Editor's Note: Today, on the Feast of St. Joseph (Mar. 19), we offer readers the following meditation from *Divine Intimacy*, a classic spiritual volume by a Carmelite priest and master of the interior life, Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen (1893-1953). In this meditation, Fr. Gabriel focuses on the heroic faith that the Head of the Holy Family exercised amidst all the various hardships and crises he faced throughout his life — "[t]he perplexity aroused in his mind by Mary's mysterious maternity, the extreme poverty and anxieties connected with Bethlehem, the privations during the flight into Egypt", etc.

In light of the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (labelled as such, rightly or wrongly, by the World Health Organization), we would do well to reflect on how the "just man" (Matt. 1:19) — he who is the "Pillar and Mainstay of families", "Terror of demons", and "Protector of Holy Church" (Litany of St. Joseph) — responded to the trials of his life and how we can imitate his example. "St. Joseph's whole life," says Fr. Gabriel, "may be summed up as a continual adherence to the divine plan, even in situations which were very obscure and mysterious to him." *O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, grant to us a share in the great faith of Thy foster father!*

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373. St. Joseph's Life of Faith

By Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.

1. The fundamental disposition of St. Joseph's soul was one of complete confidence and abandonment to God, which had its source in his faith. St. Matthew called him "a just man" (1:19); now Sacred Scripture teaches that "the just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1:17), and it can well be affirmed that no creature, after the Blessed Virgin, has lived as much by faith as St. Joseph. In fact, having spent his whole life within the orbit of the mystery of the Incarnation, he necessarily had to pass through all the obscurities which surrounded the accomplishment of the great mystery. So Joseph needed deep faith, a faith continually nourished by suffering and tempered through anguish. The perplexity aroused in his mind by Mary's mysterious maternity, the extreme poverty and anxieties connected with Bethlehem, the privations during the flight into Egypt, afflicted his sensitive soul to such an extent that in the most serious crises he needed the intervention of an angel, by whom he was sustained and introduced into the depths of the divine mystery unfolding before his eyes. Joseph allowed himself to be guided with the docility and blind confidence of a child. The Gospel relates four events which testify to this:

(1) An Angel put an end to his anguish by commanding him to take Mary as his Spouse, "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Joseph did not hesitate for a moment

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and did "as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him" (Matt. 1:20-24). (2) An Angel warned him to "take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt" (Matt. 2:13). Without delay, in the middle of the night, the Saint arose and carried out the order. Objectively the flight presented overwhelming difficulties: the great inconvenience and dangers of the journey, extreme poverty, exile in a strange land. But the Angel spoke and Joseph obeyed. (3) After Herod's death, an Angel ordered him to return into the land of Israel. (4) An Angel warned him to withdraw into Galilee (cf. Matt. 2:19-23).

Here we have four acts of faith and blind obedience. Joseph neither hesitated nor reasoned; he made no objection; for he had complete trust in God; he believed in Him fully, in His Word, in His divine Providence.

2. St. Joseph's whole life may be summed up as a continual adherence to the divine plan, even in situations which were very obscure and mysterious to him.

In our life, too, there is always some mystery, either because God is pleased to work in a hidden, secret manner or because His action is always incomprehensible to our poor human intelligence. Therefore, we need that glance of faith, that complete confidence which, relying on the infinite goodness of God, convinces us that He always and in all circumstances wills our good and disposes everything to that end. Only this loving truth will permit us, like Joseph, always to say our *yes* to every manifestation of the divine will, a humble, prompt, trustful *yes*, in spite of the obscurities, the difficulties, the mystery. God made use of the angels to make His will known to Joseph; to manifest it to us He makes use of our superiors who, like the angels, are His messengers and envoys. Let us obey with the simplicity of St. Joseph, understanding that God can employ any person or circumstance to make us know and execute His divine will, just as He used Caesar's edict to bring Joseph to Bethlehem, where Jesus was to be born. The Roman Emperor had far different intentions, but God utilized his political act to carry out the plan of the Incarnation. God always governs and directs all things toward the fulfillment of His will.

Another characteristic of St. Joseph's life was his entire consecration to the mission entrusted to him by God. Joseph did not live for himself and his own interests, but only for God, Whom he served in Jesus and Mary. Thus he is the true model of interior souls, of souls who desire to live totally for God and with God, in the accomplishment of the mission they have received from Him.

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