

INVOTIVE MASS OF SAINT JOSEPH
JUBILEE CELEBRATION: 90 YEARS OF SERVICE IN ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS
SAINT AGNES HOME CHAPEL, KIRKWOOD
SEPTEMBER 19, 2009

Eccli. 45:1-6
Matt. 1:18-21

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

1. Today's Gospel underscores for us the purity and generosity of the love of Saint Joseph for the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom he had given himself in the promise of marriage. When he learned that Mary was with child before they had come together as husband and wife, he only wanted to do the will of the Lord, to do what was true and just. At first, he judged that the Lord wanted him to separate from Mary quietly. When, however, through the message of an angel, he understood how it was that Mary was with child, he accepted the call not only to be the husband of Mary but also the foster-father of the Divine Child Who had been conceived in her womb and Whom she would bring into the world as its Savior. In the inspired words of the *Book of Ecclesiasticus*, God "sanctified him in his faith, and meekness, and chose him out of all flesh" (Epistle). Saint Joseph trusted God's word brought to him by the angel, and he conformed his life to the truth which the angel announced: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Gospel).

2. The Purest Heart of Joseph, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was completely disposed to do whatever the Lord asked of Him, because he had placed his heart in the Heart of God, the Heart which had taken human flesh under the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Saint Joseph teaches us how to give our hearts completely to the Lord and, therefore, to be ready to do whatever the Lord asks of us. Saint Joseph not only teaches us but, as the foster-father of Jesus the Savior, with fatherly love, he intercedes for us, so that our hearts may be one with the Heart of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Saint Joseph is our model of pure and selfless love of God and of our

neighbor; as our spiritual father, he helps us to overcome whatever would hinder us from giving our hearts completely to the Lord.

3. Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph had given her heart completely to the Lord. Her heart was truly one with the Divine Heart. For that reason, when she heard God's call to found a religious institute devoted to making reparation for offenses to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to growing in holiness through devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to saving souls by bringing Divine Love from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to families most in need, she invoked ceaselessly the intercession of Saint Joseph. When she was encountering so much difficulty in finding a house to become the first of her Saint Joseph's homes for the poor children, she declared:

How then, was I to buy a house or even rent one? But away with worries! God's work was to be called into life, and it was not for me to ask worriedly, "Where will I find the means?" Besides I had placed all my trust in the help of St. Joseph, and up till then he had never let me beg in vain! (*The Servant of God Mother Mary Teresa of St. Joseph [Anna Maria Tauscher van den Bosch] Foundress of the Carmel of the Divine Heart of Jesus: An Autobiography*, tr. Berchmans Bittle, O.F.M.Cap., Wauwatosa, Wisconsin: Carmelite Convent, 1953, p. 47).

Saint Joseph taught his faithful daughter, Blessed Mary Teresa of Saint Joseph, to imitate the purity of his heart and so to give her heart completely to the Lord in readiness to do whatever the Lord asked of her, no matter how challenging and even impossible it might seem. Regarding her call, Blessed Teresa of Saint Joseph declared:

Again and again, my heart is kindled with love and gratitude, and glows with a new ardor to suffer, struggle, and work so that the task, which by the mercy of God was entrusted to me, for a short time, may grow and develop entirely according to His will! (*The Servant of God Mother Mary Teresa of Saint Joseph*, p. 47)

The total union of her heart with the Divine Heart inspired and strengthened her to send her Sisters on mission throughout the world.

4. With the purity of heart of Saint Joseph and with his confidence in the Providence of Divine

Love, on September 19, 1919, Blessed Mary Teresa of Saint Joseph visited with Archbishop John Glennon and explained to him her desire to found a home for the aged in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis. There can be no doubt that she was calling upon the intercession of Saint Joseph as she approached the Archbishop's residence on that day, after having visited a proposed site for the home, which was not at all fitting. Once again, thanks be to God, Saint Joseph did not let her "beg in vain." Archbishop Glennon blessed her proposal, and on the following day, at Saint Charles, with the help of Father Francis Xavier Willmes and Father Joseph H. Winkelmann, she was able to buy the house which became the first "Saint Joseph Home" in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis (cf. *The Servant of God Mother Mary Teresa of Saint Joseph*, pp. 220-221). From the foundation of that first home and through the philanthropy of Elizabeth Moerhing, a good friend of Saint Joseph's Home, there followed the opening of this Saint Agnes Home in 1935. Fifty years later, in 1985, the Sisters opened the Carmelite Child Development Center, making this campus a true center of love from the Heart of Jesus, both for the elderly and infirm, and for little children in very formative years of their lives. Early in the time of my service as Archbishop of Saint Louis, I enthroned the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Center and consecrated the Center to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The love from the Divine Heart of Jesus continues to animate Saint Agnes Home. I recall with joy the dedication of its Sansone Wing and the Consecration of the Home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which I was blessed to celebrate on June 6, 2008. In the Fall of the same year, Bishop Robert Hermann, Archdiocesan Administrator, dedicated the Desloge Wing on the feastday of Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph (October 30th).

5. Today, we thank God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, first given to Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph and then unfailingly transmitted to her spiritual daughters, the Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus. In a particular way, we thank God for the immeasurable blessings which that grace has brought to many souls in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis over the past 90 years. We pray for the spiritual daughters of Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph, our beloved Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus, asking that they may always imitate the purity of heart of Saint Joseph, giving their hearts completely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and bringing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus pure and selfless love to all those in need, young and old alike.

As we thank God for the mission of the Carmelites of the Divine Heart of Jesus in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, since the historic meeting of Archbishop Glennon and Mother Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph, 90 years ago today, we also commit ourselves to work with the Sisters, in the long line of Father Willmes, Father Winkelmann, Elizabeth Moerhing, the Sansone Family, the Desloge Family and so many others, for the sake of our brothers and sisters who long for a sign of God's love in their need and suffering. We take as our inspiration the exhortation which Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph gave to her Sisters:

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, which God, in His infinite Fatherly love has given to men, is and always will be an inexhaustible Treasure for us. From this Heart we always want to draw love to give to our Sisters and to others (*The Servant of God Mother Mary Teresa of St. Joseph*, p. 251).

We ask for the grace to follow ever more completely the example of Saint Joseph, as did Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph, purifying our hearts of all disordered affections and offering our hearts as an oblation of faithful and enduring love of God and neighbor.

6. Let us now lift up our hearts, through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, to the Divine Heart of Jesus, pierced for love of all men, so that we may become, in turn, an oblation of pure and selfless love for our brothers and sisters. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which we now partake, we contemplate the great mystery of God's immeasurable love of us, which flows unceasingly and unsparingly from the Divine Heart of Jesus. Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Christ invites us to place our hearts in His glorious pierced Heart, to find in Him the rest and joy of God's mercy and love, and to bring from His Heart mercy and love to all our brothers and sisters.

Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness, have mercy on us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, pray for us.

Saint Agnes, pray for us.

Blessed Maria Teresa of Saint Joseph, pray for us.