, the master, leader and model of perfection, as a father hands on his son. In the glory of the Church triumphant he rejoiced in this life through hope; now he exults through enjoyment. And he is reasonably believed to have a great share in the glory of Christ, because Christ called him father and he never forsook him while he lived. And Christ himself is the one who loves those who love him [Proverbs 8:17] and is the rewarder of all good things. St. Joseph, therefore, obtained most fully the blessings of the patriarch Joseph.

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The blessing of Gad is expressed in these words: "Blessed be Gad in his breadth. He has rested as a lion, and has seized the arm and the top of the head. And he saw his pre-eminence, that in his portion the teacher was laid up, who was with the princes of the people, and did the justices of the Lord, and his judgment with Israel" [Deuteronomy 33:20–21]. The blessing of Gad chiefly contains four things: knowledge of the breadth of the Lord's empire, of his fortitude, of his wisdom and of his justice. This knowledge shone forth singularly in St. Joseph, with whom Christ was born, whose government is upon his shoulder [Isaiah 9:6]; of whom, likewise, he knew it was written: "Gird your sword upon your thigh, O most mighty. Because of truth and meekness and justice; and your right hand shall conduct you wonderfully" [Psalm 44:4–5]. These things will become more and more evident to one who meditates.

Of Dan, too, he says: "Dan is a young lion; he shall flow plentifully from Bashan" [Deuteronomy 33:22]. This blessing contains three things: humility of heart and of work, when he says "young"; fortitude, when he says "lion"; and overflowing liberality. These same three gifts shone forth in St. Joseph above every man of his age. For because of the first virtue he was given by God as spouse to that Virgin whose humility the Lord regarded [Luke 1:48]. Is it to be thought that God the Father joined the most humble Virgin to a proud man? Because of the second virtue he nourished the Lion of the tribe of Judah [Apocalypse 5:5], and, as it were,

while he slept in

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his humanity, he protected him against the wild beasts and kept him safe. Because of the third virtue, the whole world has an abundance of angelic bread, and possesses in great plenty spiritual foods and the finest gold of charity. This plenty, I say, flowed out to the whole world through St. Joseph: "from Bashan", that is, from the Jews, fat because of the divine laws, thirsting because of their lack of the spirit in understanding them, and confounded because of their ingratitude. For Bashan is interpreted fatness, dryness or confusion. And so much for the blessing of Dan.

The blessing of Naphtali is this: "Naphtali shall enjoy abundance, and shall be full of the blessings of the Lord; he shall possess the sea and the south" [Deuteronomy 33:23]. By these words a fourfold blessing is signified. The first is the abundance of spiritual gifts, which St. Joseph knew in himself and underwent, according to blessed Dionysius, who says that his teacher Hierotheus was not only learning but also undergoing divine things. The second is the plenty of the blessings of the Lord which he bestowed on the ancient fathers, among which we are now busied, and which we strive to sound out with stammering. The third is rule over sinners, signified by the sea. The last is lordship over the just. For he stood in the midst among sinners, nourishing God the Savior for them. He was also the leader of the just, leaving them examples of all the virtues.

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Lastly we must treat of the blessing of Asher, set forth in these words: "Blessed be Asher in children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. His shoe shall be iron and brass. As the days of your youth, so also shall your old age be" [Deuteronomy 33:24–25]. This blessing contains excellence of dignity, grace of conversation, fervor of interior affection, the terror of exterior work, and an unchanging way of life through every age. All these were in the divine Joseph, because of his fatherly dignity over the Son of God, because of his diligent care of his mother, because of his fervent guarding of both, and because of his most holy manner of life to the end of his days.

It is plain, therefore, that most blessed Joseph possessed all the blessings of the sons of Israel more excellently, as light exceeds shadow, as spiritual things go before bodily ones, as eternal things surpass temporal ones in dignity. Their blessings were distant from their cause; these always remained joined to it. Those passed away; these endure for ever. Of those the memory is old; of these the glory is continual. Wherefore the blessing that was given to all the sons of Israel together is also found more excellent in St. Joseph, in these words: "There is no other God like the God of the most righteous; he that is mounted upon the heaven is your helper. By his magnificence the clouds run hither and thither; his dwelling is above, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He shall cast out

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the enemy from before you, and shall say: Be brought to nought. Israel shall dwell in safety, and alone. The eye of Jacob in a land of corn and wine, and the heavens shall be misty with dew. Blessed are you, Israel; who is like to you, O people, that are saved by the Lord? The shield of your help; and you shall tread upon their necks" [Deuteronomy 33:26–29]. This blessing contains many things made plain above. For the fortitude, excellence and wisdom of God excelled in St. Joseph. The fatness and abundance of spiritual gifts, too, shone forth singularly in him. And in the heavenly fatherland most blessed Joseph lives, and in the Church militant he is venerated, so that no one is found like him. For the saints of the New Testament were called friends by Christ [John 15:15]; but Joseph was called father by him. They honored the Queen of the world as their lady; Joseph, as his spouse.

But what we have followed out as briefly as possible about the blessings of the fathers will rise into a whole volume for those who meditate more deeply.

Chapter X. On the Gifts of the Sacraments of the Church

It is asked whether St. Joseph was baptized. And it seems that he was not. For it belongs to the wise man to do nothing in vain; indeed, Aristotle says of God: "God and nature do nothing in vain." But if Joseph was baptized,

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he did it either of his own will or by divine inspiration. Neither seems to be asserted, for he would have received it in vain, which is proved. First: baptism is a medicine instituted against original sin, from which Joseph had been cleansed by circumcision and by sanctification in the womb, as we piously believe. Therefore he was not baptized.

Secondly. Moreover, this is nowhere read. Therefore it is rejected as easily as it is asserted.

Thirdly. Moreover, the Lord conferred regenerative power on the waters when he was baptized by John in the Jordan. But it is believed that Joseph was dead by then. Therefore it does not seem reasonable to assert that he was baptized.

This is confirmed: in the time of blessed Joseph baptism was not under precept, for it was so only after the resurrection, when Christ said: "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved" [Mark 16:15–16].

On the contrary it is argued: Joseph shared excellently in the grace and the ways of Christ; but Christ willed his own to be baptized; therefore it seems likely that Joseph was baptized.

I answer by first setting down certain suppositions, and then drawing certain conclusions.

The first supposition is this: to say that St. Joseph was baptized is simply among matters of opinion. For we have no

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determination, either implicit or explicit, from the Sacred Scriptures, or from the holy Roman See, or from any Catholic doctor flourishing in talent and holiness.

The second supposition is this: in determining such matters we must recall what Aristotle says in the second book On the Heavens: "In hidden and difficult matters," he says, "enough is said when something reasonable is said." Plato says the same, speaking of immaterial substances.

The third supposition is the distinction of three times. There was one time in which circumcision alone was under precept, namely before the preaching of Christ; another in which it was a matter of counsel, before the promulgation of the Gospel; and another in which baptism alone is under precept and circumcision is deadly, namely after the publication of the Gospel. But there is no time in which some baptism was not lawful and a matter of counsel, as in the Law, and the baptism of John.

The fourth supposition is that two opinions about the death of the divine Joseph must be recalled here: some hold that he died before the preaching of John, while others leave it in doubt.

The last supposition is this: the cause of the baptismal character is Christ. For it is he who baptizes, absolves and sanctifies. Therefore the form of baptism, natural water, and the rite

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of baptizing have no necessity in relation to Christ. For he baptizes effectively without water, by infusing grace and wholly forgiving sins without dipping in water, as is evident in catechumens. For it is not to be believed that the divine power is wholly bound to the sacraments.

These things set down, let the first conclusion be: If Joseph was living among mortals at the time of John's baptism, it is to be believed as likely that he was baptized with that baptism. This is proved, first, because many good and noble Jews were baptized with that same baptism out of devotion, and Joseph was the most perfect among all the noble Jews; secondly, because he knew more surely the holiness of John, to whom he was also related; and thirdly, in order to imitate Christ, whose actions it is very reasonable to think St. Joseph observed and imitated with all his strength.

The second conclusion: If Joseph was living when Christ baptized, it is to be held absolutely that he was baptized with Christ's baptism. This is proved, first, by the reasons already given; secondly, because in John 3 the Lord said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" [John 3:5]; thirdly, so as to give an example to others; and fourthly, because he observed the things of the Law as far as he could, and therefore also those of the Gospel, since zeal for observing both proceeds from one root, which is charity.

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Again, in Matthew 1 [rather, 3:15] the Lord said: "For so it becomes us to fulfil all justice"; the Gloss: "that is, perfect humility." But Joseph was most humble. Therefore in his own time he wished to be baptized with the baptism of his putative son.

The third conclusion: It can reasonably be held that St. Joseph was baptized by Christ, whatever opinions be supposed about the death of the divine Joseph. This is proved. For it is reasonable that in the long familiar conversations that took place between Christ and Joseph through the long course of years, the talk should sometimes have turned to the conversion of the Gentiles, and to the divine manner of washing them from original sin, and consequently to baptism. And since the divine Joseph noted that everything needed for receiving baptism was present, namely his own faith, Christ the sole author of baptism, and water, it is reasonable that he asked him humbly and confidently for baptism. Nor does any reason occur, or can even a suspicion of a reason occur to the mind, why Christ should not have baptized Joseph when he asked most humbly.

Secondly, I argue by asking whether the apostles were baptized. If not, great inconveniences follow, as becomes plain at once to one who considers it; if so, where is the authority? There is none. Long familiarity, therefore, will prove the point. But the familiarity between Christ and Joseph was longer, and the love sweeter, begun from his tender fingernails. Surely for one who would grasp

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and understand this truth it is necessary to come to a deep heart, and to consider more diligently the power of familiarity with the divine Person existing in human nature, in infancy, in boyhood and in the later ages. Whoever does so will by no means doubt that St. Joseph received gifts unknown to mortals. For the same power of Christ, his touch, his heavenly words produced in the divine Joseph the efficacy, the force, the gifts, the virtues, the consolations and the merits of all the sacraments of the Church. Daily reception of the Eucharist and chrism was, for him, the touch of Christ; instead of the character of the priesthood, he had the name of father of Christ, the Father of the Church; extreme unction was likewise the touch of Christ's sacred hands. Instead of contrition, Joseph received from his life with Christ a life of innocence; instead of confession, thanksgiving; instead of satisfaction, works beyond what is required. Now, then, let us answer the objections.

To the first it is answered that in baptism Joseph received the imprinting of the character, a fuller exercise of the virtues, and an increase of merits: hence not in vain.

To the second it is answered that the negative argument from authority is ineffective, especially since it is read of Christ in the last chapter of John: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" [John 21:25].

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To the third it must be said that although Christ conferred regenerative power on the waters solemnly, publicly and virtually, nothing prevents him from having conferred it in a particular way for the sake of him who nourished him and whom he so very sweetly called father.

To the fourth it must be said that if Joseph did not receive baptism because of a precept, he nevertheless wished to take it because of counsel, fruit and consolation.

I would beg you, best of readers, never to depart even very slightly in these matters from the faith or the opinion of Peter, for Catholic truth shines only within the circle of that light. Meanwhile, for the veneration of St. Joseph, let so much be said by us, reasonably, about the sacraments of the Church.

Chapter XI. On the Gift of Purity

Purity is cleanness of mind from every sin. And it is found to be threefold. The first is total cleanness, and an impossibility of uncleanness, which belongs to God alone, whose nature alone is incapable of sin. The second is confirmed cleanness, which is found only in the blessed. The third is stable justice by a singular gift. And this is threefold: either by a singular sanctification,

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as in the Blessed Virgin, who was cleansed in the womb and confirmed in stable justice for ever; or, secondly, by the sending of the Holy Spirit, as happened to the apostles; or, thirdly, by the continual indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as befell very many who kept their baptismal grace clean.

We can add a fourth kind of purity, which is actual freedom from every mortal sin, and which belongs to all who are in the grace of God.

Saving, then, the honor of all the saints, and especially of the apostles, it is proved that the purity of mind of most holy Joseph is nearer to the purity of the most Blessed Virgin, the degree of grace being left aside, or excluded from our understanding, since it is believed to be known to God alone: for the Lord alone is the searcher [of hearts].

It is argued first thus. He who was ordained to the rearing and fatherhood of Christ had the nearest purity after the Blessed Virgin. But blessed Joseph was of this condition. His purity, therefore, was nearest to the purity of the most Blessed Virgin. The first premise appears evident, because when a cause is posited, the same effect of the same kind seems to follow, and the effect is the more such the nearer it is to the cause. Therefore, if purity in the highest degree was granted to the most Blessed Virgin because she was ordained most immediately to the humanity of Christ, then, since Joseph, after the Blessed Virgin, was ordained more immediately than the others to Christ,

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his purity must follow in due degree the purity of the Blessed Virgin.

This manner of arguing is confirmed, because it is found similar to the manner of arguing of blessed Augustine in the book On Nature and Grace, where he says: "We know that more grace was conferred on

her," namely on the Blessed Virgin, "for overcoming sin in every respect, since she merited to conceive and bear him who, it is certain, had no sin."

Secondly. Again, it befits the purity of the Virgin that she should by no means be joined, as one unequal, to one wholly unequal.

Thirdly. Moreover, Joseph was the end of the Old Testament, the Blessed Virgin the beginning of the New: therefore they were neighbors, and therefore of like purity. The consequence is proved, because every law was made in order to make purity shine forth.

Fourthly. Likewise, where there is every cause of preserving and increasing purity, there purity is to be judged more fitting. But this was so in blessed Joseph after the Blessed Virgin, because of his life with her and his dwelling with Christ. In Joseph, therefore, must be placed a purity nearest to the purity of the Blessed Virgin, because it is possible, fitting and reasonable. This reason draws its force from the psalm that says: "With the innocent man you will be innocent" [Psalm 17:26].

Fifthly. Moreover, the appearance of angels is made to the pure; but to the most Blessed Virgin and to Joseph a like appearance of angels was made. Therefore they

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were of the nearest purity. I call the appearance of angels "like" by reason of its end.

Sixthly. Besides, if you look at the flesh of each, it is clean, because of most bright virginity; if at the mind, it is holy; if at their ways, they were joined by mutual charity; if at their vows and works, these are equal, because they were for Christ and with Christ; if at their dignity, the Virgin is the mother of Christ God, Joseph the father. Therefore the Blessed Virgin and Joseph seem to have been of the nearest purity.

Whoever you are to whom these things perhaps seem new, be still for a little amid the tumult of the fancies that rise up within you. Recall the ancient things that the evangelists write of St. Joseph, and you will find them full of wonderful mysteries. For when Joseph is called the father of Christ God in the Sacred Scriptures, it is a name bearing the figure of the sun, which hides the light of the stars. The saints are indeed stars shining for everlasting eternities with the pure splendor of the mind [cf. Daniel 12:3], all of whom were made servants and attendants of God. But Joseph, a sun gleaming with most white purity, called the father of the Son of God, and being the spouse and husband of his mother, the angelic Virgin, covered the light of the other saints with his most pure mind, while he came nearest to the light of the purity of his untouched wife. You who study these things, lift up the eyes of your mind, raise your ears, correct your sense, put away your habitual way of thinking, and with a loftier spirit

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and an ever Catholic mind, go beyond the traditions of the fathers. Do not doubt, do not fear: you will find the dignity, holiness and purity of most holy Joseph greater than you hope. And when you have climbed the mountain of this contemplation, you will see that our words are lowly; you will wonder, exulting, and you will say: Perhaps it will happen to you as to Moses, of whom it is said in Exodus 34: "When Moses came down from the mountain, he knew not that his face was horned," or shining, "from the conversation of the Lord" [Exodus 34:29]. "For we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image," namely of light, "from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" [2 Corinthians 3:18].

Chapter XII. On the Gifts of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The pre-eminence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit follows upon the excellence of purity. The sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, then, shone forth in St. Joseph more like the gifts of the most Blessed Virgin. They are seven, as the prophet teaches: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear [Isaiah 11:2–3].

Wisdom is opposed to folly or foolishness, and it is proved to have been in Joseph most like the wisdom of the Blessed Virgin. For it is said in Proverbs 11: "Where humility is, there also is wisdom" [Proverbs 11:2];

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but in Joseph there was a humility conformed to the humility of his spouse, the Queen of the world: therefore wisdom also[1].

Again, wisdom is called as it were savory knowledge, whence it is a spiritual taste of the highest truth. And in taste three things are found: the immediate joining of the things tasted with the sense of taste, the discernment of the things tasted, and the delight that follows. But Joseph had all these, after the Blessed Virgin, with respect to Christ. For the humanity of Christ was more immediate to Joseph, as to sense and intellect, than to other men. By divine illumination, too, and likewise by the teaching of the angels and of the Blessed Virgin, he discerned what was to be understood, what willed, and what done. And I think enough and more than enough was said above about Joseph's delight with Christ as an infant, a boy, an adolescent and a young man.

Understanding, as Gregory says, is "the spirit that penetrates what is heard and, by refreshing the heart, lights up its darkness." Consider, lofty mind, with what keenness Joseph penetrated the commands of the angels, by assenting with his heart, by directing himself, and by carrying them out in deed. By these things it becomes plain that the heart of the divine Joseph was refreshed by hope, enlightened by understanding, and cleansed of human darkness. The excellence of understanding therefore follows the degree of purity,

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and Joseph was found, after the Blessed Virgin, the most illustrious. Why, I ask, should Joseph not have had a most luminous understanding in spirit, who dwelt pure in the midst between the sun and the moon? On the one side he was enlightened, on the other cleansed. Is darkness to be thought to be in an open place which the sun and moon continually strike with their rays? It was said of Christ in Isaiah 11: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of knowledge and of understanding" [Isaiah 11:2]. Therefore the spirit of understanding rested upon Joseph also; for Jesus, the eternal God, found good rest upon the Blessed Virgin and nowhere else but in the arms, on the breast, on the shoulders, in the house and in the bed of Joseph. Do not, O reader, defile this truth with quibbles, saying, "The consequence is invalid": Christ rested bodily, therefore spiritually; and if spiritually, then according to such a degree of the gift of understanding. The consequence must surely be admitted where the mind is disposed; indeed, it holds so firmly, and has such necessity in Catholic philosophy, that even if Christ were not bodily present, he nevertheless rests spiritually. Nor will you deny that the disposition was in Joseph, who always bore a mind teachable by God [cf. John 6:45]. Add the presence of his wife instructing him, and Christ strengthening him most vividly. I believe it indeed, nor is my faith vain [Virgil, Aeneid 4.12]. Just as it does not happen that a subject capable of the highest heat, set in the midst of fire,

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with a wind always present blowing on it and kindling it, should not become greatly heated, so it was by no means possible that the mind of Joseph, dwelling with God incarnate, the fire, who breathed[2] into Joseph's intellect by love, instruction and prayer, should not be endowed with a great degree of the gift of understanding, and, after the Blessed Virgin, the most illustrious.

There follows the third gift of the Holy Spirit, which is counsel, of which blessed Gregory says in the second book of the Morals: "Counsel keeps one from being headlong," namely with respect to present things, "and fills the mind with reason," namely with respect to future things. For it shows the light by which the many lines of reasoning are begun for devising, penetrating and at last accomplishing whatever presents itself to be done. That the gift of counsel was more excellent in Joseph after the Blessed Virgin is proved. First, on the

part of the subject, namely Christ, for whose sake God endowed Joseph with such great gifts. For a most wise king chooses most wise counselors for carrying out the greatest affairs. But Christ is the highest of all beings, as the founder, restorer and end of the whole universe. If, then, God himself chose Joseph to guard and preserve Christ, especially among the powerful, the crafty and the cruel, we are compelled by sound reason, not clouded, to confess that he also endowed him with a most excellent gift of counsel,

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after the Blessed Virgin, who was ordained more immediately to Christ.

Likewise, in 1 John 2 it is said: "His unction teaches you of all things" [1 John 2:27]. But Joseph had the maker of this unction with him, a member of his household, subject to him, and his son: therefore he had a greater abundance of this unction than others, after the Blessed Virgin, whose son Christ truly was. And from the excellence of that unction flows the pre-eminence of counsel.

Again, the higher the mysteries of counsels are, the more they are wont to be revealed by most wise kings to those who excel in counsel. But the highest of all mysteries was the incarnation of the Son of God, which, after the blessed Queen of virgins, was declared more profoundly to Joseph by the angel. Likewise, therefore, after her, Joseph shone with a most excellent gift of counsel.

Secondly, the same is argued principally on the part of the angels, thus: the illumination of the angels cleanses the mind, and their conversation instructs it wonderfully; and angelic instruction surpasses all human counsel, since it descends from God: therefore one who is illustrious through angelic illumination will also be illustrious in the gift of counsel. But no one is held more illustrious in these respects, after the Blessed Virgin, than Joseph, as the holy Gospels teach: Joseph, therefore, excelled with a more illustrious gift of counsel.

Thirdly, the same is argued on the part of the Blessed

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Virgin, thus: the head of the woman is the man [1 Corinthians 11:3], so that he may govern her by his counsel. But Joseph was given by God as the head of the most Blessed Virgin: therefore he was either wiser than she, or less wise. But neither the first nor the second is to be asserted, and this because of the divine grace of this singular marriage: therefore at least less than she, and this immediately, so that the spouse might be most fittingly joined to so great a woman.

Of the gift of fortitude blessed Gregory says that it does not fear adversities, which is necessary in the present; and again, that it sets out the foods of confidence, which remains also in the future. And it is proved that Joseph shone wonderfully with the gift of fortitude. For he, unarmed, protected the King and Emperor of the world against most powerful kings, proud and exceedingly cruel. Strong Joseph kept the same Christ, the greatest, safe against the devil, of whom it is said in Job 41: "There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him" [Job 41:24].

Moreover, Joseph shone with the gift of fortitude for Christ's sake in every kind of victory. For first he conquered himself, by consenting to the angelic revelation (Matthew 1). He conquered his own flesh, by keeping his virginity intact; Jerome: "The battles of the flesh are greater than the others." He conquered attachment to the world, by leaving his homeland. He was not

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frightened by labors, nor by the dangers of journeys, nor by the depraved ways of foreign peoples, nor by the fear of poverty; but most strong, great-souled, and burning with the flame of divine love, he overcame all things and appeared as victor before God, angels and men. Do you not think that the angels themselves, in a manner wondering at Joseph's fortitude, said: "See with what great strength of soul a carpenter keeps him

whose majesty we adore, whose strength we tremble at, whose empire, I say, remains for ever!"

See with what nobility of mind he deludes, mocks and overcomes the devil, who drew with him the third part of the stars [Apocalypse 12:4]. "O how wonderful is the name of this man, to whom alone among men has been entrusted a business which we innumerable spirits on high cannot worthily accomplish! For he alone serves the King of ages and the Queen of the world. We too are their ministers, who are thousands of thousands and ten hundred thousand and more" [cf. Daniel 7:10].

See how Joseph, a mortal man, eats the foods of confidence, not fearing, not despairing, not angry.

But the sentence of the holy Gospel seems to be opposed to Joseph's most glorious gift of fortitude. For in Matthew 2 it is said of him: "Hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea, he was afraid to go thither" [Matthew 2:22]; and it has also been said, according to the sentence of blessed Gregory, that the gift of fortitude does not fear adversities.

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But it is one thing to fear adversities that must be undergone; another to fear what is not fitting to do, if it were done. One who shines with the gift of fortitude is not frightened by the first, but by the second he is made afraid, as reason compels. Each is an act of virtue: the one of fortitude, the other of prudence. If he had had to go there, Joseph would beyond doubt have driven all fear from himself. But because he was not to go, as reason advised, he had not the act of fortitude but of fear. Add to Joseph's fortitude this, worthy of wonder: that Joseph's labors and exile were to be an example to the martyrs of the Church; indeed, they foreshadowed their state.

But now we must treat of the gift of knowledge, of which blessed Gregory says that it overcomes the fast of ignorance. There are three acts of the knowledge that is a gift of the Holy Spirit: the first is to protect the faith; the second, to help the devout; the third, to judge rightly in the midst of depraved and perverse reasoning. And these three acts proceed from the judgment of knowledge. For in this way, from charity, which exists in the will, the gift of knowledge proceeds causally in the intellect, so that we may judge rightly the objects apprehended between us and God. And from this more excellent judgment it comes about that we see, attack and make light of the errors of the philosophers, helping the devout and pitying the impious. These acts, then, are produced by knowledge as by a higher cause,

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whose proper act is judgment. We must recall what blessed Augustine says in book 14 of the City of God [rather, On the Trinity 14.1] about the knowledge that is sacred doctrine; for he says: "To this knowledge, however, is to be attributed that by which the most wholesome faith, which leads to true beatitude, is begotten, nourished, strengthened and defended." And further on: "To know how this very thing may both help the devout and be defended against the impious belongs to that knowledge." And since the habit of knowledge which is a gift of the Holy Spirit and sacred doctrine are ordained to the same end, and therefore judge of the same object, the one by way of inclination, the other by way of knowledge, the same things seem to be said of both.

These things noted, we may know that the gift of knowledge too shone most excellently in Joseph, after the Blessed Virgin. For he not only protected the faith, but also the very author of the faith, whom he also nourished, the teacher of the world. Of his spouse the Church sings: "You alone have destroyed all heresies throughout the whole world." And that same Queen he protected from countless adversities, strengthened, and nourished by his labors. And so that he might also satisfy their devotion, namely of Christ and the Queen, he lived rightly in Egypt, a nation once perverse. Joseph was beyond doubt of a lofty mind and an elevated talent; for this reason, shining with the divine light, he judged more loftily about sensible things, about

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the nature of the soul, about morals, and about the angels, than even the wisest theologians or philosophers have ever judged. He gave his attention to the angels appearing to him in sleep, and sometimes, as we piously believe, under sensible form, serving Christ and the most Blessed Virgin; and from them, as from principles, he stirred up his mind to discern their nature; and what he knew most profoundly he at once referred back to Christ. He rejoiced the more sweetly to know the cause in one place and the effect in another. Lifting his eyes to the heavens, he saw the sun and the moon and the motions of the wandering stars, and, wondering at their size, beauty and power, he turned to Christ with his mind and his bodily eyes and said: "Your magnificence is elevated above the heavens" [Psalm 8:2]. If ever, according to the capacity of a mortal man, he was in doubt or did not understand more deeply, he questioned Christ, the most knowing. I pass over how often he spoke with the most Blessed Virgin about the loftiest senses of the Divine Scriptures, raising points in devout disputation. Every Sabbath, when he conveniently could, he attended the synagogue, listening most attentively to the divine teachings and noting the interpretations of the elders. Returning home, he often put many questions to Christ and the Blessed Virgin. By the very manner of speaking of Christ and the Blessed Virgin he was lifted most loftily to know divine things, and more and more he perceived that Jesus was he whom Moses and the prophets

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had foretold as to come. He pitied the blindness of the Jews, saying within himself: "Why, O true God, do you not teach these things to the elders of the Jews? Show them your face. Appear before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasses" [Psalm 79:3–4]. Perhaps it was to satisfy such wishes of his putative father that Jesus, at twelve years, willed to dispute in the Temple, keeping silence afterwards until the time foreordained by the Father. Nor is it to be doubted that, after Christ's public disputation with the doctors in the Temple, Joseph questioned Christ about divine things and learned great and unspeakable things. "And his mind contemplated many things wisely, and he gave his heart to know prudence" [Ecclesiastes 1:16–17]. His mind was watered by "the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Lebanon" [Song of Songs 4:15]. There was made in him "a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting" [John 4:14]. Surely he seems hardly discerning who doubts that Joseph, a man of no mean talent who dwelt for many years with Wisdom itself, shone with a most excellent gift of knowledge. Those who excel in talent, who are strong in prudence, who have learned the mysteries of divine things amid human affairs with experience as their witness, will declare with faithful voice that Joseph excelled in the most knowing gift of God. Nor is the craft of a carpenter opposed to the gift of knowledge of the Holy Spirit, but rather to knowledge that is to be acquired through teachers, either by application or by reading a long series of volumes. And

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because Joseph is not described in the Sacred Scriptures as a doctor, not as a rabbi, not as an elder, not as one learned in the law, it is not therefore to be denied that he was of lofty talent; for "the foolish things of the world has God chosen" [1 Corinthians 1:27], and he has shown the wise of this age to be fools [cf. 1 Corinthians 1:20]. Those who flourish in the gift of knowledge of the Holy Spirit and are anointed with interior unction flee the fame of men and wear a dress different from the wise of the world. For the wisdom of this world puffs up; the wisdom of the Holy Spirit humbles. The one strives to make its possessor think high things of himself, the other lowly things. The one bids him wear long and broad phylacteries on his garments [cf. Matthew 23:5], the other mean ones, so that the possessor may lie hidden and be known to God alone. I myself would believe that no one in Joseph's time, that is, when Christ was being born and was a boy, whether among the Jews or among the philosophers, searched out divine things with more attentive talent than he, drawn on[3] by the constant speech of Christ and the heavenly conversation of his divine Mother.

Next we must consider the gift of piety, of which blessed Gregory says that it fills the inmost heart with works of mercy. And because "piety is profitable to all things," as is said in 1 Timothy 5 [rather, 4:8], there seem therefore to be three acts of this gift. The first is the inclination to the works of mercy; the second is non-resistance to the divine word, whether it comes interiorly by inspiration, according to the psalm: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" [Psalm 84:9],

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or by angelic revelation, according to the prophet: "And the angel that spoke in me" [Zechariah 1:9], or by the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; the third act of piety is the veneration of holy things: hence the Gloss on the text of Matthew 5, "Blessed are the meek" [Matthew 5:4], says: "Those who piously seek and honor holy things." Now the inclination to the works of mercy is intensified either by reason of the object, or by reason of a precept or exhortation, or also by reason of affection. Hence we pity more the extreme calamities of kings, because kings seem nobler objects provoking us to pity; likewise those of our kinsfolk, as in things that have something in common, between which change is easier, a movement of the soul more easily arises to compassion and to bestowing gifts; to them we also leave our patrimonies. And the commandments of God and the exhortations of superiors strongly provoke us to works of piety. But since the divine Joseph knew that the true God, having put on human flesh for our restoration, was bearing the calamities of mortal life, he strove to follow him with an affection of piety as much greater as the majesty of the immortal King surpasses the dignity of mortal kings. Other mortals show piety to the image of God; Joseph offered works of piety both to the image of God and to God himself. If some just and God-fearing emperor of the whole world came to us as a fugitive through a conspiracy of wicked servants,

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trusting in us and calling us friends and kinsmen, would it not be fitting that we should pour out works of piety upon him with all the heart? What, then, must we think of Joseph, with right reason going before us, when he beheld with the eye of his mind most surely, experienced with his senses, and was taught by wonderful signs, that the King of kings had turned aside to him as a little infant, naked and lacking every help, with the Virgin mother, a young girl? The gift of piety was stirred up in Joseph, and burned more and more, as he contemplated the charity of his virgin spouse toward him and the future benefits of the infant. Add that the Virgin was truly his wife, and the infant was thought to be his son. He was urged to these things by the divine command, which was made plain to him in many ways, by angelic exhortation, and by sure knowledge of the prophets and of the Law. Hence arose an immense veneration toward Christ and the Blessed Virgin, with such affection that we believe no one of his time ever venerated divine or holy things with the like. If I am not devoid of reason, I think Abraham never received the angels as guests [Genesis 18] with so great an affection of piety as Joseph received Christ and the Blessed Virgin. Why do we proclaim that the patriarchs shone with the gift of piety, if not because they worshipped God in faith, knew him deeply, and lived simply? Surely Joseph's faith was greater than the faith of the patriarchs, his knowledge of the living God fuller, and his manner of life

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simpler. Therefore I do not doubt that the gift of piety excelled more pre-eminently in Joseph, after the Blessed Virgin.

Lastly we must treat of the gift of fear. We know that fear is threefold: servile fear, which in a sinner who is to become just goes before the gift of the Holy Spirit; initial fear, which arises immediately after the grace of the Holy Spirit has been infused; and chaste fear, which always endures with charity. Servile fear is so called because it behaves after the manner of a slave, who dreads to offend the divine eyes lest he be scourged. This is the fear of which it is said in 1 John 4: "Fear is not in charity" [1 John 4:18]. And St. Augustine, writing on the Epistle of John, says: "As the bristle draws in the thread, so fear draws in charity." This fear Joseph cast

from himself: for he was good, and he feared to sin from love of virtue, not from dread of punishment. He knew indeed that the divine vengeance is severe, and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands" [Hebrews 10:31] of God when he punishes; but wounded with divine love, he fixed the eye of his mind on the rays of the divine love, forgetful of punishments. Hence Joseph's fear with respect to guilt was initial, of which it is said in Proverbs 8: "The fear of the Lord hates evil" [Proverbs 8:13]. This fear, compared with chaste fear, is imperfect; made more perfect day by day, this same fear becomes chaste. This chaste fear the apostle Paul calls filial, writing to the Romans, chapter 8: "For you have not received," he says, "the spirit of

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bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons in love, whereby we cry: Abba, Father" [Romans 8:15]. St. Augustine says that this chaste fear is like the fear of a most chaste wife, who guards against every offense toward her husband, fearing only a lessening of love.

There are two acts of this fear: the first is [to fear] being separated from God; the second, to venerate or revere that same God. And reverence is subjection mixed with love.

This is the fear in which, we do not doubt, Joseph shone most excellently. For this fear is born of love, because its root is charity. Because of his most fervent love, then, his most constant labor, and his most pure worship of God, in which Joseph shone exceedingly, we gather that chaste fear too was in him in like degree. Stirred by this fear, we often fear things that ought not to be feared at all. For it belongs to good minds to fear a fault where there is no fault. Nor do we say that anything vain proceeds from this fear; but those strong in this fear shrink from undertaking doubtful things until they know most surely whether an offense against God is to be found in that work. To these, at length, the divine goodness gives its support, granting the consolations of interior light. Hence Joseph feared to take Mary his wife. But an angel of light came to him and said: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary

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your wife; for that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit" [Matthew 1:20]. Chaste fear likewise brings forth knowledge of worldly things, since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" [Psalm 110:10] and is never separated from it; and from wisdom flows a wonderful prudence in matters of action, especially those that concern divine worship. For this reason the evangelist relates of Joseph: "But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither" [Matthew 2:22]. Joseph's reverence toward Christ we know from his justice, approved by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures [Matthew 1:19]; from the many labors he bore for him; and from his frequenting of the Temple, where he was accustomed to adore God; for it was his custom to go up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast day [Luke 2:41–42]. Joseph, then, was a mystical temple containing the lamps of the Holy Spirit, ever burning, upheld by seven hewn pillars [Proverbs 9:1]. He was, I say, "one man" [Isaiah 4:1], that is, singular, because of his election, because of his working, and because of the glorification that followed; whom "seven women took hold of", that is, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, rightly signified by the name of woman because of their fruitfulness. And they bring with them garments and food, with which to nourish and adorn the soul.

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[1] The first edition has "therefore humility also". But wrongly, and against the rules of the syllogism and the logic of our Isidore (Editor).

[2] The first edition has "breathing" [agreeing with "mind"] (Editor).

[3] The first edition has "tractus" (Editor).

Chapter XIII. On the Gifts of the Seven Beatitudes

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After we have followed out the gifts of the Holy Spirit shining most excellently in Joseph, it comes in right order to consider the seven beatitudes. For the divine Augustine, in On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, assigns each beatitude to one of the gifts. To the gift of fear he ascribes poverty of spirit, by which pride is cast down; to the gift of piety, meekness, to which piety moves; to the gift of knowledge, mourning, according to the text of Ecclesiasticus 2 [rather, Ecclesiastes 1:18]: "He that adds knowledge adds also sorrow"; to the gift of fortitude is ascribed hunger and thirst for justice, to which fortitude moves especially by untiring labors; to the gift of counsel, mercy, according to the text of Daniel 4: "Let my counsel be acceptable to you: redeem your sins with alms" [Daniel 4:24]; to the gift of understanding, cleanness of heart, by which gluttony is cast off, which dulls the understanding because of the fumes engendered and rising up; to the gift of wisdom, peacemaking, by which lust is slain, because once the sweetness of the Holy Spirit has been tasted, which comes about through wisdom, all flesh loses its savor.

But the eighth beatitude, in which the Savior said, "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" [Matthew 5:10], is not a beatitude distinct from the foregoing,

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but a certain confirmation of those that precede. These beatitudes, then, will pertain to the state of the present life, as Saints Augustine and Thomas testify. For the kingdom of heaven can be understood as the beginning of perfect wisdom, as the Holy Spirit begins to reign in the saints of this life. The possession of the land signifies the good affection of a soul resting through desire in the stability of the heavenly inheritance, which is signified by the land. One is comforted in this life by sharing in God, who is the Paraclete or Comforter. They are filled even in this life with that food of which Christ says: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" [John 4:34]. In this life too men obtain the mercy of God, so that, the eye being cleansed through the gift of understanding, God can in a manner be seen. In this life likewise those who bring their fears [rather, impulses] to peace are called, by likeness, sons of God.

That Joseph, while he lived among mortals, shone with the gifts of the seven beatitudes is proved by these common reasons. First. As the excellence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit stands, so also the seven beatitudes. But Joseph excelled in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as we proved in the preceding chapter: therefore also in the seven beatitudes. The parity and likeness are made plain by what was said immediately above, since St. Augustine assigns each beatitude to one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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Secondly. Again, as fruit is to fruit, so is tree to tree. But Joseph obtained from God the fruit of his beatitudes in this life most excellently: for he espoused the Queen of beatitude in a true and real marriage, and the King of that happiness chose him as his father. Therefore he likewise possessed the beatitudes in this life most excellently.

Thirdly. Moreover, the Cherubim in the future beatitude are of the highest orders, attaining beatitude in the highest degree. But Joseph in this life filled the office of the Cherubim set to guard the earthly paradise [Genesis 3:24], which signifies the Blessed Virgin; set also to guard the tree of life, by which Christ is figured. In this life, therefore, Joseph had to excel in the beatitudes that are possible.

Fourthly. Likewise, Joseph's charity in this life was most excellent in both its higher and its lower acts: therefore the degrees of the beatitudes too, which proceed from charity as from a root, were most excellent.

Fifthly. Again, the patriarch Joseph shone with these beatitudes. For in his boyhood he was poor in spirit, that is, thinking lowly of himself, though he had dreams foretelling his future dignity; meek with his brothers in his youth; wise in young manhood, because he spoke wisdom among princes [cf. Psalm 104:22]; strong in his prime, loving supremely the justice of the kingdom;

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merciful in old age, and at every age chaste, peaceable and upright. But he was a figure of the divine Joseph. The latter, therefore, must be judged to have shone with these far more fully.

But so that these things may shine with a purer light, let us argue about each of the beatitudes one by one. Let us rub off the rust of a dull wit, and, made keener by the splendor of Joseph's majesty, let us dare greater things. If the mind should not be lively, let reason be cautious, reasoning prudent, faith more sure, hope more sublime: for the glorious dignity of Joseph lies hidden, and an unknown treasure, marked with a heavenly title, is what I am searching out. Its title, written by the finger of God, is this: "This is the spouse of the Queen of heaven, and the putative father of the Son of God." The treasure is the virtues, the gifts, the beatitudes.

Chapter XIV. On the Gift of the Beatitude of Poverty

Since what is said about the beatitude of poverty must be noted with devout diligence (for on the one hand it instructs and enlightens man's ignorance, and on the other, when badly understood, it supplies fuel for error), let us set down beforehand some things about this poverty, so that the pure splendor of this beatitude may shine upon us, instructed by a clearer understanding.

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It must be considered, then, that the poverty of spirit of which the Savior says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" [Matthew 5:3], can be understood either as the emptying of a puffed-up and proud spirit, as Augustine expounds; or also as the casting off of temporal things, which is done "in spirit", that is, by one's own will, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, as Ambrose and Jerome expound. It is of this poverty that we must now speak.

Poverty is twofold: the first from constraining necessity, the other from one's own will. The first is mean, the enemy of nature, a hindrance to the virtues, hostile to one's neighbors, making a man mean and abject; hence men of most excellent life call it mean. Hence we assert that poverty in itself is evil, and brings with it as much good as it takes away from a man of anxiety and hindrance, so that, these being removed, he may give himself to spiritual things. Hence the Philosopher says that poor men of this kind are corrupters of the state if they are taken up to the helm of the kingdom. But praiseworthy poverty of spirit, whose praise is in the Gospel, confers seven goods on us: acknowledgment of sins, preservation of the virtues, quiet of heart, fulfillment of desire, the sweetness of spiritual goods, the exaltation of merits, and the heavenly inheritance. This poverty is especially the sign of humility; and since Christ was the divine teacher of humility, saying, "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart" [Matthew 11:29], he willed

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to take up that same poverty. For this reason those who reverence the Christian mysteries with a divine spirit cast off riches, as far as the weakness of human nature allows. For nature is content with little, indeed with the least, and it calls riches what is superfluous to one's nature and condition. But it was fitting for Joseph to have a little ass and money, with which to provide for the Queen of the world and supply her with food. And lest these fail, he labored with his hands, demanding from no one anything but what was just. For this reason too he could have a house, a small field, clothes, many utensils, and a manservant and a maidservant, and yet not lack the splendors of the fruits of poverty. For the fault is in the affection, not in the possession; in the bent of love, not in the use; in burning greed, not in necessity. Let us prove, then, that Joseph, adorned with the beatitude of poverty of spirit, shone most excellently before God; and many reasons will persuade us to believe this, which the interval of time has prevented us from experiencing in the things themselves.

The first reason is taken from the interior and immediate cause of poverty, which is humility of heart. For in Matthew 5, on the text "Blessed are the poor in spirit", the Gloss says: "The poor in spirit is the humble of

heart." But Joseph was most humble; for this reason he was given by God as spouse to the most humble Virgin. He therefore shone with a most glorious beatitude of poverty of spirit.

The second reason is taken from a cause that is interior

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but remote, which is faith and devotion. For in the same place the Gloss says: "Not necessity, but faith and devotion make the poor blessed, so that, having despised all things, one may live for God." All these, namely faith, devotion, contempt of the world, and living for God, were in Joseph excellently. Therefore so also was the beatitude of poverty.

The third reason is taken from the effect of poverty of spirit itself, which is the renunciation of things; and this is done in two ways: by subjecting things, or by casting them off entirely, or in both ways, according to the Apostle's word: "As having nothing, and possessing all things" [2 Corinthians 6:10]. And this is the most perfect mode of poverty. And the divine Joseph had nothing in affection, cast off earthly riches in effect, possessing all things in Christ, having rights over all things, because he was the true husband of the Queen of all.

The fourth reason is to be taken from an enumeration of the degrees of poverty in the casting off of things. The first is to give what is superfluous to nature but not to one's person; hence Augustine says, on the words of the Lord: "Use superfluous things, give necessary things to the poor; use precious things, give cheap things to the poor."

The second degree is to give what is superfluous both to nature and to one's person. Luke 11: "Of that which remains, give alms" [Luke 11:41]. Of what is beyond necessities, besides food and clothing, one must give to the poor.

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The third degree is to give not only superfluous things but also necessary ones; hence the Gloss: "Let us share with our neighbors not only outward and unnecessary things, but also inward and very necessary ones."

The fourth degree is to give all superfluous and necessary things together, but to keep oneself. This some of the philosophers also did, though not for God's sake; hence on the text of Matthew 10 [rather, 19:27], "Behold, we have left all things", the Gloss: "He did not say only, You who have left all things, for this Socrates also did, and many of the philosophers who despised riches; but, You who have followed me, which is proper to the apostles."

The fifth degree is to give all things and to add oneself. Matthew 19: "If you will be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" [Matthew 19:21].

The sixth degree is to give all things and to leave oneself, and besides to labor with one's hands, so as to have something to give to him that suffers need, relieving his bodily misery, as the Apostle said to the Ephesians, chapter 4 [Ephesians 4:28]. In this degree was blessed Paul the apostle, as is found in Acts 20 [Acts 20:34]. In this same degree was Joseph: but so much the higher, as he labored for those more worthy than all others, Christ and the most Blessed Virgin. Joseph labored with his hands so much that from his own earnings he bore the expenses of the supreme Emperor and the Queen

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of the world. And he acquired such great treasures that the King and Creator of all desired to be adopted as his son, and to give him his own mother as wife. And so it was done.

The seventh degree is to give all things and oneself, and to labor in spirit and in body to feed one's neighbor with spiritual bread. And this degree is greater than the foregoing, because, as Gregory says, it is a greater thing to refresh a soul that will live for ever than a belly that will one day die. And this degree was common to the Blessed Virgin and the divine Joseph, who prepared Christ, the living bread, for all by rearing him.

The eighth degree is to leave all things and oneself, and to take part of the substance of one's own body and give it to one's neighbors for the refreshment of souls: this degree was attained by the most Blessed Virgin, who from her most pure blood made for us the viaticum, the living bread that came down from heaven [John 6:51]. This is that woman of whom Matthew 13 and Luke 13 speak: "A woman hid it in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened" [Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:21]. The three measures are the divinity, the body and the soul. The leaven, as St. Bernard says, is the faith of the Virgin, which joined God to human nature and prepared refreshment for man.

The ninth degree is to give all things to one's neighbor, both the body and one's own soul, and the united divinity, as food for the soul, though under

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another's appearance: and this was the work of mercy and the supreme gift of poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ on the way.

The tenth degree is to give oneself wholly, body and soul and divinity, under one's own appearance, as food of body and soul together, and for ever, in eternal beatitude; of which Luke 14 says: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" [Luke 14:15].

By these things it is plain that Joseph's degree of the beatitude of poverty was nearest to the poverty of the most Blessed Virgin. I think that only a poor man can understand the beatitude of poverty of spirit, which is not separated even from holy kings. How many nobles of both sexes have hidden poverty of spirit beneath golden garments! Agnes, Cecilia, Agatha, Dorothy, most illustrious virgins, clothed in robes woven with gold, kept this beatitude of poverty. How many Roman Pontiffs, how many prelates of the great cities of the empire of the Church militant, laden with gems, have shone with this poverty! Hence some of them would not even look at gold coin. Let us learn poverty of spirit on earth, amid its very dangers: possessing it, we shall say that it has truly been called a beatitude. With the eye of the mind we shall see that to use a house, furniture, gold, clothing, food and drink according to reason is not foreign to poverty of spirit. And lastly, with an unimaginable gladness of mind, we shall contemplate with what great joys Joseph exulted at having found the treasure of poverty of spirit

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in this life.

Chapter XV. On the Gift of the Beatitude of Meekness

It is proved in many ways that Joseph shone most excellently with the gift of the beatitude of meekness. First, by the removal of the contrary qualities in the subject. For the more guilt is removed from anyone, the more God pours meekness into him. But Joseph was most far removed from actual guilt. He was, therefore, most illustrious in the beatitude of meekness.

Secondly, from the effect. Now the effect of meekness is threefold. One concerns the one who has it, of which the Gloss on Matthew 5, "Blessed are the meek", says: "The meek are those who master bad habits." The second concerns one's neighbor, of which the Gloss says in the same place: "The meek man neither provokes nor is provoked, neither harms nor thinks of harming." The third concerns God, from whom he bears the scourges and labors sent upon him, so as to satisfy the divine will. Hence the Gloss says in the same place: "The meek man is he whom no rancor or anger affects, but who bears all things with an even mind."

The first effect is shown by Joseph's holiness; the second, by his stay

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among the Egyptians for the course of seven years; the third, by his long and hard journeys and his endurance of sufferings for Christ. He was, therefore, most meek.

Thirdly, the same is made clearer than light from his office. For he was chosen by God to be the husband of the most meek Virgin, of whom the Church sings in a hymn: "Virgin singular, meek above all." Therefore he too was most meek. The consequence is proved: because likeness of character belongs to the nature of a marriage having all perfections, such as was the marriage of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin.

Lastly, Moses, Joseph and David were most meek. For of Moses we read in Numbers 21 [rather, 12:3]: "For Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth." But Joseph was the end of the fathers of the Old Testament: therefore he too was most meek.

Chapter XVI. On the Gifts of the Remaining Beatitudes in Particular

Two things argue the pre-eminence of the beatitude of mourning in Joseph. The first is the joy with which, in Christ's presence, he rejoiced above all the joys of the world. Fearing, then, to lose him, he mourned supremely and was saddened.

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For as the intensity of joy stands to the presence of its cause, so, reasonably, must the intensity of mourning stand to the removal of the cause of joy: especially when that joy is the form and consummation of all other delights.

The second is Joseph's perfection. For perfection compels a man more and more to cry out: "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!" [Psalm 119:5]. Paul the apostle, in a higher degree of perfection, drawing sighs from the bottom of his breast, said: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [Romans 7:24].

Of Joseph's hunger and thirst for justice we argue thus. Hunger and thirst are intensified by the presence of the food and drink desired, by long fasting, and by the vigor of nature: and where these three are together, the greatest hunger and the greatest thirst are inferred. But the true justice is Christ, of whom the psalm sings: "You are just, O Lord" [Psalm 118:137]; the true drink was that same Christ, who was present to Joseph; the world had hungered fasting for long ages; and the mind of St. Joseph was excellently disposed. He, therefore, among all the fathers of the Old Testament, hungered and thirsted for justice supremely.

That the beatitude of mercy excelled in Joseph is suggested, first, by the consideration of a threefold proportion or relation. The first is to Christ, to whom the divine Joseph was related as a son to his father. The second

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is to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was related as a husband to his wife. The third is the relation to the Synagogue and to the Church, between which Joseph stood as the end of the Synagogue and the beginning of the Church. The excellence of the beatitude of mercy, then, must reasonably be judged to be such as was its relation to the author, the queen and the state of mercy. But his relation was most eminent: therefore there is no doubt at all that Joseph excelled in the beatitude of mercy.

The same is argued likewise from the effect. Ambrose says: "Mercy is to leave no one in misery and to make no one miserable." Again Bernard: "Mercy consists not only in almsgiving, but in correcting every sin." Understand this first in oneself and then in one's neighbor, according to the condition of one's own state. And

Joseph did this most excellently, by nourishing with countless labors the Son of God, who was to cleanse the miseries of all, to correct vices and to renew the world.

Four things persuade us that the beatitude of cleanness of heart shone in Joseph: the first is the negative effect; the second, the positive effect; the third is the first root; the fourth is the immediate cause of that same cleanness of heart. Of the negative effect, which is the absence of remorse of conscience, the Gloss on Matthew 5 says: "The clean of heart are those

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whom conscience does not accuse of sins." The positive effects are to cleanse, to enlighten and to perfect; for blessed Dionysius, in the fifth chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy, ascribes these to the most pure angels. The first root is faith, according to the text: "Purifying their hearts by faith" [Acts 15:9]. And the immediate cause of cleanness of heart is charity; 1 Timothy 1: "Charity from a pure heart and a good conscience" [1 Timothy 1:5]. But no Catholic doubts that these four excelled in Joseph, since he confesses that they were in him so much the more perfectly as he himself is strong in keener faith and a more elevated mind. For the dignity of Joseph is hidden from no Catholics, unless they are either ignorant of the Sacred Scriptures, or dull of wit and of little discernment, or failing to reason through some sloth of this kind, as happened to a certain doctor of sacred theology in my presence. For, disputing by chance about the holiness of St. Joseph, he put forward things very unworthy of his state. And when he was roused by me to consider the propositions of the holy Gospel about the height of St. Joseph, he wondered like a youth meditating things never thought of.

Hence it comes about that certain preachers of the divine word refuse to speak of the divine Joseph, because they are overcome by custom, and they shun as suspect what they do not find formally written. I would beg them to open their eyes and see. When they have set about doing this, they will perceive that they were blind in

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recognizing the height of Joseph's holiness. Some, when they extol the Queen of heaven with praises on Saturdays, mark Joseph only with the dignity of a good old man, because they do not know the deep mysteries of the Holy Scriptures; they also pass over lightly and with flitting thoughts what ought to be considered with deeper inquiry.

Three things establish the glory of the beatitude of peace in Joseph. These are its reward, its reason or form, and its effect. The reward of peace is sonship of God; Matthew 5: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" [Matthew 5:9]. But Joseph was not only a son of God by grace and adoption, but he had what was granted to no other: for he was consecrated with the name of father of God. Therefore the beatitude of peace was found in him most excellently. The reason of peace is that which the Gloss gives on the text of Matthew 5, "Blessed are the peacemakers", saying: "The peacemakers are those who subject all the motions of the soul to reason, for nothing resists them, because they are like their Father, who is supreme rest." And these things are attributed to Joseph by those who strive to join the foundations of faith to reason[1]. The effect is twofold, in ourselves and in others. For the Gloss says in the same place: "While the law of the flesh resists the law of the mind [Romans 7:23], we cannot be at peace not only with another, but not even with ourselves." But Joseph rejoiced in so great a quiet of the flesh that, drawn by the heavenly fragrance of virginity,

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he kept his virginity, and delighted in it more than in the delights of the flesh. For this reason the other effect followed. For he nourished for us the Savior, who, delighted by the peace of Joseph's flesh, willed to rest in his arms.

What persecutions, lastly, he suffered, we know from the teaching of the holy Gospel.

[1] The first edition has "And these things Joseph, which strive to join the foundations of faith to reason" (Editor).

Chapter XVII. On the Gift of the Fullness of Grace

The Sacred Writings relate that some, by divine gift, were full of grace. For Christ is read to be "full of grace and truth" [John 1:14]. The divine Mother is called by the angel "full of grace" [Luke 1:28]. Stephen is praised in the Acts of the Apostles as "full of grace and fortitude" [Acts 6:8]. Tabitha likewise is declared "full of good works and almsdeeds", in chapter 9 of that same book [Acts 9:36]. And we know that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit [Acts 2:4]. Hence it is now asked whether this fullness of grace can belong to St. Joseph, so that we may say of him what is read in the book of Esther, chapter 15: "I saw you, my lord, as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled for fear of your majesty. For you, my lord, are very admirable, and your face is full of graces" [Esther 15:16–17].

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The fullness of grace, then, is called the abundance of its overflowing gift, and it is twofold. The first does not receive and yet overflows, and this belongs to God alone. The second receives and overflows, and this belongs to men also, though in differing ways. For the fullness of grace of Christ was one thing, that of his divine Mother another, that of the rest another. Substantially, Christ's fullness is of truth and divinity, as the Apostle says: "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" [Colossians 2:9]. The Blessed Virgin's fullness was of mind and womb; that of the rest, of mind only. These fullnesses differ likewise in origin. For the first is that of the fountain, the second that of the river from the fountain, the third that of the stream from both. But the fullness of grace which is common to the saints is found to be twofold. Some saints overflow from interior perfection to exterior perfection, for their own salvation and for the edification of others by good example. And this is called the fullness of sufficiency, to which all who are able to work are bound.

Others overflow through good works and saving teaching, unto the edification of the whole Church. Of the first it is said in Acts 9: "Tabitha, full of good works." Of the second, in the same book, chapter 2: "The apostles were all filled with the Holy Spirit." And this last is twofold. For some pour out good works and instruction; but some, beyond these, lay down their life for Christ.

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The first is common to all the doctors, the second to the martyrs, of which it is said: "Stephen, full of grace and of the Holy Spirit" [cf. Acts 6:5, 8].

To the question, then, it is answered: Joseph had the fullness of Christ excellently by participation, the fullness of the Blessed Virgin singularly, that of the apostles virtually, that of the rest formally, but with excellence and perfection. St. Joseph shared excellently in the fullness of Christ because of priority, for he was the first among men to enjoy it, receiving him into the bosom of his mind and of his body; because of dignity, for he merited to be called the father of Christ; and because of charity, for by works, vows and exile he showed that he would do all things for the sweetness of God, whose fullness of divinity he shared in Christ by loving, living, hearing and touching. At the overflowing fountain of Christ he drank to the full, and there was made in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting [John 4:14].

But Joseph shared singularly in the fullness of the Blessed Virgin because of union, because of subjection, and because of revelation. The union was that of conjugal love; the subjection, that of mutual working; the revelation, that of interior consolation. Nor is it to be doubted that the most Blessed Virgin did not suffer Joseph to be without a share in her perfection, her gladness and her consolation. She was indeed most loving, and,

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experiencing joys unimaginable to mortals because of the presence of Christ and of the angels, she was eager to open them, with all humility, to her husband, most dear to her, so that he might have divine solace in his labors. Thus the mother, untouched by her husband, fulfilled the Lord's command by the communion of spiritual joy: "And they shall be two in one flesh" [Genesis 2:24]. For she wished the flesh of Joseph to be moved by the same joys in which she herself exulted, so that he might be a helper like to her [Genesis 2:18].

Joseph had also the apostolic fullness virtually, in mind and in body: in mind, because of the abundance of sanctifying grace; in body, because of the wonderful splendors which it is reasonable to think Joseph noticed in Christ. And the fullness of the other saints shines everywhere in Joseph for those who read what has been said above and is to be set forth below.

Chapter XVIII. On the Comparison of the Gifts of St. Joseph with the Gifts of the Apostles, Evangelists and Pastors

Paul the apostle, writing to the Ephesians, chapter 4, sets forth certain graces, saying: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for

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the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" [Ephesians 4:11–12].

There are four properties of the apostolic dignity: proclamation, from the last chapter of Matthew: "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature" [Mark 16:15; cf. Matthew 28:19]; illumination, Matthew 5: "You are the light of the world" [Matthew 5:14]; reconciliation: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them", from the last chapter of Mark [rather, John 20:23]; and speaking through the Holy Spirit, John 15: "For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of my Father that speaks in you" [Matthew 10:20]. These properties are most worthy, because they are immediately from, under, and for the sake of Christ. But the properties of St. Joseph were: the espousal of the Queen of heaven, the title of father of the King of the angels, the defense of the Messiah promised in the Law of the Jews, and the rearing of the Savior of all. And these properties are immediately over, toward, and for the sake of Christ. Whoever, then, is strong in talent, with the truth of divine things set before you, run through it, argue, conclude from the comparison with the apostolic majesty to the heavenly dignity of Joseph, how great are his excellence, dignity, holiness and the inexplicable perfection of his virtues. Come to a deep heart, and the majesty of the apostolic summit will not be lowered or made humbler in your eyes: but God will be exalted in the hidden gifts of Joseph, his putative father.

And indeed there are three properties of the prophets: illumination from above, from 2

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Peter 1: "For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time; but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit" [2 Peter 1:21]; the interpretation of the Scriptures, as the Gloss says in the place cited above: "Some prophets, that is, expounders of Scripture"; and the disclosing of hidden things, whence they are also called prophets, as it were speaking of things hidden from the senses. And these three things befell the prophets in a shadowed light, in figures and riddles. But Joseph, enlightened by angelic light, knew more clearly the supreme mystery of the Son of God, which is likewise the end of all the prophets. Having known it, he understood most profoundly the most hidden senses of the Sacred Scriptures, and he strove that the mystery itself should, at the proper time, be made manifest to the whole world, by rearing that same Son of God. For this reason he prepared for the Evangelists the matter of their writing, and was also its subject. Hence Joseph is related to the Evangelists as the subject of a science to the science itself.

The office of pastors is to lay down their life for the sheep, not merely their substance; not only not to flee the wolf when it comes, but to drive it off [John 10:11–12]; to feed the people by word and example, and always to invite them to lay hold of eternal life. But Joseph, laying down his life and his substance for the King of heaven, put to flight from him not wolves but most savage tyrants, giving others an example to exercise themselves in the worship of Christ the greatest, by which they may merit to become sons of God

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for ever. Therefore we must attend to the height of the divine virtues of most blessed Joseph, by which he deserved to be compared with the chief men and the first dignities. Hence Matthew, the head of all the Evangelists, at the very beginning of his Gospel, first set out the nobility of Joseph's flesh, and then that of his mind, so as to lead us by a twofold road to know, venerate and worship Christ.

I myself could here bring forward each of the virtues of the prophets, apostles, evangelists and pastors, and set light against light more distinctly; but I fear lest, as a searcher of so great a majesty, I be overwhelmed by the glory [cf. Proverbs 25:27]. Therefore let us leave these things to the contemplation of a most elevated mind. Let the mind enter the place from which the pen draws back. Let the spirit understand what words decline to express. Let the intellect wonder at what writings do not reach. Lastly, let the whole man venerate what lies hidden, covered with heavenly glory.

Chapter XIX. On the Gifts of the Properties of All the Angels

Of the properties of the most blessed spirits handed down by the holy Fathers, and especially by blessed Dionysius, some are proper to the individual orders and hierarchies, others are

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common; and concerning these we must now consider whether they were found in blessed Joseph.

It must be noted beforehand that there are some properties common to the angels which follow upon their interior: and I call interior their substance, their power, and their immanent operations, such as understanding and willing, which are not ordered to transient effects, as moving the spheres is; and some are properties that regard exterior things, which are God, the other angels, and the lower created beings. Nor should you wonder that I call them at once properties and common, for a property is so called on different grounds. For it belongs only to the angelic nature, spiritual and separate from matter; while I am pleased to call them common properties because they do not belong to one order alone, but to all the persons of every order. The property, then, that belongs to all the angels with respect to their interior is that of which the same blessed Dionysius says in the eleventh chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy: "By a supermundane reason all the divine intellects are divided into essence, power and operation." To this, I think, is reduced the property which he had written of in chapter 3, saying: "There are three things in all the angels: order, that is, power; knowledge; and operation." Let us argue from these, then, raised higher by the devotion of faith. The essence, power and operation of Joseph were more immediately near to God in order, election and power.

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For the being of Christ God is celebrated and traced in genealogy under the being of Joseph, and to Christ that same Joseph immediately ordered all his understanding, all his will and all his operation, with the highest ardor, clear understanding and simple purity. This property, therefore, belongs to Joseph. I think these things not at all to be wondered at; for as grace raises nature to supernatural being, so putative fatherhood and true motherhood toward Christ, though differently, raised the essence, power and operation of Joseph to a likeness of the nature of the blessed angels, saving the condition of human nature. Of the Blessed Virgin we must now be silent, since that elevation is higher, more intense, and in every respect more perfect. For they differ as the relation of Joseph's fatherhood toward Christ differs from the relation of the

motherhood of the Queen of the world toward him.

But now let us speak of the common properties that follow upon exterior things. The first regards God, and is described by the Sacred Scriptures under a twofold name: namely clear vision, and sincere ministry. Of the vision it is said in Matthew 18: "Their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" [Matthew 18:10]. Of the second we have in Daniel 7: "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him" [Daniel 7:10]. Concerning his clear vision no room for doubt is left to a Catholic as to how (?)

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lofty and excellent it is, according to the quality of the highest orders. The ministry, too, was found so familiar in Joseph that all the angels together did not minister to God so familiarly as Joseph alone. For he received God, the Son of God, as a guest; he covered him with swaddling clothes when he was naked; he fed him when he was hungry; he visited him when he was weak in infancy and lying in the cradle, and even bathed him, whether by himself or by giving help to his mother. Hence at the last judgment Joseph will be able to say more boldly to God: "I, O immortal God, have not only fed the least of yours when hungry, but yourself; I gave you drink when you were thirsty, covered you when naked, visited you when sick [cf. Matthew 25:35–40]. Whatever humanity a mortal man ought to show, I showed to you made man." Wherefore I think that among the patrons of mortals before God the divine Joseph is the more effective, and, after the blessed Queen of virgins, the more excellent, saving the abyss of the judgments of the Godhead. By these things it becomes plain that Joseph had the angelic properties of ministering and of standing before God. Here let us be pleased to contemplate for a little Joseph's most clear knowledge of God, when he had him with him covered in flesh. I would not call it a knowledge more excellent than that by which the angels are beatified, but say that Joseph then knew God most loftily above other mortal men. There is a twofold knowledge of God among us. The first is said to arise by taking away:

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like those who make a statue, taking away what has been set around and hinders a clear view of the hidden form, and by taking away alone revealing the hidden beauty itself. This, then, is one way of knowing God, as St. Dionysius testifies in the book On Mystical Theology. The other knowledge he calls positing, by which we begin from the first things and descend through the middle ones to the last. Setting this aside, let us dwell upon the way of taking away, considering with what affection of mind, what sweetness, and what elevation of intellect lovable Joseph regarded Christ, the most beloved God, clothed in flesh. Touching his feet, he said in a whisper, aflame: "The earth is the footstool of your feet" [cf. Isaiah 66:1]. Seeing his hands, he turned over in his mind that saying of David: "Your hands, O Lord, have made me and formed me" [Psalm 118:73]. Turned toward his face, not unlike a cloudless sky, he thought: "O Lord, they shall walk in the light of your countenance, and they shall be happy" [cf. Psalm 88:16]. "These," he went on, "are mortal members, finite, human. What, I ask, is the beauty, the delight, the glory of the divine countenance hidden here? How great the power of the almighty arm shut up in these? Unspeakable indeed is the majesty which the earthly substance of this body hides from me. In my mind I take away the bodily bounds, the walls, the shadow of opaque flesh, and, free in spirit, I contemplate things unspeakable, full of faith, bright with light from above, instructed by the teachings

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of the holy angels, made sure by daily experience, never erring, and enlightened by the most holy examples, teaching and ways of the mother of this Son of God, my spouse." Joseph, therefore, shone with the angelic properties, and the likeness of the majesty of God the Father was not wanting to him. But called to the holy hymns, we are compelled to break off these divine consolations and put an end to this chapter.

Chapter XX. On the Gifts of the Properties of the First Hierarchy

The heavenly Jerusalem, adorned from the beginning with countless spirits, holds together, divides and governs by a divine bond all its citizens, distinguished likewise into a threefold hierarchy and a threefold order. A hierarchy, as St. Dionysius teaches, is a sacred principality and a certain sacred distinction, which is an image of the divine beauty, of its splendor and its understanding; it carries out the hidden mysteries by more sacred orders and disciplines, and strives, as is right, to express in itself the likeness of its principle. And lastly, for whoever is given to that distinction, perfection is to strive with all his efforts, in his own measure, toward the imitation of God, and, what is more excellent and worthy than

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all, as the Sacred Writings testify, to become a fellow worker with God [1 Corinthians 3:9] and, as far as he can, to show forth openly the divine operation. Thus Dionysius, in the third chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy.

Since there are nine orders of angels, a threefold order is found in the lowest hierarchy, ascending from the lowest toward the supereminent God. The first is that of the Angels, the second that of the Archangels, the third that of the Principalities.

Three properties are handed down for the order of Angels, namely: their immediate ordering toward men, a more glorious knowledge of them on the part of men, and their governance of individual men. The first of these belongs most excellently to St. Joseph, because of his immediate authority over the first man, Christ, the sole King of the human commonwealth. The second also belongs to him, since through the knowledge of Joseph the genealogy of the Savior becomes known to us. The third likewise is to be attributed to him, because of his guardianship of Christ the greatest and of the most Blessed Virgin. Nor are these few things to be noted lightly and with a flitting glance of the mind, since they contain very much. To look at the sun as we come out of darkness, we train our sight little by little. To behold these divine things, sloth and also haste in reading must be wholly avoided. The habit of faith must be stirred up, the ardor of charity kindled, and the sword of a keen

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wit exercised. The majesty of the Angels is inexplicable, since the least of them is greater than the highest among mortals. And when you are compelled by reason to attribute the properties of the Angels to Joseph, you will perceive how much loftiness of virtue there is in him. After this, take wings like an eagle [Isaiah 40:31], and you who think yourself raised higher will see that you hardly reach the first step of an immense height.

The second order is that of the Archangels, which, according to the opinion of St. Dionysius, has three properties: the first is to receive from those above; the second, to be over those below; the third, to lead those below back to those above. The first of these must necessarily be ascribed to Joseph, who received from the higher spirits the knowledge of the Son of God, from the Son himself experience, and from his wife heavenly knowledge. The second he had most excellently, because he was set over the King of all and the Queen of the world. The third he did not lack, as has been explained more fully. See in Joseph the heavenly garments of the Archangels, which will seem cheap to you, to speak after the manner of mortals, when you have climbed higher.

The third order is that of the Principalities, which flourish with three properties: the first is the imitation of the first principle; the second, the adornment of the principal virtues; the third, the leading of those below back to that principle. And Joseph imitated the principle, because

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he was set over that same first principle. For God himself called Joseph father, and was subject and obedient to him [Luke 2:51]. The adornment of his virtues the Evangelist expressed in a single word, saying: "But Joseph her husband, being a just man" [Matthew 1:19]. Note that the first seat of justice in the New Testament is ascribed to Joseph, so that the Sacred Scriptures might indicate the eminent adornment of the first order of virtues. And how Joseph strove to lead other men back to God, by nourishing the Son of God in deed, by proclaiming his power in word when he ought, and by living holily in example, we have said enough and more than enough above. And thus it is plain how the divine Joseph possessed each of the perfections of each order of the first hierarchy. Now let us pass on to fuller things, so that, by declaring the greater things of a great man, the glory of the divine name may shine more fully, be proclaimed, and burn.

Chapter XXI. On the Gifts of the Properties of the Second Hierarchy

The first order of the second hierarchy is that of the Powers, to which likewise three properties are assigned: the first is the keeping of one's own dignity; the second, the ordering of others; the third, a profitable leading back. Joseph surely

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always strove to keep his own dignity of justice, for the keeping of which he willed to put away his wife privately, not willing to expose her [Matthew 1:19]. He guarded the lilies of untouched virginity with all the strength of his soul; and the majesty of God's fatherhood he kept by humility, by lofty thoughts, by assenting to the frequent illuminations of the heavenly minds, and by keeping it[1] also in his labors and in the various chances of his journeys. How beautiful is the power of the divine Joseph, who, keeping its height unstained, exulted crowned amid the delights of Jerusalem! Moreover, he instituted another order, by which he showed that he had borne a purer flesh and possessed a more excellent soul than Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Samuel and all the fathers. This is the order of virgins and of the continent, which the immortal God taught the race of men through Joseph's working. The virgin wife, the immortal glory of women, was the heavenly law of women's continence. Joseph, a virgin, brought the teachings of this purity to men, with the approval of the only-begotten of God. Hence Joseph, calling the mortal race of men to the heavenly banquet, the uncleanness of the flesh being spurned, did not lack the title of universal leading back.

And now we must enter the middle of the heavenly city, which the order of the Virtues possesses. Of this order, likewise, three properties are asserted, after the likeness of mortals: the first is

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excellent manliness; the second, no slowness; the third, bounty toward those below. Manliness consists in three things: in undertaking what is hard, in resisting what is contrary, and in enduring evil. All these were in Joseph most effectively. For he undertook enterprises of such difficulty that, in the extreme poverty of his circumstances, he received the King of ages into his house for many years. He resisted the cruelty of tyrants, having endured countless labors. What shall I say of his swiftness? He rejoiced as a giant to run the way [Psalm 18:6] without the burden of the flesh, and running ahead with the load of the flesh on the way which the angels run without flesh, he seized the greater prize [1 Corinthians 9:24]. Wherefore, using the greatest bounty, he nourished in this manner the Son of God, with the inexhaustible treasure of all the virtues. By his munificence mortals have been endowed with the gift of the immortal kingdom. Perhaps it is also for this that the holy Evangelist calls Joseph "man", saying, "But Joseph her husband [vir]" [Matthew 1:19]: because he shone with the radiance of the virtues, and possessed the proper gifts of those heavenly spirits whom men, stammering of heavenly things, call the Virtues.

Now, now let us gird our loins and put on our boots, as if about to climb the steep summit of some great mountain. For the Divine Scriptures speak in a figure of the blessed angels as mountains; and among them the order of the Dominations, which holds the highest place of the middle hierarchy, surpasses the Riphaean

heights.

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Blessed Dionysius explains the proper gifts of the Dominations in the eighth chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy, saying: "By the name of the holy Dominations, full of mystery, I think is signified a certain loftier understanding, ignorant of all servitude, free from every low submission, and in no way whatever subjecting itself to any tyrannical unlikeness. Which, since it asserts its freedom, as yielding to no flatteries, and as true Domination, is above every servile work subject to diminution, and yields to no submission, and, loftier than all unlikeness, burns with an unfailing and ardent desire for true dominion, indeed for the very supreme ruling Godhead." Thus he. This lofty manner of speaking, this teaching obscure to unbelievers, this mystical discourse of the most holy father and martyr Dionysius, teaches seven properties of the holy Dominations: the first is freedom from servitude; the second, that no victory has ever been gained over them by enemies; the third, liberal severity; the fourth, no need of servants; the fifth, an ordered will to rule; the sixth, conformity to God; the seventh, a shared majesty of the divine dominion. By these the divine teacher shows that those blessed Dominations are subject to none of the defects of earthly dominions. For the most holy Dominations are oppressed by no servitude to superiors, they dread no assaults of enemies, they are broken

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by no windings of vices, no ambition for honor stirs them; subject to the voluntary rule of God most good, they exercise the sacred laws of ruling. And if we do not perceive the empires of the Dominations by sense, what is proclaimed by the oracle of the Holy Spirit is not to be denied by the intellect. In these most lofty matters our intellect must be brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ [2 Corinthians 10:5]. And the things we hope one day to behold with the clearest lights are to be held by sure faith. I would beg you, most blessed Dominations, whom the Church daily sings as adoring God, send down from on high to the minds of mortals some gifts of your divinity, by which humble little dogs may eat at least the crumbs that fall from your table [Matthew 15:27]. If it is not given us now to enjoy your company, let us not, we beseech you, be deprived of your favor. Since you dwell among the highest mountains of creatures, how shall we compare the inexplicable light of your gifts with another? It will therefore have to be ascribed to your divine powers if I compare what is worthy of your nature and your glory with the not unworthy gifts of the divine Joseph. The first property of the Dominations is the excellence of complete freedom from servitude. That Joseph shone with this is argued by his noble lineage and the long recounted line of his blood, and it is urged by the height of his charity and of all the virtues, which make a man free and the nursling of nobility alone.

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Add that Joseph was called the father of the King of all: by that name you would confess that he never served anyone. Hence, by avoiding the tyrants he overcame them, and he never suffered himself to be made over to the devil's rule. For this reason the second property of the Dominations belongs to him, which we said is that no trophies have ever been won over them by enemies. But let us speak of Joseph's liberal severity. Joseph was humble and gentle before God, and before the Son of God and his mother, his spouse; but he did all things at the command of reason. Dwelling in the midst of a depraved nation [Philippians 2:15], he left out nothing that would help toward living holily, nothing that would hinder justice, longing to satisfy all. This is that noble severity in which holy men flourish, by which they neither spurn the favor of men nor court it. For it is found the inseparable companion of him in whom dwells the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, whom Christ the greatest sends down from above. Liberality is never separated from glorious ways. This race of men, not to say of angels, has always a cheerful face, whether it speaks to Jews or to Gentiles, to the friends of God or to his enemies. They bestow on all what is theirs, and do not keep their own things hidden in close-fisted darkness. These ways, then, we call by the name of liberal severity: and Dionysius teaches that they belong to the most holy Dominations, and we do not doubt that they are almost

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always present in those who follow the footsteps of Christ. Mindful of the Gospel discourse, let us bring forward the fact that the Pharisees objected this liberal severity to Christ the Lord, saying: "Why does your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" Jesus answered: "They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" [Matthew 9:11–12; Mark 2:16–17]. See the divine liberality of the physician who goes of his own accord to the sick and gives them bitter cups to drink, so that they may feel the health which in their sickness they could not perceive. Hence arises the supreme pleasantness of a power that has no need of servants, in those who hold the reins of such a principality, after the example of Christ God, who says of the kingdom of this world: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews" [John 18:36]. For those who rule according to the laws of the Christian empire have servants as though they had them not [cf. 1 Corinthians 7:29]. And so they rule over those below as over companions of the kingdom, the divine charity of heavenly ardor compelling them to this. Hence, lastly, there arose in Joseph three properties of the Dominations: namely a will to rule with an ordered mind, conformity to God, and a shared majesty of his principality. These we venerate in silence, offering readers matter for contemplation. For it is not right to pursue the angelic gifts of Joseph with too slender a discourse, since they are joined to the sweetness of the one truth.

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And truth is the object of the intellect alone, which the divine light surrounds, as the prophet says: "And your truth is round about you" [Psalm 88:9].

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[1] The first edition has "observare" (Editor).

Chapter XXII. On the Gifts of the Properties of the Highest Hierarchy

Reaching now the summit of the whole universe, let us explain that the properties of the highest hierarchy were not lacking to Joseph. Its first order is that of the Thrones, to which, among other things, three are ascribed, especially by most blessed Dionysius, through whom the orthodox faith has understood very much about the dignity of the heavenly spirits: the first is the encircling of the king; the second, the receiving of the king; the third, the carrying of the king. Although the Sacred Writings attribute the first property to the Queen of heaven, virgin and mother, in whose womb God made man enclosed himself, for which reason she is believed to be that woman whom Jeremiah foretold in prophecy in chapter 31, saying: "The Lord has created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man" [Jeremiah 31:22]; yet it can also belong most fittingly to Joseph. For he encircled Christ God, coming into this world, with his house, his swaddling clothes and his bosom. He received him as he came from the journey, and he carried him into Egypt as he avoided

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the tyrant. He brought him back to Nazareth, fulfilling what was written by the prophet [Matthew 2:23]. By these things it is most fittingly established that the three properties of the Thrones were found in Joseph.

But truly, let us stop here for a little and say boldly that the aforesaid properties of Joseph were more excellent, and his described gifts more glorious, than those attributed to the Thrones. The Peripatetics say that the signification of a name is twofold: the first is that by which the name signifies that from which its signification was first imposed; the other is according to the use of the name. For example, "sight" indicates the act of the visual power; but usage has it that it is applied to the other powers too: indeed, we call the action of the intellectual part by the word "sight", as the holy Evangelist testifies, saying: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" [Matthew 5:8]. I would say, then, that the things signified by these

names, encircling, receiving and carrying, if we attend to the first origin of their signifying, belong more excellently and more gloriously to Joseph than to the Thrones. For in them the things signified by the said names, ascribed to them, indicate degrees of divine grace unknown to us; and we stammer of things which mortals cannot reach even with the mind. But, O divine Joseph, when you encircled God made man, received him into your house, and carried him in your bosom, we see with clear light what you did; we understand it and know it most fittingly. I myself venerate

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the majesty of the Thrones, most lofty in the degree of their divine gift: but I cannot reach them except with a blind light. But Joseph was a man, working with God things known to mortals, which our words first sound forth.

There follows the order of the Cherubim, to which Dionysius ascribes chiefly three things. For the spirits of this order, each by a certain special gift, lead all things back to God their author, always working for the honor of the divine majesty. And the examples of their actions are by their very nature examples, as though they behold in themselves what it befits them to do. Hence this order is described as leading back to God, active and exemplary. These things Joseph possessed most fully: he led mortals back to God as far as he could strive, by constant works of virtue, of which likewise there is a heavenly exemplar for those who do not spurn his supreme honors. Sleep here a little, O soul, and keep watch with your heart [Song of Songs 5:2], meditating on the deeds of Joseph, and, as truth compels, you will cry out that he was a Cherub "while the spirit ruled these limbs" [Virgil, Aeneid 4.336]. Remember the account of sacred Genesis, which declares that God set a Cherub to be the keeper and guardian of the earthly paradise [Genesis 3:24]. Recall too that the Virgin Mother is signified by the figure of paradise, and that Christ is the tree of life, which is planted near the running waters [Psalm 1:3]. Now if these things are believed to be of established truth, why should not Joseph

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be declared a Cherub, who was set by the immortal God as the keeper of both the most holy Virgin and Christ? Recall the rest yourself, so that with most lively faith you may reach the most lofty seats of the Seraphim, and rise to a fuller wonder at the virtues of most blessed Joseph.

Although the Seraphim possess many gifts, and nothing is found in those below that does not shine more excellently in them, yet let it please us now to treat of three, so that we may now close the streams, since the meadows have drunk enough [Virgil, Eclogues 3.111]. The first is the more than fervent ardor of most fervent love, which, secondly, is unceasing, and thirdly, unbending. The Seraphim always burn for God, and cannot but burn; and therefore that love is called unceasing; and since it never turns aside outside God himself, it is called unbending. The whole majesty of the Seraphim, then, all their virtues, each of their gifts, become known to mortals through the flame of most ardent love. This divine love, like the Seraphim, though it seems to lie hidden in Joseph, is yet betrayed by its own light, and presents itself to us most manifestly. For by that same burning flame he both withstood the tyrants and overcame a thousand arts of harming. Of Joseph's love toward God let the tongue be silent; let his ways and his life be examined. The divine Joseph, then, was an Angel in life, an Archangel in office, a Principality in victory over kings, a Power in the working

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of supernatural things, a Virtue in godlike perfection, a Domination in the subjection of the creature to him, a Throne in the bodily receiving of God, a Cherub in the knowledge of secrets, and a Seraph in supreme love of the Creator.

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The Fourth Part

Prooemium to the Fourth Part

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You, most holy father Joseph, divine husband of the Queen of heaven, whom lofty minds ought to have taken up, setting aside all common themes, we have followed through a long series of chapters; now we must attempt the way by which we may reach the majesty of your glory among those on high. A hard work indeed, but sweet, seemly, and exceedingly to be desired, for the spirit is now winged with great and ardent hope. My breast exults with heavenly joy, it leaps for gladness and says: Behold, I am the first in the empire of the Church militant to bring forth a volume in which I gather into one the gifts of Joseph, which should surely be opened by the voices of angels. I am the first, I say, O most blessed Joseph, to bring back to you the palms of your gifts, and, as one setting up a temple of marble in a green field, I myself, my head adorned with the leaves of the trimmed olive, bring gifts [cf. Virgil, Georgics 3.13, 21]. Let unhappy Envy be far off [cf. Georgics 3.37]; let the empty breeze depart from lofty brows, by which the minds of mortals are tossed both by heaven and by earth. For we, glad only in the triumph of Joseph, desire nothing earthly for such great gifts. It is enough for me that, after long ages, blind minds should come to know the divine Joseph. With what wavering spirit I know not, men of great and excellent

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talent have not striven to open so many gifts, hidden as in the secret chests of the Church. Now, now let him who was called the father of the eternal Word and the spouse of the kindly Mother flourish among the people under the name of Saint; let him be praised, let him be pleasing; let him be honored with praises and heavenly hymns, and, worthy of great solemnities, be given the highest honor of the saints. Surely these words of ours will seem cheap to the most illustrious minds, when, through rough forests, in more pleasant meadows, through fruitful fields, they shall have striven to gather the most delightful flowers of Joseph's gifts. O Father, O eternal Power of men and of the heavenly ones [cf. Virgil, Aeneid 10.18], who were pleased to send down from on high into the arms of Joseph your Son, begotten before the ages, to be nourished for the whole world, compel now the angelic minds to set forth how great is his honor with you. Joseph is the most excellent father of heroes. Stammering and unlearned as I am, why should I dare such great things? Grant, Father, that I may now pour forth lofty consolations, and make known to mortals the glory well known among the dwellers in heaven. Meanwhile I myself, bold, bearing these gifts as among the white clouds of the upper air, will be present, and, with slender strength made perfect, I will follow out the gifts of the great husband of the Queen of all, which, glad in a worthy honor, I cannot fulfil. Though unskilled, I will strive to take fire from the rays of Christ, and to look undaunted on the triumphs of the Lord of fire. Joseph himself, holding the lofty palace of the heavenly Jerusalem, will be present and favorable, granting his help, lest I be crushed by so great a weight. Thus shall I wonder at such gifts of the supreme father. But since we are still standing in the

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entrance, before the very beginning of the gates of the fourth volume, we must hasten to penetrate its interior. For this work of mine, such as it is, I ask in return the most ample gift of the prayers of the faithful, so that, helped by them, I may imitate something of the virtue of the divine Joseph and obtain the joy of the good things to come.

Chapter I. On the Gift of the Time of the Death of St. Joseph

I find three opinions among Catholic doctors on the time of Joseph's death.

Some assert that he died before the preaching of Christ, and that his mother passed into the keeping of Christ. Hence Ubertino of Casale, of the Order of Minors, says: "Perhaps St. Joseph also died before the baptism of Christ, because from then on no mention seems to be made of him in the Gospel, except that they reproached Jesus with being the son of a carpenter." Thus he.

Others say that Joseph died during the time of the Savior's preaching, and that the Savior was present with the crowd of disciples when that same Joseph gave up his last breath.

And some assert that Joseph died after the death of the Savior, but that before that he had been separated from the Virgin.

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Hence the Master, in the Scholastic History, speaking of the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee, says: "Joseph was not invited, but his wife. Hence some say that Joseph was dead and that the Virgin had passed into the keeping of her son, because he is not read of again thereafter in the Gospel. But if he was not yet dead, still it is certain that at the Passion of the Lord he was dead, because his wife was commended to another." Thus Peter.

On the third opinion there is the chapter Si enim, Cause 27, question 2: "For if he had known her and had her in place of a wife, how would the Lord have commended her to the disciple, as though without comfort and having nothing at all, bidding him take her to his own?" [John 19:27]. The Gloss: "An argument that the Virgin was separated from Joseph while he was living. Argument above, [c.] Ecce …"

And this is against Peter Comestor, who said that Joseph was dead at the time of the Lord's Passion; for here the cause is expressed why the Lord separated her from Joseph. But I myself agree with St. Jerome, who, writing against Helvidius, asserts that Christ, hanging on the cross, commended his mother, a widow, to John the disciple. Joseph, therefore, had died by that time. The same is asserted by doctors of illustrious talent who have searched out with lofty mind the deeds of this most holy Joseph. Among them was John Gerson the chancellor, who

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also composed the Josephina in heroic verse. The same is asserted by the Orientals, who have an ancient history of Joseph. This likewise agrees with reason and with the manner of speaking of the holy Gospel, and it accords with the ways of the divine goodness.

Reason persuades this, because, since marriage is indissoluble of its nature, it was not reasonable that a marriage of such perfection should be dissolved among mortals, even by divine authority.

Secondly. Further, that marriage bore the figure of the marriage of Christ and the Church, which is joined to him by a perpetual covenant.

Thirdly. Again, charity never falls away [1 Corinthians 13:8], nor does its bond, while charity endures. But between the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph there was a love according to perfect charity: therefore that love was never dissolved, and consequently neither was the marriage, especially since no authority and no necessity intervened.

Fourthly. Likewise, that marriage shone with every perfection, as was proved above. But perpetual cohabitation belongs to a perpetual marriage, and it does not bear a long separation. It therefore accords wonderfully with reason that Joseph, while he lived, was never separated from the Blessed Virgin.

Fifthly. And indeed, if the manner of the holy Gospel is noted, it asserts the same. For it calls Mary his wife. In the book of the imperial

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census, too, Joseph was enrolled with Mary his wife, who was with child [Luke 2:5]. Nor is it reasonable, indeed it seems impious, to say that Joseph gave the Blessed Virgin a bill of divorce, as the Law of Moses commanded [Deuteronomy 24:1], when there was no cause: unless perhaps Joseph had wished to lie, which a just man does not do. The manner of speaking of the holy Gospel, therefore, indicates that Joseph and Mary were spouses for ever.

Sixthly. Moreover, Joseph circumcised Christ as his son, presented him in the Temple with Mary his wife, and brought him up in the sight of all, whence he was also publicly thought to be his son. He would therefore have been convicted of rashness, or of inconstancy, or even of impiety, if Joseph, while living, had abandoned his partnership and cohabitation with Mary. But Joseph himself was most humble, steadfast and most devout. Look and contemplate diligently those words of Luke 2: "And he was subject to them" [Luke 2:51]; these are the last words of the Gospel about St. Joseph, and you will understand that to a Catholic, keen and reasonable mind they proclaim this inseparability.

Seventhly. Then, that Joseph was never separated from the most Blessed Virgin while he lived accords with the ways of the works of the divine goodness. For to its most perfect works the divine goodness gives the willing, the undertaking and the accomplishing. But the marriage of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin was a work of the divine goodness: therefore it shone, perfect in its beginning, middle and end. Therefore it was inseparable.

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Eighthly. Moreover, the works of the divine goodness pertaining to the incarnation of the Son of God have shone with every exemplary virtue, whether we know it or do not understand it. But this marriage was the first work surrounding the incarnation of the Son of God: therefore it ought not to have the stain of separation.

Ninthly. Again, the exercise of the works of the divine goodness is in conformity with the common law that directs those works. But this is the first law of marriage instituted by the divine goodness: inseparability during the life of both spouses. Genesis 2: "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" [Genesis 2:24]. This marriage, therefore, was never separated.

Hence Peter de la Palud says, on the Fourth Book, distinction 30, question 2, article 2: "Since the good of the sacrament is inseparability, and they were not separated until death, it is proved that Joseph was dead when the Virgin was commended to another." Thus he.

It remains to answer the sayings of the Gloss and the text of the Decretum. And to the authority of the Gloss is said what John Capreolus says on the Fourth Book, distinction 26, at the beginning of his reply to the arguments against the second conclusion: "Jurists," he says, "often form false opinions in the faculty of theology, unless they are instructed in it; just as, conversely, pure theologians often form false opinions in the matter of civil and decretal law, unless

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they are instructed in it. And of such jurists can be said that saying of the first book On the Soul: The art of weaving does not happen to enter into flutes." Thus he.

To the words of the text, which is said to have been taken by Gratian from the second Homily of St. John Chrysostom on Matthew, it is said, first, that wherever it may be, it is to be understood of separation by death. I say, secondly, that I have diligently searched the text cited in the second Homily of St. John Chrysostom, and have found nothing of the kind, nor even anything similar; rather, things opposed and contrary. For thus it is found in the second Homily, on Joseph: "For he was so modest and upright, and so free from vicious passion, that even under the compulsion of suspicion he would not proceed to the punishment of the Virgin: how then would he violate the precepts of the Law through lust? For he was living

a philosophy above the Law: for to put away, and to put away privately, was without doubt the part of one philosophizing above the Law; how then would he admit anything against the Law?" Likewise in the fourth Homily he says: "For when he," namely Joseph, "who is seen to have been of special zeal, not only does not cast off his betrothed nor brand her with disgrace, but even receives her into partnership and honors her after the birth, it is surely manifest that, unless he had clearly known that the child had been conceived by the working of the Holy Spirit, he would never have kept her with him, nor

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ministered to her in all that she needed." Again in that Homily, expounding the words of the Gospel, "Fear not to take Mary your wife" [Matthew 1:20], Chrysostom says thus: "He joins them, not in the solemn covenant of marriage, but in the partnership of a common dwelling, and he joins them through the office of my voice. For just as Christ himself afterwards commends her to the disciple, so now the angel commends her to the betrothed, who was to have only her companionship, without the covenant of nuptials." Thus Chrysostom. Therefore, where the Decretists assert texts taken from the doctors that are doubtful, they must be weighed more diligently.

Chapter II. On the Gift of St. Joseph Descending to the Holy Fathers in Limbo

Since we reasonably believe that Joseph died before the Passion of Christ, we must consider the privileges with which he was adorned among the fathers who were in Limbo.

The first privilege is called a most certain embassy. For he was appointed ambassador to announce the incarnation of the Son of God, of which he himself was an undoubted witness. Many kings and prophets desired to see what Joseph saw, and did not see it [Luke 10:24]; and therefore, dying, they announced it from afar. But

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Joseph, dying, made known to the fathers what he had seen and heard. This dignity the Savior describes under the name of beatitude, saying: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see" [Luke 10:23]. And perhaps for this reason, when John asked, "Are you he that is to come, or look we for another?" [Matthew 11:3], the Savior did not wish to answer explicitly yes or no, as if indicating that he had sent another, who had such great certainty about the incarnation of the Son of God, and greater than John himself. This embassy was prefigured in Genesis 39 and 40, in Joseph in prison comforting those committed to the prison; and likewise in Tobias going among all the captives and giving them counsels of salvation [Tobit 1:19].

The second privilege was a most abundant narration. For it is to be believed that Joseph told the fathers fully the manner of the incarnation of the Son of God, his birth and the course of his life. And this privilege too is plainly contained in the figures mentioned.

The third privilege was a most speedy deliverance. For the soul of Joseph did not remain shut up in Limbo for many years; but, like another Joseph endowed with a double robe [cf. Genesis 41:42], namely the beatitude of soul and of body, Joseph sat first after Christ the King of kings, and accompanied him as he ascended to heaven.

Do not, I pray, doubt these things, O faithful soul, but consider the wisdom and goodness of God poured out through creatures. Gather, as was commanded of old to the Jews, the manna before sunrise [Exodus 16:21; Wisdom 16:28], that is, before

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your thoughts boil with the heat of temporal things; and you will keep it uncorrupted, that is, you will behold this most clear truth.

Consider with how great honors and benefits an illustrious and not degenerate son honors a parent worthy of veneration, as nature compels, reason persuades, and custom proclaims. What then must be said of Christ the true God, "of whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named" [Ephesians 3:15], who "makes his sun to rise upon the good and the bad" [Matthew 5:45]? I know, and surely know, that the faithful man who tastes these things with a sound palate will praise them; and he himself will confess that Joseph's merits are greater than these praises we have written.

Chapter III. On the Gift of the Glorification of St. Joseph in Soul and Body

We believe, as the holy Gospel teaches, that after the Passion of the Savior many bodies of the saints arose, as is said in Matthew 27 [Matthew 27:52]; and we are persuaded by the following reasons that the body of Joseph was among them.

For that privilege was given to those saints because of the excellence of their holiness. And we believe that Joseph was inferior to none in holiness. Therefore he was endowed with this privilege.

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Secondly. Further, it belongs to a son to honor his parent and to care for the body of his failing father: therefore Christ, the reputed son of Joseph, loving him more than if he had been his natural son, when he raised many bodies of the saints from the dust, did not suffer the little body of his putative father to remain in the dust. This reason is supported by the argument of St. Bernard, who argues, saying: "It was not fitting that he who placed the honoring of parents under the strictness of a precept should leave the flesh of his mother on earth without honor."

Thirdly. Likewise, it is pious to believe that he who in mortal life honored Joseph above others, calling him by the name of father, honored him above others in death.

Fourthly. Further, the Son, rising again, filled with every consolation his mother, who had suffered with him: therefore also the father who had brought him up.

And perhaps Joseph was one of those who appeared to many [Matthew 27:53], and especially to the most Blessed Virgin. But the Holy Spirit did not will the evangelists to write this, for the same reason for which he did not will them to write that his mother was to be a witness of his resurrection.

We must hold, then, what agrees with the truth; and, as blessed Augustine says, let truth itself become authority, without which authority neither is nor avails. Nor is this a new teaching, for St. Bernardine, of the Order of Minors, wrote and preached it before us.

Chapter IV. On the Gift of the Threefold Aureole: of Martyrdom, of Virginity, and of the Doctorate

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The doctors of the orthodox faith prove that three aureoles are given by God to the blessed in the heavenly fatherland, whether to one person or to different persons, according to the degrees of their merits. The first is that of martyrdom, which the rite of the Church takes more strictly than the saints have written that it is given to the blessed in glory. For no one is numbered among the martyrs by the holy Roman Church except one who has actually and voluntarily laid down his life for the faith and has died a violent death. But among those on high many are given the palm of martyrdom whose life the sword of the persecutor did not take away, as is read of St. John the Evangelist and of St. Martin. This rite of the early Church is not without the mystery

and providence of the Holy Spirit. If, then, we speak of the palm of martyrdom according to the custom of the Church militant, Joseph is not to be reckoned or proclaimed a martyr; but if of merit among those on high, we do not doubt at all that he was given the crown of martyrdom, and we prove it.

First, from the nature of the aureole. For the aureole is a certain joy over works done by oneself which have the nature of an excellent victory. Hence it is plain that it differs from the aurea, which is joy in God and is owed to the common victory. And as the aurea

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is principally in the soul, so also is the aureole; but by overflow there will be in the body a certain seemliness and singular beauty representing the aureole: in the preacher, in the mouth; in virgins, in the parts now held shameful; in martyrs, in their scars or in other parts according to the kind of martyrdom; so that it will at once appear from the look of the body what each was, virgin, martyr or doctor. This account of the nature of the aureole having been given, let us see what excellent victory there was in Joseph.

The first was over himself, for he endured exile and countless labors so as to keep the Son of God from the dark slaughter of the tyrant. The second was over the devil. But these victories are commonly presupposed to all the aureoles, as without them there is no aureole. The third was the victory over the tyrants who persecuted Christ and strove to kill him with the material sword. By this victory it is clearly evident that he did not dread a voluntary death for God. For this reason he can be said to have well merited the palm of martyrdom.

Secondly. Again, the nature of the palm of martyrdom belongs to the actual giving of one's life. But Joseph, actually offering it, gave it for God, although the tyrant could not snatch it away. Joseph, therefore, well merited the palm of martyrdom.

Thirdly. Likewise, the sign of the desire for martyrdom is charity, which was found most excellently in Joseph. It is therefore persuasive that he is adorned with the palm of martyrdom among those on high.

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Fourthly. Moreover, the other martyrs, from the abundance of divine grace, desired to lay down their life for Christ, as the deacon Vincent said: "This is what I have always desired and sought with all my prayers." But Joseph's grace was abundant and overflowing. The same, therefore, follows.

As to the aureole of virginity of Joseph, Catholic doctors now have no hesitation at all: both because they believe that Joseph died a virgin in mind, body, vow and state; and because bridegroom and bride are wont to be arrayed with common adornments.

As to the aureole of preachers we argue thus. It is more to preach Christ by deed than by word. But Joseph preached Christ supremely by deeds, by which indeed he gave occasion to the whole world to be converted to adore the true God made man. Likewise, true preachers are enlightened from above, speak in their time, and strive to convert everyone to know the true God. But Joseph was enlightened by the angels; in his time he spoke of God with those with whom he lived. For the words of the preacher are the smoke of the divine fire burning in the heart and striving to lead mortals, in the knowledge of Christ, to eternal life. Let us stop here a little and meditate on Joseph dwelling for many years in Egypt. Do we not believe that

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Joseph exhorted the Egyptians with whom he lived countless times to worship the true God? That, if it ever happened that they heard that the Messiah promised in the Law of the Jews had come, he persuaded them to believe? And he said: "He will be true God and true man, and he will renew the world. He will destroy your idols, make new the sacrifices, renew the laws, the ways of life, the kingdoms and the empire. In this age, those who discern the deeper things of the holy Law with true understanding declare that the times of the

Messiah are at hand. And this is surely not doubtful to me. I exhort you, O Egyptian brothers, rejoice, for he will redeem you from the power of darkness. You, though men, believing in him, will be like the angels; indeed, the Messiah will at last give to men who believe in him the eternal kingdom of heaven." And when he lived in Nazareth of Galilee as a known citizen, he preached fuller things daily. O how often he exhorted the well-disposed and his true friends to observe most attentively the face, the words and the ways of Jesus his son! For he thought that that flesh would give forth to others the fragrance of the divinity, as it did to him. Lastly, I persuade myself that, just as through the presence of the Body of Christ in the Church and the power of the sacraments very many are saved, so also in the town of Nazareth, in those times, many were converted to God by the conversation of Christ, by the ways of the most Blessed Virgin, and also by the merits and words of Joseph.

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Without contradiction, I say, from Peter, I persuade myself of many things which Catholic minds, resting within themselves, will contemplate more fittingly. And if Peter, whose throne the light of faith surrounds, does not teach them more openly, nor contradicts them, let us then profit by meditating on what Peter permits by keeping silence.

Chapter V. On the Gifts of the Fruits

As we are about to speak of the gifts of the fruits, let us presuppose three things: the first is the definition of fruit; the second, to whom it is given; the third, its division. Fruit, as distinguished from the aurea and the aureole, is a reward specially owed to a man because, from the seed of the word of God, he rises to spirituality by cultivating his flesh. Hence the aurea is joy in God, the aureole joy in triumph; but fruit is joy and delight in spiritual exercise, because spiritual delight is specially owed to him who has renounced carnal affection.

As to the second, I say that the fruits are owed and given to the virtue of continence or chastity. For know that, according to the doctors, just as the aureole is not owed to any victory whatever, but to an excellent one, in an outstanding matter, so also the fruit in its own way. For since

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it implies a delight owed to one who spurns delight, it is therefore owed not to the virtue that spurns lesser delights, but to that which spurns the greater ones, namely venereal delights, as continence does.

As to the division, a threefold fruit is taught by the Savior: thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold [Matthew 13:8]. The reason for this is as follows. Since fruit is owed to continence, there are different fruits according to the different ways of being continent. And continence is threefold: for the necessity of salvation, which is that of married people, for venereal delight with one's spouse alone is lawful; for perfection according to a fixed time, as that of widows; and for perfection universally and simply, as that of virgins. To one who is continent with the continence needed for salvation, then, the thirtyfold fruit is owed; to one continent with an abundant continence for a fixed time, such as the continence of widows who abstain from second marriages, the sixtyfold fruit is owed; but to one continent simply and universally, which belongs to virginal perfection, the hundredfold fruit is owed. And just as a vow or purpose without effect is not enough for the aureole, so neither is it for the fruit. Hence if an incontinent man repents at death with a purpose of continence, he has the aurea indeed, but not the fruit. But one who, having been corrupted, repented of his sin and lived in health with a purpose of being continent except within marriage,

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has the thirtyfold fruit; but if with a purpose of being continent simply, he has the sixtyfold. For he cannot have the hundredfold fruit, as neither the aureole, since he has once been corrupted in heart and body.

But as regards Joseph, it is proved that he shines most magnificently among those on high with the gifts of the fruits: both because he had the first and the last together, for he was a perpetual virgin and a husband; and because he had the thirtyfold fruit perfectly. For in the thirtyfold fruit, which is owed to the married, the perfection of eternal glory is signified by the number ten, and by the number three the three goods of marriage, fidelity, offspring and sacrament, through which the married tend to eternal life: and Joseph had these three most excellently; therefore he had also the thirtyfold fruit. The hundredfold fruit, which consists of ten multiplied by itself, signifies the angelic life on earth, through which one tends to the company of the angels in heaven. Joseph surely led an angelic life on earth with the King and Queen of the angels, called the father of the King and the husband of the Queen; familiar also with the angels, by whose illumination, admonition and appearance he was directed to carry out the ministry for which he had been chosen by God. I would dare to argue that no one among mortal men possessed a more fruitful tree of the hundredfold fruit than Joseph. Noah and Abraham reached the sweetness of the sixtyfold fruit,

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but never of the hundredfold, because they died not virgins, but having known women. Moses did not shrink from the embraces of a wife, though while living he was endowed with the gift of divine vision. We nowhere read that Joseph saw God in his essence: but he persevered most joyfully, a virgin and innocent, until death. The virgin, therefore, possesses the hundredfold, which the mind of Moses does not have, nor will ever experience in itself. O immortal God, to whom shall I liken Joseph your father, if not to you and to your Mother? He knew not the sin of the flesh, as David, Solomon and the Prophets did, "nor was guile found in his mouth" [1 Peter 2:22]. O most fruitful earth of the divine Joseph, which by its very nature knew not the barrenness of the rock, was ignorant of the pricking of thorns, and felt not the wicked beaks of the birds of the air [cf. Matthew 13:4–7]! O truly blessed man, Joseph, whom we know most surely to be endowed among the heavenly ones with the singular gift of the fruits, as faith, reason and the interior spirit teach most effectively!

Chapter VI. That the Feast of St. Joseph Ought to Be Celebrated

The faithful ought to celebrate annual feasts in honor of most blessed Joseph, compelled by several reasons. The first of these is taken from the example of Christ God, who says: "Learn of me" [Matthew 11:29].

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Gregory: "Every action of Christ is our instruction." Likewise it is a rule of conduct for all faithful servants that they love and venerate him whom the king loves and venerates, or at least venerate him the more. Since, then, God made man venerated Joseph on earth, by interior charity truly loving him, by exterior humility subjecting himself to him, and by receiving benefits from him in the weakness of a frailer nature, we too are likewise compelled, lest we be found ungrateful and wicked servants [Matthew 25:26], to venerate Joseph by celebrating his feast day every year. For it is this annual honor that we are wont to pay to the saints whom we love and honor.

The second reason is taken from the consideration of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, whom those who do not love and worship are like senseless beasts [cf. Psalm 48:13]. But the most holy Virgin loved Joseph and venerated him above others, since she was his true wife, and that same Joseph directed and governed her at God's command. You can never be a true worshipper of the most Blessed Virgin unless you strive to imitate her will and her ways. And she, while she lived her life among mortals, was zealous for the honor of Joseph her spouse. For this reason there is no doubt at all that his annual feast will be most acceptable to the most Blessed Virgin.

The third reason is taken from the excellence of the holiness of the divine Joseph, by which he is reasonably believed to be inferior to very few

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in the life of blessedness, as can be made plain from what has been said and is to be said.

Chapter VII. How the Feast of St. Joseph Is to Be Celebrated

Concerning the explanation of the manner of celebrating the feast of St. Joseph we shall say three things. First it will be declared that his name is to be placed in the number of the confessors; secondly, that his office ought to be sung solemnly; thirdly, in what order he is to be named in the litanies. Whoever is honored in the empire of the Church militant was either an apostle (and to increase the number of the apostles belongs to God alone), or a martyr, or a confessor.

Those are called confessors who have made known the name of the Savior to mortals by observing the divine commandments. Of these, some devoted themselves to divine worship, others to preaching, to lectures, some to writing volumes, and some, intent on works of mercy, have left us examples of right living. Among these Joseph ought rightly to be enrolled in the Church; indeed, he shines most gloriously in their crown. For above others he loved his author, he devoted himself to the service of the Savior and to works of mercy, attending not to men,

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but to the true God himself clothed in human flesh, and to his most blessed Mother. He who first obtained the name of just, as the holy Gospel testifies, is believed to have worshipped the infant Christ with such ardor of mind as human mortality cannot explain. Since, then, Joseph did not undergo a violent death for Christ, he is rightly to be placed among the confessors; and he is reckoned the first of them, as John the Baptist is proclaimed the first martyr from the Savior's time.

For this reason, since he yields to none of the confessors in merits, his office will have to be celebrated solemnly. Moreover, if holy Mother Church commands that the apostles, the evangelists, and the four doctors of the Church, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory, be venerated in a special way (On the Relics and Veneration of the Saints, in the Sext), because by preaching the doctrine of Christ they were the lights of the world, why is Joseph not to be venerated with the same solemnity, who nourished the very Word of God for the whole world? Christ called the apostles friends [John 15:15]: Joseph he himself, God and man, named father. We honor the patrons of cities with a solemn feast: why shall we not venerate with the same honor the patron of our Queen, the Virgin Mary? Let us, then, honor blessed Joseph with an office of the highest solemnity, whom on earth Christ and the Blessed Virgin venerated above other men. Add what honors you can to

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Joseph's solemnities, since his merits are not yet fully known to us. With what applause, what gladness, what honors and praises do we believe the heavenly Jerusalem resounds when Joseph is named, whom God himself deigned to call parent, whom the Queen of the angels still calls her most loving spouse!

For these same reasons his name is by no means to be passed over in silence in the litanies. Joseph is to be named first in the order of the confessors among the saints. For it does not seem right that he should hold a lower place to whom the Savior granted a place above himself. Nor ought his name to be placed beneath another's, to whom Christ himself was subject. For because of Christ and his most blessed Virgin Mother, every honor shown to Joseph ought to be most glorious and most worthy.

Chapter VIII. Why the Celebration of St. Joseph Was Omitted by Our Forebears

Many rightly tend to wonder why the solemnity of St. Joseph was not celebrated by the ancients. To them it is answered that the fathers, the founders of our holy Mother Church, strove with all the desires of their souls to preach to the peoples the divine nature of the Lord Jesus,

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dashing against the rock of faith the countless heresies that everywhere rose up against that same divinity. For this reason the fathers refrained from these solemnities, especially the Western fathers, and above all the Roman Church, which, itself remaining unstained, destroyed every heresy that exalted itself against the holy and true doctrine of the faith.

Secondly. Joseph is likewise as it were midway between the fathers of the New and of the Old Testament; and feasts in honor of the ancient fathers have been celebrated more rarely. Hence Ubertino of Casale, of the Order of Minors, says: "The Church does not keep a solemnity of St. Joseph, because he went down to Limbo and belongs to the Old Testament."

Thirdly. The end of Joseph's life, his miracles and his benefits were also in part hidden; and afterwards, when the truth of the Church was at peace and these were brought more clearly to light, they became known to the Catholic peoples.

Fourthly. Add that the first fathers were accustomed from the beginning to keep the feasts of the martyrs only.

Fifthly. They also thought that the feasts of the Savior's Nativity, of the Circumcision, of the Adoration by the Magi, of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and of the return of the boy Jesus from Egypt, were almost common to Christ God, to the Blessed Virgin, and to Joseph. For this reason, content with no other feast, they venerated the saint of the Lord, Joseph. But as the end of the world draws near, and the divinity of the Savior has been made manifest enough and more than enough to those willing to believe, and the more obscure places of the Divine

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Scriptures have also been explained, and it has now been made plain to all that Joseph, although the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, never attained to the use of marriage with her, but, having made a common vow together with the untouched virgin, kept his virginity, it is reasonable to believe that the immortal God wills Joseph to be venerated with special honors in the empire of the Church militant at the end of time. It is surely fitting that holy Mother Church should at some time honor with singular reverence him whom Christ venerated as his father. And since the beginnings of the infant Church and the middle times, driven by the persecutions of tyrants and the fires of heresies, prevented this, it follows that these things should be done at the end of time. Therefore we are not afraid to say that it is most pleasing to God if anyone implores St. Joseph with prayers. For what will the Son of God refuse Joseph, whom he always loved with the whole heart of charity? What son, unless ungrateful, consigns his father's benefits to eternal oblivion? And the Son of God makes his sun to rise upon the good and the bad [Matthew 5:45]. When, therefore, we come to St. Joseph to implore his intercession, let us not, I pray, waver, let us not fear; but let us hold with constant faith that such prayers will be most pleasing to the immortal God, and also to the Queen of the angels. God himself, the Son of God, commanded this great precept to be observed, under threat of temporal

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and eternal curses: "Honor your father" [Exodus 20:12]. Reason urges the same, nature compels it: why then should we doubt that we do a thing most acceptable to the Son of God when we venerate with such services his father Joseph, for so the Gospels call him? He who honors the father honors the son. He who loves the bridegroom loves the bride too. He who gives gifts to the bridegroom fills the bride likewise with joy. Among the citizens of heaven charity is not lessened; mutual love, affection and desires are not lost, but rise

up to perfection. For those who loved one another here according to God will, when they have entered the heavenly fatherland, embrace one another with a fuller love. There will be no envy there: the gladness will be common, and all else common. And if these things are found in the saints, what will there be in the Holy of holies, the true God? Therefore, when the Son of God sees in the light of his glory anyone devoted to St. Joseph, eager for his honor and imploring his intercession, he surely rejoices, so that, as a son, he may honor his nourisher; he grants the prayers, hears them more mercifully, and for his father's glory pours out heavenly gifts more abundantly on those who call upon him. Or do we perhaps doubt that the Queen of the world desires with all the longing of her soul the glory and honor of her most true spouse? Whoever is foolish enough to think that charity grows cold in the saints may say that such things are not most pleasing to those on high. Therefore, O faithful and devout servant of the Blessed Virgin, when you

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say her Rosary, do not be loath at the end to do something in honor of her spouse, the divine Joseph. For by such things your offerings will be rendered more pleasing to God, and by them you will gladden alike heaven and earth: heaven, I say, because the whole heavenly court applauds when the nourisher of the Savior is honored; and earth, because man, born of the earth, and holy Mother Church herself, which is the land of the living in the life of grace, receive heavenly gifts through the merits and prayers of most holy Joseph.

Chapter IX. On the Custom of the Orientals Who Celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph

The Catholics of the East have been accustomed to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph on the twentieth of July with great veneration. For they honor St. Joseph with great honors and rejoice exceedingly on his feast. In their churches a certain life of St. Joseph is customarily read. This, translated from Hebrew into the Latin tongue by a Catholic man who honors the Roman Church with due veneration, came into my hands. He confesses that, while he was among the Saracens, it went well with him through the merits of St. Joseph. He translated the said history in the year of the Lord's incarnation one thousand three hundred and forty,

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on the sixteenth day of January. What follows is an epitome of that history.

One day our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, said these things about St. Joseph, his putative father: "Joseph was a carpenter, a native of Bethlehem, of the house of David; from his youth he learned knowledge and wisdom. He knew the carpenter's craft. Joseph was also very just, and in all his doings he gave glory to God. And Mary my mother was completing her twelfth year. For she had been offered by her parents in the Temple as a girl of three years, and she remained in the Temple nine years. Then the priests, seeing that this Virgin was holy and fearing God, said to one another: 'This girl has grown up. Let us seek a man fearing God, to whom we may commend her, and let her stay with him until the time of the wedding, lest perhaps there happen to her in the Temple what is wont to happen to women, and it be imputed to us as sin and we incur the wrath of God.' Then they called twelve elders of the tribe of Judah, and wrote down all the families of the tribe, and the lot fell upon Joseph, a just and holy man. Then the priests said to the Virgin Mary my mother: 'Go with Joseph your betrothed, and stay with him until the time of the wedding.' And so, by the command of the priests, Joseph received her, a virgin commended and betrothed to him,

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and led her to his house. And when Mary had stayed in Joseph's house, he went to a distant place, called there to work at his craft. Then I, by the will of my Father and with the counsel of the Holy Spirit, came down into the Virgin and took flesh. This mystery exceeds all the knowledge and understanding of every

creature. After three months blessed Joseph returned, the work for which he had gone being finished, and found the virgin Mary with child; and he feared and was terrified, and thought to put her away privately. And for anguish of heart, anxiety and fear he neither ate nor drank that day. And at midnight the angel Gabriel appeared to him in his sleep, by the command of God my Father, and said to him: 'Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary your betrothed. For she has been filled with the Holy Spirit, and she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; and he it is who shall rule all nations with a rod of iron' [cf. Psalm 2:9; Apocalypse 12:5]. And the angel departed from him. And Joseph, rising from sleep, did as the angel had commanded him, and Mary my mother stayed with him. After this there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled, each in his own city [Luke 2:1–3]. Then Joseph took the virgin Mary his betrothed, who was with child, and came to Bethlehem, his city, and was enrolled in the common register thus: 'Joseph of the line of David, and Mary his wife, both of

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the tribe of Judah.' And while they were there, the time drew near for the virgin Mary my mother to give birth, and she brought me forth in a cave which is near the tomb of Rachel, who was the wife of the patriarch Jacob and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. But the devil put it into the heart of King Herod to seek me to destroy me; for he feared, though my kingdom was not of this world. And that Herod was not the one who killed John the Baptist, my kinsman and most dear to me, but was the father of Archelaus. And an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying: 'Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell you. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him' [Matthew 2:13]. And Joseph arose and took me and Mary my mother by night, and we came into Egypt, and we stayed there until the death of Herod, who died a most wretched death, with his whole body rotted, because of the blood he had shed of the children who had done no sin. And when that wicked man was dead, we came and dwelt in a city of Galilee called Nazareth, where blessed Joseph worked at his craft and lived by the work of his hands. He never ate anyone's bread for nothing [cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:8], and he lived perfectly according to the Law of Moses. And after this Joseph grew old and advanced in days; yet his body was not weakened

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in its strength, nor were the sight of his eyes dimmed, nor did any tooth of his mouth decay, nor did his mind fail in anything. But at so great an age he was entire in all his powers and strong in all his limbs, as in his youth. And I lived with him in all things as if I were his son. And I was in all things like him, except sin. And I called Joseph father, and he called me his son. And I obeyed my mother and Joseph in all things, and never transgressed their word; but I was subject to them, as children to their parents. And I loved Joseph greatly, as the apple of my eye. And the days of Joseph drew near that he should die; and an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that he was soon to pass from this world and be gathered to his fathers. And he feared, and rising up he went to Jerusalem and entered the Temple, and prayed to God at length that he would be merciful to him in the hour of his death, and that he would send the holy Archangel Michael to defend him from his enemies. And he prayed also that the good angel who had been appointed to guard him from his mother's womb might appear to him with a glad face and a kindly look, and accompany his soul graciously, and not permit the terrible and hostile spirits to come near him. And after he had prayed he returned to Nazareth and entered his house, and,

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falling sick, he fell upon his bed, and his sickness grew very heavy. And as the hour of death drew near, Joseph began to be troubled. Then I went in to him and said to him: 'Hail, my father Joseph: why are you so troubled, blessed and holy man?' And when he had heard my voice, he answered: 'O my beloved son, my Jesus, many times hail. O my son, the sorrows and the fear of death have compassed me [Psalm 17:5]; but as

soon as I heard your voice, my soul was consoled. For you, Jesus, are the Savior and deliverer of my soul. You are the curtain that covers my sins. Your name in my mouth is most sweet. Jesus, you are the strength of my eyes. You are the ear that hears all things: hear me your servant today; I beseech you to look upon and receive the tears which I pour out in your sight. For I believe you to be true God and Lord, as the angel told me many times. And do not impute it to me as sin that I thought to put away the holy and pure Virgin your mother when I first saw her with child. For not knowing what to do, the angel of the Lord taught me your wonderful mystery, and directed me, and commanded me to give you the name Jesus; and he told me that you are he who shall save the people from their sins [Matthew 1:21]. And you, O Lord my God, be not angry with me for that hour. For I believe you to be true God and the true Son of God.' And when he had said these things, the sickness prevailed, and he could

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speak no more. Then I sat at Joseph's head, and my mother sat at his feet. And the old man turned his face to me, and sighed to me with great sighs. And I bent down, and touched his feet and stroked them, and held his hand between my hands a long hour. And Joseph made signs as best he could that I should not leave him, and he kept his eyes fixed on me; and Michael and Gabriel came to my father Joseph. And so, patiently and joyfully, he breathed his last. And I with my own hand closed his eyes and his cheeks, and composed his face. And the whole city, hearing of Joseph's death, came together; and his close friends washed Joseph's body and anointed it with the best ointments. And meanwhile I prayed to my Father; and when the prayer was ended, a multitude of angels came, and I commanded two of them to clothe Joseph's body. And the angels clothed the body of blessed old Joseph in a white robe. And I blessed his body, that it should not decay. And I said also: 'I will bless and will be a helper to every man in the church of the just who, on the day of your memory, O Joseph, offers sacrifice to God. And whoever meditates on your life, and on your labors, and on your passing from this world, when his soul goes out from his body, I will blot out his sins from the book, so that he may not be punished on the day of judgment. And pestilence shall not enter, and sudden death shall not come, into the house where your memory is kept.' And the elders carried

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Joseph's body to the tomb. And I remembered the days when he carried me into Egypt, and his many labors which he bore with me, and I wept, bending over his body. And they laid the body of Joseph my father in the tomb, beside the body of his father Jacob. And he died on the twentieth day of July."

These are the things which I have briefly recounted, as received from the Orientals. But I have omitted many things which, I think, would not be received by the worshippers of the holy Roman Church, whose truth cannot fail, since Christ preserves it.

Chapter X. On the Wonders Received through Prayers Made to St. Joseph

We have learned from a venerable man, in the renowned city of Venice in Italy, that a certain nobleman was accustomed every day to kneel before an image of St. Joseph painted on the wall of a certain church, and to venerate St. Joseph with prayers. After he had long kept the custom of such prayers with a sincere and noble heart, he took to his bed, stricken with a grave illness. Awake, with sound eyes and sound mind, he saw St. Joseph, in the likeness of that image, entering his chamber. At that sight he was moved to a wonderful contrition for his sins. And at once, having called a priest as confessor, he made the confession of his

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sins in the Catholic manner. And so he fell asleep in the Lord, invited, as is piously believed, to those on high by the presence of most holy Joseph.

St. Vincent of our Order of Preachers, in a sermon on the Nativity of the Lord, relates the following: "A merchant of Valencia, every year on the day of the Lord's Nativity, invited a poor old man and some woman with a little son, who represented for him the Virgin with the Son, and Joseph. Of him it was revealed that at his death the Virgin with the Son and Joseph appeared to him, saying: Because you received us in your house, therefore we will receive you in our house." Thus he.

The rest, which we believe to be beyond doubt countless, we leave to Catholics to search out. For what has been related ought now to be enough for them, since, by the account of the Holy Scriptures, by the authority of the Roman Church, and with the agreement of the crown of the holy doctors, the divine Joseph is believed to be great among the dwellers in heaven and on earth.[1]

[1] With these words the first edition ends: "END OF THE FOURTH PART AND OF THE WHOLE SUMMA ON THE GIFTS OF ST. JOSEPH, spouse of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and putative father of Christ Jesus the immortal God, published by Brother ISIDORE DE ISOLANIS of Milan, of the Order of Preachers. The said Summa was begun by me, Brother ISIDORE of Milan, in the year of the Lord 1514, in the month of March, in the town of Fontanellato, in the house of St. Joseph, and completed at PAVIA, also as to its correction, in the year of the Lord 1521, on the solemnity of the Apostles Simon and Jude. And printed at Pavia by Jacob Paucidrapius, 1522, on the third day before the Kalends of September" (Editor).

The Office and Mass of St. Joseph

The Office for the Feast of Most Holy Joseph, Confessor

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Here begins the Office for the Feast of Most Holy Joseph, Confessor.[1]

At First Vespers. *Antiphon over the psalms:* O blessed man, who, loving God with all his heart and obtaining the name of just, merited to have the Queen of the world and Mother of God as his spouse in this mortal body. *Psalm:* Praise the Lord, ye children [Psalm 112]. Praise the Lord, etc.

Chapter: Beloved of God and men, etc. [Ecclesiasticus 45:1].

Responsory: He placed the Cherubim, etc. (see the third responsory of Matins).

Hymn: Iste confessor. *Versicle:* Pray for us, blessed Joseph. *Response:* That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

At the Magnificat, antiphon: Great is the pre-eminence of St. Joseph, whom the Son of God chose as his guardian and nourisher, and consecrated with the name of father for his most holy merits.

Prayer: O God, who willed St. Joseph to be the spouse of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of your only-begotten Son, and who deigned to call him his father: grant, we beseech you, that the glorious intercession of so great a confessor may protect us. Through the same Lord.

At Matins. *Invitatory:* Let us adore the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved just St. Joseph with a privilege of love. *Psalm:* Come, let us praise [Psalm 94]. *Hymn:* Iste confessor.

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In the First Nocturn

Antiphon: Blessed Joseph was the first to receive the fruit of the tree planted by the running waters, in its season [cf. Psalm 1:3]. *Psalm:* Blessed is the man [Psalm 1].

Antiphon: The Lord said to me: You are my father [cf. Psalm 2:7]. Whom, as an infant, I hid from kings and princes. *Psalm:* Why have the Gentiles raged [Psalm 2].

Antiphon: The Lord is my protector, my glory, and the lifter up of my head [Psalm 3:4]. *Psalm:* Lord, how are they multiplied [Psalm 3].

First Lesson. Dearly beloved brethren, the solemnity of most blessed Joseph is here, bringing with it the joys of the heavenly fatherland. It is surely fitting that no one marked with the sacraments of the Christian name should be absent from the festive praises of so great a day. For we are celebrating the heavenly birthday of him from whose genealogy, as Sacred Scripture testifies, we have learned all the nobility of Christ and the Blessed Virgin from Adam. This is Joseph the just, of the seed of David, the spouse of the Virgin Mother of God, and in the opinion of the Jews of that time the father of Christ the greatest, the Savior. But you, O Lord, [have mercy on us].

Responsory: Let us celebrate the feast of this day, on which we recall the glorious merits of St. Joseph. From whose genealogy we have learned all the nobility of Christ received from the fathers. *Versicle:* And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph [Luke 3:23]. From whose genealogy.

Second Lesson. Let none of the faithful doubt that there was a true marriage between Joseph and Mary, although the lily of the virginity of both remained

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unstained. Wherefore the angel called Mary the wife of Joseph: with whom, in the love of chaste affection, Joseph and Mary together promised to God both the vow of virginity and the divine charity of spouses. And what Adam lost of dignity by sinning, Joseph found with greater joy, when with the highest veneration he guarded Mary, the paradise of all the virtues, the Queen of the world. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary your wife. For that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit [Matthew 1:20]. *Versicle:* And the Lord God placed man in the paradise of pleasure, to keep it [Genesis 2:15]. For that which.

Third Lesson. Most blessed Joseph, too, was rightly the cherub guarding the way of the tree of life; for, mighty with the sword of justice, which turns every way to the gaining of all the virtues, he guarded Christ Jesus, of whom it is said, "And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters" [Psalm 1:3], before he was born, in his mother, and nourished him when he was born. Hence the angel said to Joseph, who was afraid of the divine secrets which he had discerned by certain signs that Mary was carrying in her womb: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary your wife. For that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit." But you, O Lord.

Responsory: The Lord placed the Cherubim, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life [Genesis 3:24]. By whose fruit man may live for ever. *Versicle:* But Joseph, being a just man,

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and not willing to expose her, was minded to put her away privately [Matthew 1:19]. By whose fruit. Glory be to the Father. By whose fruit.

In the Second Nocturn

Antiphon: Joseph, offering the sacrifice of justice [cf. Psalm 4:6], has been set upon your holy mountain, O Lord. *Psalm:* When I called upon him [Psalm 4].

Antiphon: St. Joseph, standing before Christ the Lord, saw that he is not a God that wills iniquity [cf. Psalm 5:5]. *Psalm:* Give ear, O Lord, to my words [Psalm 5].

Antiphon: By divine gift Joseph, made a little less than the angels [cf. Psalm 8:6], made known the wonderful name of God in all the earth. *Psalm:* O Lord our Lord [Psalm 8].

Fourth Lesson. Made more certain, then, by a twofold revelation, exterior and interior, the one shining in the body of the Blessed Virgin, the other made by the angel, Joseph took Mary as his wife. To her he rendered every service, as to the Queen of the Angels, carrying the true God in her womb. Joseph observed the divine ways of his wife, her words sweeter than honey, whom perhaps the angels sometimes served in his sight; he noted that the Son of God, most longed for by the ancient fathers, was to be born in his house, and his heart melted for the sweetness of God. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary your wife. For that which is born in her is of the Holy

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Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus [Matthew 1:20–21]. *Versicle:* And Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary his wife [Matthew 1:24]. And she shall bring forth.

Fifth Lesson. When, therefore, the Son of God was about to be born, while the whole world was being enrolled, Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And Mary brought forth a son, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for her in the inn [Luke 2:4–7]. Who doubts that Joseph, after the Virgin and before the shepherds, adored the newborn Christ and burst into tears of sweetness? O most blessed confessor, who saw with his eyes such great mysteries, which the ancient fathers, contemplating them in riddles, wept for; and we, recalling such things, are filled with heavenly joys. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. *Versicle:* Joseph came, because he was of the house and family of David. To be enrolled.

Sixth Lesson. Joseph strove to nourish the newborn Savior of the world with all care, diligence and adoration. And where the powers of human wit failed, the angel of the Lord was at hand to show what was to be done, especially how he might escape the cruelty of the tyrant Herod, who was persecuting the infant Jesus. Wherefore Joseph,

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warned by the angel in his sleep, withdrew into Egypt. And he was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Out of Egypt have I called my son" [Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1]. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying: Arise, and take the child, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell you. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him [Matthew 2:13]. *Versicle:* And Israel went into Egypt, and Jacob was a sojourner in the land of Cham [Psalm 104:23]. For it will come to pass. Glory be. For it will come to pass.

In the Third Nocturn

Antiphon: The Lord dwelt in the tabernacle of St. Joseph, who, having wrought justice, rests on your holy mountain [cf. Psalm 14:1–2]. *Psalm:* Lord, who shall dwell [Psalm 14].

Antiphon: The just man has rejoiced exceedingly in your salvation, for you have given him his heart's desire [cf. Psalm 20:2–3]. *Psalm:* In your strength, O Lord [Psalm 20].

Antiphon: Joseph, innocent in hands and clean of heart, received a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Savior [cf. Psalm 23:4–5]. *Psalm:* The earth is the Lord's [Psalm 23].

Seventh Lesson. But because the boy was to be instructed according to the Divine Scriptures in Nazareth of Galilee, when Herod was dead Joseph took the boy, at the angel's command, and came into the land of Israel, and, dwelling in Nazareth of Galilee, passed through the years of the Savior's boyhood. And although Joseph had God the Comforter with him through all that time,

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yet when the persecutor's fury had been calmed, he experienced in the tender years of the Son of God consolations unknown to sick mortals. O how often Joseph, carrying him in his arms, kissed him! How often he stirred him, when silent, to speak: for he knew that his wisdom is the bread of the Angels and governs the empires of the whole world. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: But when Herod was dead, the angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child [Matthew 2:19–20]. *Versicle:* He arose, and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel [Matthew 2:21]. For they are dead.

Eighth Lesson. But do not believe that the boy Jesus mixed somewhat harsh acts with his endearments toward Joseph, since the Lord Jesus obeyed his most blessed mother and his putative father Joseph at a mere nod. Hence the Evangelist says: "And he was subject to them" [Luke 2:51]. Wherefore we believe that Joseph burned with such divine charity that he made much of nothing earthly, delighted by the words, deeds, countenance and embraces of Jesus Christ, in which there was a heavenly sweetness. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: The solemnity of the spouse of the glorious Virgin Mary, of the seed of Abraham, sprung from the tribe of Judah: whose renowned merits make all the churches illustrious. *Versicle:* Sprung from a royal line, Joseph shines forth. Whose merits.

Ninth Lesson. Moreover, since a man's holiness excels by divine charity, which the worship of divine things increases, and the diversities of graces which come from one Spirit [1 Corinthians 12:4],

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there is no doubt at all that most blessed Joseph is of the greatest merit before God, both while his spirit ruled his human limbs and now that he is in the company of the Blessed. With what countenance, likewise, will the Son of God not grant the prayers of St. Joseph pleading for us, in whose service he rendered all that he could? Therefore, dearest brethren, let us implore the intercession of blessed Joseph with all the depths of our hearts, believing that whatever we shall ask of Christ in his name, he will give us. But you, O Lord.

Responsory: For happy are you, most worthy spouse of the holy Virgin Mary, for from her arose the sun of justice [Malachi 4:2], Christ our God. *Versicle:* Pray for the people, intervene for the clergy, intercede for the devout female sex; may all feel your help who celebrate your solemnity. For. Glory be. For. *Versicle:* Pray for us, blessed Joseph.

At Lauds.

Antiphon: The solemnity of the spouse of the glorious Virgin Mary, of the seed of Abraham, sprung from the tribe of Judah, of the illustrious stock of David. *Psalm:* The Lord has reigned [Psalm 92].

Antiphon: Today is the solemnity of St. Joseph, whose renowned merits make all the churches illustrious. *Psalm:* Sing joyfully [Psalm 99].

Antiphon: Sprung from a royal line he shines forth; by whose prayers we most devoutly ask, in mind and spirit, to be helped. *Psalm:* O God, my God [Psalm 62].

Antiphon: With heart and soul let us sing glory to Christ on this sacred solemnity of the spouse of Mary, Mother of God. *Psalm:* All ye works, bless [Daniel 3:57].

Antiphon: With gladness let us celebrate the feast of St. Joseph, that he may intercede for us with the Lord Jesus Christ. *Psalm:* Praise the Lord [Psalm 148].

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At the Benedictus, antiphon: This is the spouse of the Queen of Virgins, who bore the King of heaven; like the most beautiful morning star, a virgin, innocent and just. Most holy Joseph, intercede for us all. *Canticle:* Blessed be the Lord [Luke 1:68].

At the Magnificat, antiphon: Today we recall the glorious merits of blessed Joseph the confessor. Today we venerate the virginity and innocence of the divine spouse of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. Today we sing the solemnity of him who nourished Christ Jesus, the true God. By this privilege superior to the prophets, honorable among the patriarchs, venerable to the apostles, may he by no means be unmindful of us. *Canticle:* Magnificat.

The rest is to be taken from the Common of one Confessor, according to the ordinance of the Reverend Master of the Order, Brother Thomas de Vio of Gaeta.

[1] We publish this Office of St. Joseph again as a merely historical and pious document, without any intention on our part of proposing anything other than what is customarily accepted in the Church (Editor).

The Mass of St. Joseph

Introit: Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a feast day in honor of St. Joseph the confessor, at whose solemnity the angels rejoice and together praise the Son of God. *Verse:* My heart has uttered a good word; I speak my works to the King [Psalm 44:2]. Glory be to the Father. *Gloria in excelsis.*

Collect: O God, who willed St. Joseph to be the spouse of the most Blessed Virgin, mother of your only-begotten Son, and who deigned to call him his father: grant, we beseech you, that the glorious intercession of so great a confessor may protect us. Through the same our Lord.

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Lesson from the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, chapter 4. Brethren: As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father. So we also, when we were children, were serving under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons of God. And because you are sons of God, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore now he is not a servant, but a son; and if a son, an heir also through God [Galatians 4:1–7].

Gradual: The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak judgment. *Verse:* The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted [Psalm 36:30–31].

Tract: As the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full, and as the sun when it shines: so did he shine in the temple of God. *Verse:* As the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the days of the spring. *Verse:* As the lilies that are on the brink of the water, and as frankincense giving its odor in the time of summer. *Verse:* As a bright fire, and frankincense burning in the fire. *Verse:* As a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone [Ecclesiasticus 50:6–10].

In Paschaltide: Alleluia. Joseph and Mary were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Jesus [cf. Luke 2:33].

Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 1. At that time: When Mary the mother of Jesus was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found

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with child, of the Holy Spirit. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto you Mary your wife, for that which is born 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 from their sins [Matthew 1:18–21]. *Credo.*

Offertory: Arise, and take the child, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell you [Matthew 2:13].

Secret: Graciously receive, O Lord, the offerings dedicated to you in honor of St. Joseph, who nourished the true Victim of the whole world, our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Preface: … eternal God. And to praise you more gloriously in the joys of today's feast, on which we recall the glorious merits of the most holy confessor Joseph. For he it is who was given in marriage to the most blessed Virgin Mother, ever virgin. He it is who merited to nourish the Son of God, most longed for by all the fathers, and he was of such merit before God that he was consecrated with the name of father of the Son

of God. O most worthy confessor! O man to be honored with every veneration! O most holy father, who, while still mortal, was joined in such great familiarity to the Son of God! Whom the angels praise, etc.

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Communion: Take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Judah: for they are dead that sought the life of the child [cf. Matthew 2:20].

Postcommunion: Follow your people, O Lord, with heavenly kindness, and, through the intercession of most blessed Joseph the confessor, keep with constant protection those whom you prepare by divine sacraments. Through our Lord.

Index and Reimprimatur

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Reimprimatur: Fr. Augustine Bausa, O.P., Master of the Sacred Palace.

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