

DAY 23

Lover of Poverty, Pray for Us

Truly, I doubt not that the angels, wondering and adoring, came thronging in countless multitudes to that poor workshop to admire the humility of him who guarded that dear and divine child, and labored at his carpenter's trade to support the son and the mother who were committed to his care.¹

— St. Francis de Sales

Saint Joseph was unpretentious in the eyes of the world. He had no worldly ambition or desire for recognition.

Throughout the centuries, people have often wondered what the financial status of the Holy Family was, or what their living conditions were. To answer this question, we need look no further than the New Testament. The Holy Family was poor. Very poor.

Saint Joseph was so lowly and poor in the sight of the world that the Wise Men who entered the stable in Bethlehem did not even acknowledge his presence (see Mt 2:11). When the Holy Family journeyed to the Temple in Jerusalem to participate in the Jewish ritual of purification for a new mother, Joseph couldn't even afford to purchase a lamb for a burnt offering (see Lev 12:6-7). Lambs were expensive. Saint Joseph could only offer a poor man's gift, that is, two turtledoves or two young pigeons (see Lev 12:8).

The Holy Family lived on Divine Providence. Had Baby Jesus not been given gold, frankincense, and myrrh by the Wise Men in Bethlehem (see Mt 2:11), it is likely that St. Joseph would not have had money to purchase food and other necessities for his family when they traveled to Egypt. When they had left from Nazareth for Jerusalem to fulfil the census, they had not brought many things with them because they expected to return to Nazareth. The gifts of the Wise Men were God's providential way of taking care of the Holy Family. Years later, after returning to Nazareth from Egypt, the Holy Family lived for almost 30 years in a house in Nazareth that was simple and small.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). Have you ever wondered what that actually means? Is Jesus saying that poverty is wonderful? No, that's not what

he is saying. What he is saying is that those who are detached from the things of this world are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. When a person is detached from the things of this world, poverty is understood to be a virtue. The person who is detached from material things is truly blessed in spirit and rich in the sight of God. This explains why St. Joseph is called "Lover of Poverty." He relied on Divine Providence for all of his needs.

SAINT JOSEPH WILL HELP YOU BE POOR IN SPIRIT. Saint Joseph will teach you how to be detached from material things and abandoned to Divine Providence. You will never find true happiness in material goods. Those who allow their relationship to God to depend on whether they have worldly things are destined for unhappiness. The person who is poor in spirit, on the other hand, is able to proclaim, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

The silence of St. Joseph proves his greatness and poverty of spirit. Everyone likes to boast of their achievements and have others acknowledge their work. Saint Joseph, however, never saw the results of his hard work and sacrifice. He trusted that God would bring good fruit from his labor and years of service to Jesus and Mary. And God did — more than St. Joseph could have ever imagined. He was poor in the world, but rich in the Kingdom of Heaven.

He [St. Joseph] lived content in his poverty.²

— St. Bonaventure

Read "Perpetual Adoration" (page 171)
Pray the Litany of St. Joseph (page 233)