

May he [St. Joseph] take charge of the affair of your salvation. Just as he led the Son of God in his travels, may he be your guide on the voyage of this life until you arrive at the haven of eternal happiness.⁴

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

Savior of the Savior

To give life to someone is the greatest of all gifts. To save a life is the next. Who gave life to Jesus? It was Mary. Who saved his life? It was Joseph. Ask St. Paul who persecuted him. Saint Peter who denied him. Ask all the saints who put him to death. But if we ask, “Who saved his life?” Be silent, patriarchs, be silent, prophets, be silent, apostles, confessors and martyrs. Let St. Joseph speak, for this honor is his alone; he alone is the savior of his Savior.¹

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

“Savior of his Savior?” That sounds heretical, doesn’t it? Don’t worry: Blessed William Joseph Chaminade is not claiming that St. Joseph is God or greater than Jesus. Blessed William Joseph was a very holy priest and had a tremendous devotion to St. Joseph. He lived through the French Revolution and suffered many hardships during a very anti-Catholic era of France’s history. Blessed Chaminade’s love for Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph gave him the strength to resist the evil intentions of the revolutionaries.

At the height of the French Revolution, Blessed Chaminade spread devotion to Mary and preached fervently about St. Joseph. He encouraged his religious confreres to act as the heel of Mary and crush the darkness of the revolution. He knew the power of St. Joseph as well, and encouraged everyone to seek refuge beneath the fatherly protection of St. Joseph.

Make him [St. Joseph] responsible for the protection of your person, he who saved the life of his Savior.²

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

To understand and justify Blessed Chaminade’s description of St. Joseph as the “Savior of his Savior,” we turn to the Gospel of Matthew.

When they had departed [from Bethlehem], behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the

child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

— Mt 2:13-14

Saint Joseph can be called the Savior of the Savior because he saved Jesus from the wicked intentions of Herod by taking Jesus to Egypt. Saint Joseph is the only saint who has the privilege of being called the Savior of the Savior — not even the Mother of God has such a title. God wanted St. Joseph to have the unique title all to himself. It is a title that shows the greatness of the fatherhood of St. Joseph. It teaches us his important paternal role in the plan of God.

To him [St. Joseph] was entrusted the Divine Child when Herod loosed his assassins against him.³

— Pope Pius XI

Blessed Chaminade is not the only one who called St. Joseph the Savior of the Savior. Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat made a similar statement. She wrote:

Jesus wished to become indebted to St. Joseph for the necessities of life, and of this holy patriarch alone it may be said that he saved the life of his Savior.⁴

Saint Alphonsus Liguori, a Doctor of the Church, went so far as to claim that because St. Joseph saved the Savior from Herod, Jesus will not refuse anything to those who go to St. Joseph for assistance. He writes:

The Apostle Paul writes, that in the next life Jesus Christ "will render to every man according to his works" (Rom 2:6). What great glory must we not suppose that he bestowed upon St. Joseph, who served and loved him so much while he lived on earth! At the last day our Savior will say to the elect, "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me" (Mt 25:35). These, nevertheless, have fed Jesus Christ, have lodged him or clothed him, only in the persons of the poor, but St. Joseph procured food, a dwelling, and clothes for Jesus Christ in his own person. Moreover, our Lord has promised a reward to him who gives a cup of water to the poor in his name: "for whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in my name, he shall not lose his reward" (Mk 9:40). What, then, must be the reward of St. Joseph, who

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can say to Jesus Christ, "I not only provided thee with food, with
a dwelling, and with clothes; but I saved thee from death, deliv-
ering thee from the hands of Herod." All this helps to increase
our confidence in St. Joseph; it makes us reflect that, on account
of so many merits, God will refuse no grace which St. Joseph asks
of him for his devout clients.⁵

Wow! What confidence we should have in St. Joseph!

Ultimately, St. Joseph saved Jesus' life so that Jesus could save
us. For his part, Jesus is extremely grateful to St. Joseph for all that
he suffered to make the saving mission of our Lord possible: exile,
poverty, hardship, fatigue, ridicule, and so many other hardships.
Saint Joseph suffered so much for Jesus. Without the sufferings of
St. Joseph, we would not have the Savior to set us free from sin and
death. This is why Jesus grants every desire and wish of his beloved
virginal father.

The sufferings of St. Joseph are rarely mentioned in homilies or
writings on St. Joseph. Yet, if you think about it, being the father of
the Savior could not have been easy. Saint Joseph's fatherly mission
entailed tremendous suffering.

How great a share had not the glorious St. Joseph in the chalice
of Jesus' passion, by the services which he rendered to his sacred
humanity!⁶

— St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

Saint Joseph's suffering began before our Lord was even born.
When St. Joseph discovered that his beloved wife was pregnant, his
heart, mind, and soul experienced excruciating sorrow. His sorrow
did not come from suspecting Mary had been unfaithful; he never
doubted Mary's love, fidelity, and holiness. Rather, his suffering came
from knowing that he was not worthy to be the husband of so holy
a woman; nor did he consider himself worthy to be the father of a
heavenly Child. He realized that Mary belonged totally to God, and
out of justice, he needed to give God his due by distancing himself
from Mary. The thought of distancing himself from Mary caused
more sorrow in his heart than any martyr could ever experience.
Unlike the suffering of the martyrs who shed their blood for love of
Christ, St. Joseph's suffering was interior, and of such intensity that
it is more meritorious than the suffering of all Christian martyrs. Pre-
paring to distance himself from Mary, the delight of his heart, caused
him such deep sorrow that God had to send an angel to comfort and

instruct him not to be afraid to take her into his home. Abraham was made the father of a multitude of nations because of his willingness to sacrifice his son; St. Joseph was made the father of the new covenant people because of his willingness to distance himself from his own beloved wife.

Saint Joseph's suffering continued for the remainder of his married life. When he traveled with his pregnant wife to Jerusalem for the census, he suffered greatly from not being able to provide a suitable place for his wife to give birth. What man wants his wife to give birth in a cold, dirty, and smelly animal stable? Yet a stable was all that St. Joseph could provide. Men, by nature, are providers. If a man is unable to provide as much or as well for the ones he loves as he wishes, he dies inside. Saint Joseph died daily.

Saint Joseph experienced sorrow when his Son was circumcised. When he and his wife saw the blood coming from their Son's body, they knew it was a foreshadowing of things to come. When and by what method, they did not know, but they were so attuned to divine mysteries and Old Testament prophecies that they knew there was more bloodshed to come. It would be confirmed when Jesus, Mary, and Joseph appeared before the priest at the Temple in Jerusalem for the ritual of the purification of a new mother. On what was supposed to be a joyful occasion, St. Joseph learned that his wife's Heart would be pierced and his Son was destined to be a sign of contradiction.

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted, and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

— Lk 2:33-35

Simeon's words were spoken to Mary, but St. Joseph heard them. When St. Joseph heard Simeon announce to Mary that Jesus would be a cause of division, and that Mary's Heart would be pierced by a sword, the prophetic words penetrated the loving heart of St. Joseph, causing him unspeakable sorrow. It was a sorrow that he would carry in his heart and soul for the rest of his life.

What man wants to hear that his wife and child are going to suffer ridicule and hatred? What husband would not experience tortures of the heart knowing that his wife is going to be pierced by a

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sword? Scripture tells us that Mary pondered the words of Simeon in her Heart (see Lk 2:19). Saint Joseph had to have pondered Simeon's words in his heart as well. No man could walk away undisturbed after hearing such shocking statements about his wife and son. The hearts of a husband and wife are one. What is of concern to one is of concern to the other. For decades, St. Joseph carried the sorrowful prophecy of Simeon in his heart. Because his love is great, St. Joseph's suffering was interior, intense, and long lasting.

O most sensitive heart of St. Joseph, who, resembling the tender heart of Mary, felt the sorrows of the Most Holy Mother, tell me, what did you feel, hearing the terrible prophecy of Simeon? Yet with what generosity, with what silence and unalterable resignation did you accept from the hands of God even the sword of sorrow for our good! How can I show you my thanks? O my sweetest saint, I want to imitate your generosity, and to any painful news I will say with you: God's will be done.⁷

— Blessed Bartolo Longo

Were it possible for St. Joseph to prevent his wife and Son from suffering, he would have done everything in his power to protect them. A good and loving husband is willing to stand in front of his wife and have the sword pierce his heart instead of hers. Yet, according to the plan of God, St. Joseph knew that he had to allow his wife's Heart and soul to be pierced. Such suffering was required so that a new humanity could be born. His immaculate bride had not suffered the pangs of birth at the manger in Bethlehem because she was free from all stain of original sin and exempt from all its penalties, but Simeon's prophecy had foretold that a day would come when St. Joseph's wife would endure a torturous type of birth-pang: spiritual birth-pangs. Saint Joseph's wife is the New Eve, and God was going to use her Heart as a spiritual womb. She would have to undergo spiritual birth pangs in order for humanity to be reborn in Christ. Simeon had prophesied it; St. Joseph knew it had to happen. His role was to prepare his wife and Son for the sacrifice.

No martyr's suffering has been greater than the suffering of St. Joseph. Simeon's prophecy had been addressed to Mary alone. Saint Joseph knew why, and the knowledge caused him even greater suffering. Saint Joseph understood that Simeon's prophecy meant that when the time came for Mary's Heart to be pierced, she would be without St. Joseph. The time, place, and manner of the piercing

were unknown to St. Joseph, but he understood that he would not be there with Mary. In light of Simeon's prophecy, he must have spent his marriage lovingly consoling Mary and preparing her for the hours when she would suffer unparalleled sorrow and agony — her spiritual birth-pangs. Saint Joseph's sweet consolations helped prepare Mary for the sacrifice of Calvary. He could not prevent her maternal suffering, but he could prepare her for it. His years of love and devotion were a consolation to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Saint Joseph is the greatest consoler of the Heart of Mary.

How beautiful and simple did you [St. Joseph] see this innocent dove [Mary]. And how greatly you suffered at the vision of her martyrdom without you, the solitude of the wife whom you loved so well. Oh what martyrdom wracked your soul at the fore-vision of the Passion and the seven swords which would pierce the Immaculate Heart of Mary. You dreamed of her alone, alone without Jesus — and this affliction embittered your happy life.⁸

— Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida

The sword that was going to pierce Mary's Heart on Calvary needed to pierce the heart of St. Joseph as well, but in a different way. He would not be at Calvary, but the sword needed to pierce his paternal heart since it is fitting that the re-birth of mankind would involve both a mother and a father. Husbands do not experience labor pangs as a woman does, but every husband is called to journey with his wife throughout the pregnancy and prepare her for delivery. As a good husband, St. Joseph would see to it that his wife was well-prepared for her suffering. He spent decades preparing her for the painful delivery on Calvary.

At Calvary, Mary must have experienced great consolation and strength as she remembered all that her husband had done for her and their Son across the years. The consolation offered by John the Apostle, Mary Magdalene, and several others paled in comparison to the consolation offered to Mary by the man who was not even there. God spared St. Joseph the tortures of Calvary, but Mary brought him there in her Heart. Her Crucified Son, before whom she stood, was also Joseph's Son. Mary remembered her husband and stood strong in faith, hope, and love.

There were many memories of St. Joseph that would have flooded Mary's Heart at Calvary. They were all a source of consolation

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and strength for Mary. The memory of St. Joseph's own strength in suffering would have increased Mary's determination to witness and suffer with her Crucified Son. She would have remembered the slaughter of the innocents and how much that had wounded her husband's heart. Remember: When the angel came to St. Joseph and instructed him to take the Child and His mother to Egypt, St. Joseph was not told that children would be slaughtered and mothers would witness the death of their children. Mary would have remembered how bitterly St. Joseph had wept over the loss of so many precious children. It was a source of tremendous suffering to St. Joseph, but he remained firm in his resolution to do the will of God. At the foot of the Cross, Mary did likewise.

Joseph and Mary had not yet crossed the mountains that separated them from the desert, when suddenly the painful moans, echoing through hills, reached their ears. These heartrending cries, which were the cries of the mothers of innocent saints slaughtered on the breasts and arms of their mothers, filled the hearts of Joseph and Mary with tremendous sadness.⁹

— Blessed Bartolo Longo

At the foot of the Cross, Mary remembered how St. Joseph, as the head of the family, had taken her and Jesus to Egypt, and how strong St. Joseph had been in protecting and caring for their family. Walking to Egypt could not have been a safe or comfortable journey for the Holy Family. Egypt was a very dangerous place, notorious for bandits, thieves, and pagan practices. Saint Joseph's years of living there must have been very difficult. Saint Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure believe that the Holy Family was in exile in Egypt for almost seven years. These years would have been filled with much suffering for St. Joseph. Mary remembered these years and how strong St. Joseph had been for love of God and their family.

At Calvary, Mary remembered all the sufferings St. Joseph had endured during their time in Egypt. According to the mystical revelations of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, the hardships of the Holy Family in Egypt were especially felt by St. Joseph because he was the loving head of the family. The responsibility of taking care of the family was primarily St. Joseph's. Oftentimes unable to acquire sufficient work, food, clean water, or proper housing, the man of the house suffered greatly because he was unable to provide everything that was needed by his family.

In Egypt, St. Joseph was in a land which was not only foreign, but also hostile to Israelites. The Egyptians resented that the Israelites had escaped from their tyranny, and also that they had been the cause of many of their ancestors being drowned in the Red Sea.¹⁰

— St. Francis de Sales

In the accounts of the mystical visions of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, we are told that in Egypt the Holy Family underwent the frightful experience of being surrounded by robbers with bad intentions. On Calvary, Mary remembered how strong her husband had been and how he was willing to die out of love for his family. In this memory, she would have found the strength to be a co-victim with Jesus.

Mary would have also recalled the memory of the time she and her husband had lost Jesus for three days. Losing a child is the worst nightmare a parent could ever face. For three days, the Hearts of Mary and Joseph were filled with anxiety and worry. Yet she remembered that, after three days of tremendous sorrow and suffering, she and her husband found Jesus in the Temple. Finding him, their hearts were filled with inexpressible joy. In some way, losing Jesus for those three days was a preparation for Calvary. Remembering this event, Mary once again would have found strength and consolation in her sweet St. Joseph.

At Calvary, the memory of all St. Joseph had done for his wife and Son must have been a consolation to Jesus, as well. Through the role model Joseph provided for him of long and faithful suffering, Jesus was better able to offer his own sacrifice on Calvary. Our Lord knew well that his father had saved him from Herod, carried tremendous burdens of love in his heart, consoled his mother, and helped Mary prepare for her suffering with Jesus. God did not require that St. Joseph be physically present at the sacrifice at Calvary, but Jesus knew that he would never have made it to Calvary without him. God made the sacrifice of Calvary dependent upon the fatherly sacrifices that St. Joseph had offered during the hidden years of the Holy Family. The fruit of St. Joseph's paternal love and suffering made him the spiritual father of the new covenant family. Similar to Mary, Jesus, too, would have had St. Joseph on his mind and in his Heart at Calvary.

The virginal Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph are one. As their Hearts are one, so is their mission. Jesus alone is the Savior of

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sacrifice of the Holy Family made him the spiritual
father of all Christians. Jesus, too, would
suffer and die for us. As

the world, but he wanted his mother and father to have a unique participation in the work of redemption. The union of the virginal and sorrowful Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph at Nazareth, Bethlehem, Egypt, and Calvary was the principal means that God chose to enable all of us to be born again. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph make it possible for us to be children of God.

What we learn from the sacrificial fatherhood of St. Joseph is that he is a man who takes care of those entrusted to him, no matter the cost. He offers consolation and strength to all his children. As your spiritual father, he wants to take care of you just as he took care of Mary and Jesus. He wants to console you and increase your capacity for self-sacrificing love.

God has given you a mission as a Christian. Your mission will require sacrifice, sorrow, and suffering. You will experience your own Calvary. With St. Joseph in your heart, you will find a father's consolation and the strength to endure all things for love.

Saint Joseph knows that as you seek to do God's will, Satan, a spiritual Herod, is going to unleash his assassins against you. You need St. Joseph to protect you. Your spiritual father will lovingly watch over you and never stop fighting for you. With his assistance, you can be victorious in suffering and overcome the enemy. Saint John Paul II emphasized this point in a homily he gave during a papal visit to the Shrine of St. Joseph in Kalisz, Poland. He said:

The angel had warned him [St. Joseph] to flee with the child, because he was threatened by mortal danger. From the Gospel we learn about those who were threatening the child's life. In the first place Herod, but then also all his [Herod's] followers. Joseph of Nazareth, who saved Jesus from the cruelty of Herod, is shown to us in this moment as a great supporter of the cause of the defense of human life, from the first moment of conception to natural death. In this place, therefore, we wish to commend human life to Divine Providence and to St. Joseph, especially the life of children not yet born, in our homeland and throughout the world.¹¹

You are going to suffer in life. Saint Joseph can't prevent all of your suffering, but he can prepare you for it and console you when you are in the midst of sorrow and pain. He offers a father's love and protection.

Saint Joseph, with the love and generosity with which he guarded Jesus, so too will he guard your soul, and as he defended him

from Herod, so will he defend your soul from the fiercest Herod: the devil! All the care that the Patriarch St. Joseph has for Jesus, he has for you and will always help you with his patronage. He will free you from the persecution of the wicked and proud Herod, and will not allow your heart to be estranged from Jesus. *Ite ad Ioseph!* Go to Joseph with extreme confidence, because I do not remember having asked anything from St. Joseph, without having obtained it readily.¹²

— St. Pio of Pietrelcina

At the Shrine to St. Joseph in Kalisz, Poland, where St. John Paul II preached his inspiring homily on St. Joseph in 1997, in the crypt of the church, there is a museum dedicated to St. Joseph in thanksgiving for his role in saving the lives of many Catholic priests imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp in World War II.

There were many priests (and bishops) in the Dachau concentration camp. According to official records, 2,579 Catholic priests were in Dachau. Of these, 1,034 of the priests died there. Saint Joseph helped them in their suffering and gave them the strength to offer their lives for love of Jesus. As for the other 1,545 priests who survived Dachau, all of them attribute their liberation from the camp on April 29, 1945, to the powerful intercession of St. Joseph.

Here's the story.

The first Catholic priests arrived in Dachau in 1939. In the following months and years, the numbers continued to grow because priests were transferred to Dachau from the Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen concentration camps. On December 8, 1940, the priests in Dachau made a communal act of consecration to St. Joseph, asking him to help them survive their ordeal and save them from death. They consecrated themselves to St. Joseph in particular because it was St. Joseph who had saved the Son of God from death when Herod wanted to kill him, and the priests knew that he had the power to save them from the Nazis as well.

The act of consecration to St. Joseph was frequently renewed. The imprisoned priests also renewed the consecration annually in a more solemn manner. Additionally, the priests prayed novenas to St. Joseph asking for help in their dire situation. When the camp was finally liberated in 1945, the remaining priests testified that it was St. Joseph who was responsible for their survival. In thanksgiving, many of the priests — especially the priests from Poland — organized a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Joseph in Kalisz, Poland, in 1948. The

our soul from the fiercest Herod: Patriarch St. Joseph has for Jesus, help you with his patronage. He protection of the wicked and proud heart to be estranged from Jesus. In extreme confidence, because I anything from St. Joseph, with-

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pilgrimage was such a memorable event that a second pilgrimage was organized in 1958, and subsequent pilgrimages followed. In 1995, the 37 remaining priests who had survived Dachau were present for the pilgrimage. Today, all the priests have died, yet their memory and tribute to St. Joseph lives on in the museum attached to the shrine.

Saint Joseph saved Jesus from Herod. Saint Joseph protected Mary from robbers. Saint Joseph consoled Jesus and Mary and prepared them for Calvary. Saint Joseph was in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Calvary. Saint Joseph consoled the many priests who suffered and died in Dachau. Saint Joseph helped many priests survive the camp. Saint Joseph, your spiritual father, wants to protect you, prepare you, console you, and help you make of your life a sacrifice for others.

We all have in him [St. Joseph] a model and a protector.¹³

— St. Peter Julian Eymard

Let us say to the great Patriarch, “Here we are, we are all for you; may you be all for us. Show us the way, strengthen us in every step and lead us to where Divine Providence wants us to go.”¹⁴

— St. Joseph Marella

Saint Joseph's Workshop

Saint Joseph is the Glory of Domestic Life. He loved, educated, nourished, and protected his Son. He gave his entire life in loving service to Jesus and Mary.

On March 19, 1963 (the Solemnity of St. Joseph), St. Josemaría Escrivá gave a homily in honor of St. Joseph that has become very well-known. It is titled, “In Joseph's Workshop.”

In the homily, St. Josemaría describes the wonderful relationship that St. Joseph and Jesus had as father and son. Below is a section of the homily.

Joseph, caring for the child as he had been commanded, made Jesus a craftsman, transmitting his own professional skill to him. So the neighbors of Nazareth will call Jesus both *faber* and *fabri filius*: the craftsman and the son of the craftsman (see Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55). Jesus worked in Joseph's workshop and by Joseph's side. What must Joseph have been, how grace must have worked through him, that he should be able to fulfill this task of the human upbringing of the Son of God!