

to build the staircase. Once the  
ld not be found. He simply van-  
n leave, and no one knew who he  
ywhere but could not find him.  
wspaper to try and locate him. It

o the lumberyard to inquire who  
aircase, as well as to pay for the  
person at the lumberyard knew  
e sisters were informed that the  
od to a man building a staircase

red how odd it was that the man  
nmer, and a few other basic tools.  
eters ever did see how the lumber  
ed, the sisters and others from the  
realized that the mysterious man  
nique. It was a spiral staircase that  
the main floor in any way. It had  
ad-bearing column, and appeared  
ined no nails! It was found to be  
egs. The staircase is an architectural  
piece!

re from? Well, in 1996, a study was  
ater and wood technologist for the  
d the United States Naval Research  
found that the wood of the staircase  
ence in the world. Additional studies  
determined that the spruce that most  
staircase is only found in Israel.  
who built the staircase? The  
Joseph. After praying and  
to construct a staircase  
for the consecrated

## Silent Witness

The Gospel does not record a single word from him [St. Joseph];  
his language is silence.<sup>1</sup>

— St. Pope Paul VI

**W**e honor St. Joseph as the man who taught Jesus how to speak.  
Jesus must have spoken in a style similar to his earthly father,  
using the same colloquialisms and having the same accent as St.  
Joseph. Yet we do not have a single one of St. Joseph word's recorded  
in the New Testament. Actions speak louder than words.

Saint Joseph's silence and humility are the foundation of his  
greatness. Of all the men God could have chosen to be the earthly  
father of Jesus Christ, God selected St. Joseph, the most silent of  
all men.

Saint Joseph, although the greatest of saints, is the humblest and  
most hidden of all.<sup>2</sup>

— St. Peter Julian Eymard

You would think that to protect this precious treasure [Jesus],  
the omnipotent God would equip him [St. Joseph] with thun-  
derbolts. Wrong. Joseph sees in his arms a fugitive God and he  
follows him. He finds consolation only in his submission and in  
his confidence.<sup>3</sup>

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

Saint Joseph never wanted to be in the forefront of the drama  
of salvation. He preferred to remain hidden. His desire is for all the  
attention to be given to Jesus and Mary. The silence and humility  
of St. Joseph are one-of-a-kind, revealing his power, greatness, and  
influence with God.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet of France  
extolled the wonders of the silence and humility of St. Joseph. He  
wrote:

Jesus was revealed to the apostles that they might announce him  
throughout the world; He was revealed to St. Joseph who was  
to remain silent and keep him hidden. The apostles are lights  
to make the world see Jesus. Joseph is a veil to cover him; and  
under that mysterious veil are hidden from us the virginity of  
Mary and the greatness of the Savior of souls. He who makes the  
apostles glorious with the glory of preaching, glorifies Joseph by  
the humility of silence.<sup>4</sup>

Bishop Bossuet thought so highly of St. Joseph that he considered him to be the greatest human being in Christianity after Jesus and Mary. Although St. Joseph's holiness is hidden and unknown to many, Bishop Bossuet reminds us that the holiest object of Christianity is that which is hidden and veiled. He states:

The most illustrious thing the Church has is that which she hides most.<sup>5</sup>

Bishop Bossuet is referring to the hidden Most Blessed Sacrament, reserved in every tabernacle around the world. It is interesting, however, that as exposition of the Blessed Sacrament has increased, so too has St. Joseph been brought to the forefront of the Church's attention and devotion. The unveiling of St. Joseph reveals one of the greatest treasures of Christianity. Previous generations would have been delighted with the development of the Church's understanding of Joseph's role and devotion to Joseph in modern times because, even though their understanding and devotion to Joseph was in a rudimentary stage, they still loved him and would have welcomed more light had it been available to them at the time.

There have been "unveilings" of the greatness of St. Joseph in the past. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, many saints and scholars brought to the Church's life and theology a greater awareness of the wonders of St. Joseph through their own devotion and personal testimony. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, St. Joseph himself made an appearance in Europe that would become world famous and bring about an even greater appreciation of the importance of St. Joseph.

On June 7, 1660, in Cotignac, France, St. Joseph appeared to a shepherd, spoke to him, and worked miracles and wonders of healing. As the story goes, in the middle of a scorching hot day, a shepherd named Gaspard Ricard sought refuge in the shade under the trees on Mount Bessillon near the southeastern French town of Cotignac. Extremely thirsty, Gaspard did not know what to do to quench his thirst. Suddenly, a man of dignified appearance appeared to him, pointed to a rock, and said to him: "I am Joseph. Lift this rock and you shall drink." The rock was extremely large, and Gaspard told the man that he would not be able to lift it by himself. Undeterred, the man repeated his order for Gaspard to move the rock. Gaspard reluctantly approached the rock and, to his astonishment, was able to move it. Immediately, clear water began to gush out from the spot where the rock had been. Gaspard consumed the water with great enthusiasm and rose to thank the man, but the man had vanished.

Not knowing where the man had gone, Gaspard ran to the village to tell the people what had taken place, fully expecting to be ridiculed and mocked. His story was so intriguing that many people from the village followed him and saw the spring flowing with clear water. They also took note that the large rock had been moved; they could even see where the rock had once been located. For better access to the water, men from the village tried to move the rock a little further. It took eight grown men to move it! It was then that it dawned upon Gaspard that he had been visited by the great St. Joseph!

As word got out about what had taken place, people began to come to the spring from all over France, and many miracles occurred because of the faith of the people. They prayed to God for healing, and God worked wonders through St. Joseph and the miraculous spring. The king of France, King Louis XIV, heard about what was happening in the village and was deeply impressed. He was so moved that he consecrated all of France to St. Joseph on March 19, 1661. He also declared the Feast of St. Joseph a national holiday throughout all of France. The site quickly became so popular that the local people built a shrine to St. Joseph around the miraculous spring. For over a hundred years, it was a place of great pilgrimage, but at the time of the French Revolution, the shrine was abandoned and fell into ruins. It was restored in 1978 and is now operated by Benedictine nuns.

On occasion, God has also taught the Church about the greatness of St. Joseph through the writings of saints and mystics, such as St. Bridget of Sweden, Venerable Mary of Ágreda, and Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich. On one occasion, the Virgin Mary instructed St. Bridget about the greatness of St. Joseph, especially emphasizing the wonder of his silence. Our Lady said to St. Bridget:

Saint Joseph was so reserved and careful in his speech that not one word ever issued from his mouth that was not good and holy, nor did he ever indulge in unnecessary or less than charitable conversation. He was most patient and diligent in bearing fatigue; he practiced extreme poverty; he was most meek in bearing injuries; he was strong and constant against enemies; he was the faithful witness of the wonders of heaven.<sup>6</sup>

In modern times, God has continued to unveil the greatness of St. Joseph through the writings of two of the most well-known and beloved saints of the Church: St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Faustina Kowalska. Their respective autobiographies are among the most popular writings of modern saints.

Saint Thérèse describes her love for St. Joseph in *The Story of a Soul*. She tells her readers that she had a tremendous devotion to St. Joseph from her childhood. She recounts the story of how, when she was a little girl, she was miraculously healed through the intercession of St. Joseph. Later, as a Carmelite nun, St. Thérèse wrote about how she prayed to St. Joseph every day, crediting him with granting her countless favors.

In the Divine Mercy apparitions given to St. Faustina Kowalska, St. Joseph frequently appeared to St. Faustina and reassured her of his protection over her important mission of making God's mercy known and trusted. Similar to St. Thérèse, Faustina, too, prayed to St. Joseph every day and wrote about her experiences in her *Diary*. Without a doubt, the saints and mystics of the Church have done much to reveal the greatness of St. Joseph. However, above them all, it is the Virgin Mary herself who seems to be doing the most to make her husband known and loved.

Think about it: Centuries ago, Mary was the first person to “unveil” the greatness of St. Joseph by telling St. Matthew and St. Luke about aspects of the life of St. Joseph of which they otherwise would have had no knowledge. Saint Matthew and St. Luke never knew St. Joseph personally; they never met him or talked to him. The most likely explanation for how St. Joseph ended up in the New Testament at all is that Mary told St. Matthew and St. Luke about St. Joseph. The wife of St. Joseph is *the* source of information about St. Joseph in the New Testament. Mary wanted her husband to be included in the New Testament. Saint Joseph didn't speak much, but his wife spoke for him.

Today, Mary is at it again. Through her various apparitions, Mary is making her husband known by bringing him with her and teaching the Church about his importance. The Holy Trinity is the one behind it, of course, but there can be no doubt that Mary greatly delights in it and wants it as well. It seems Mary is once again asking Jesus to provide more wine for the wedding!

In our time, Our Lady has helped us comprehend and love her dear and chaste husband, St. Joseph. She has told us of the mystery surrounding him and of his greatness. She has let us know something of her love for St. Joseph, that most lovable saint who for years held the Word made flesh in his arms.<sup>7</sup>

— Blessed Gabriele Allegra



Let's take a look at several of the apparitions referred to by Blessed Gabriele Allegra, as well as a few that have taken place since his death.

On August 21, 1879, the Virgin Mary appeared to 15 people in Knock, Ireland. The apparition is popularly known as the apparition of Our Lady of Knock, but St. Joseph and St. John the Apostle were also present. No words or messages were given by Our Lady or the other heavenly visitors. The apparition occurred in the pouring rain and lasted for many hours. According to the sworn testimony of those who witnessed the apparition, St. Joseph wore white, was barefoot, and had his hands folded in prayer with his head slightly bent toward Mary as if honoring her great dignity as the Mother of God. It's a mysterious and intriguing apparition, but one that is fully approved by the Church.

In 1917, the Virgin Mary appeared in Fatima, Portugal. On October 13, 1917, during the last of the six Marian apparitions given to the three young visionaries, St. Joseph made an appearance as well. Similar to Knock, the skies were pouring rain on October 13 when St. Joseph made his appearance. It was also on that day that the famed Miracle of the Sun took place. More than 70,000 people witnessed the sun gyrate and spin as though it were going to crash into the earth. It was shortly before the Miracle of the Sun took place that St. Joseph appeared, holding the Christ Child, and together they blessed the world. All three visionaries of Fatima testified that St. Joseph and the Christ Child simultaneously blessed the world.

The significance of Jesus appearing as a child and blessing the world with St. Joseph cannot be underestimated. The message of Fatima has great significance for our times. Sister Lucia, the longest-lived visionary of the Fatima apparitions, stated that the final battle between good and evil would be over marriage and the family. Heaven taught us on October 13, 1917, that Jesus works miracles, gives peace, and blesses the world through St. Joseph. What St. Joseph's presence at Fatima also signifies is that a crucial component of the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary — a promise Our Lady made during the July 13 apparition to the three visionary children — is for the world to receive the simultaneous blessing of St. Joseph. When the Church recognizes the blessing of St. Joseph's fatherhood, Jesus will reign in hearts, and Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph.

In 1968, there were a series of apparitions of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph in Zeitoun, a suburb of Cairo, Egypt. The town of Zeitoun

is believed to have been one of the places the Holy Family visited during their sojourn in Egypt centuries earlier. Incredibly, thousands of Zeitoun's inhabitants — including Christians, Muslims, Jews, and government officials — witnessed the apparitions of the Holy Family. As at Knock, there were no words spoken and no messages given. The apparitions took place above and around a Coptic church, and were approved by the local Coptic ecclesial authorities.

Perhaps the most significant of all St. Joseph's appearances in modern times were the alleged apparitions given to Sr. Mildred Mary Neuzil (also known as Sr. Mary Ephrem) in the United States in the 1950s. These apparitions are known as the apparitions of "Our Lady of America."

The alleged apparitions given to Sr. Mary Ephrem occurred in Ohio and took place over many years; Sr. Mary Ephrem died in 2000. At the heart of the messages is a call to prayer, conversion, purity, consecration to Our Lady as the Immaculate Conception, and devotion to St. Joseph. In 1956 and 1958, St. Joseph himself spoke to Sr. Mary Ephrem.

The messages of St. Joseph to Sr. Mary Ephrem are extremely important for our times. Saint Joseph spoke to her of his virginity, purity, obedience, and love for his spouse. He also informed Sr. Mary Ephrem that God desires that the world have a greater appreciation for the sufferings the heart of St. Joseph underwent in union with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Saint Joseph spoke of the importance of devotion to his heart and spiritual fatherhood, as well as how God desires to bless all fatherhood through St. Joseph. The recognition of the wonders of St. Joseph is of such great importance that St. Joseph instructed Sr. Mary Ephrem that God wants St. Joseph to be honored on the First Wednesday of every month, especially by the recitation of the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary and the reception of Holy Communion.

The messages given by St. Joseph to Sr. Mary Ephrem on March 18 and March 19, 1958, are of such spiritual importance and magnitude that they need to be presented here in their entirety. Sister Mary Ephrem wrote:

On March 11, 1958, Our Lady said to me: "St. Joseph will come on the eve of his feast. Prepare yourself well. There will be a special message. My holy spouse has an important part to play in bringing peace to the world."

[March 18, 1958]

St. Joseph came as was promised, and these are the words he spoke at this time: "Kneel down, my daughter, for what you will hear and what you will write will bring countless souls to a new way of life. Through you, small one, the Trinity desires to make known to souls its desire to be adored, honored, and loved within the kingdom, the interior kingdom of their hearts. I bring to souls the purity of my life and the obedience that crowned it. All fatherhood is blessed in me whom the Eternal Father chose as his representative on earth, the Virgin-Father of his own Divine Son. Through me the Heavenly Father has blessed all fatherhood, and through me he continues and will continue to do so till the end of time. My spiritual fatherhood extends to all God's children, and together with my Virgin Spouse I watch over them with great love and solicitude. Fathers must come to me, small one, to learn obedience to authority: to the Church always, as the mouthpiece of God, to the laws of the country in which they live, insofar as these do not go against God and their neighbor. Mine was perfect obedience to the Divine Will, as it was shown and made known to me by the Jewish law and religion. To be careless in this is most displeasing to God and will be severely punished in the next world. Let fathers also imitate my great purity of life and the deep respect I held for my Immaculate Spouse. Let them be an example to their children and fellow men, never willfully doing anything that would cause scandal among God's people. Fatherhood is from God, and it must take once again its rightful place among men."

As St. Joseph ceased speaking I saw his most pure heart. It seemed to be lying on a cross which was of brown color. It appeared to me that at the top of the heart, in the midst of the flames pouring out, was a pure white lily. Then I heard these words: "Behold this pure heart so pleasing to him who made it." St. Joseph then continued: "The cross, my little one, upon which my heart rests is the cross of the Passion, which was ever present before me, causing me intense suffering. I desire souls to come to my heart that they may learn true union with the Divine Will. It is enough, my child; I will come again tomorrow. Then I will make known to you how God wishes me to be honored in union with Jesus and Mary to obtain peace among men and nations. Good night, my little one."

On the evening of the next day, March 19, 1958, St. Joseph again appeared to me as he had promised and addressed me in these words: "My child, I desire a day to be set aside to honor my fatherhood. The privilege of being chosen by God to be the Virgin-Father of his Son was mine alone, and no honor, exclud-



ing that bestowed upon my Holy Spouse, was ever, or will ever, be as sublime or as high as this. The Holy Trinity desires thus to honor me that in my unique fatherhood all fatherhood might be blessed. Dear child, I was king in the little home of Nazareth, for I sheltered within it the Prince of Peace and the Queen of Heaven. To me they looked for protection and sustenance, and I did not fail them. I received from them the deepest love and reverence, for in me they saw him whose place I took over them. So the head of the family must be loved, obeyed, and respected, and in return be a true father and protector to those under his care. In honoring in a special way my fatherhood, you also honor Jesus and Mary. The Divine Trinity has placed into our keeping the peace of the world. The imitation of the Holy Family, my child, of the virtues we practiced in our little home at Nazareth is the way for all souls to that peace which comes from God alone and which none other can give.”

Then suddenly, as he ceased speaking, I was favored with a unique and marvelous vision of the glorious St. Joseph. He seemed suspended, as it were, a short distance above what had the appearance of a large globe with clouds moving about it. His head was slightly raised, the eyes gazing upward as if in ecstasy. The hands were in a position similar to that of the priest during the celebration of Holy Mass, only they extended upward somewhat more. The color of his hair as also of his rather small and slightly forked beard seemed a very dark brown. His eyes resembled in color the hair and beard. He was clothed in a white robe that reached to his ankles. Over this he wore a sort of cloak which did not come together at the throat, but covering the shoulders and draped gracefully over each arm, reached to the hem of the robe. The cloak at times had, or seemed to have, the appearance of a brown, sometimes a purple, hue, or perhaps a slight blending of the two. The belt about his waist was of a gold color, as were his sandals. His appearance, though quite youthful, gave at the same time the impression of rare maturity combined with great strength. He seemed a bit taller than medium height. The lines of his face appeared strong and purposeful, softened somewhat by a gentle serenity. I also saw his most pure heart at this time. Moreover, I saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering above his head. Standing sideways, facing each other, were two angels, one on the right, the other on the left. Each carried what appeared to be a small pillow in a satin covering, the pillow on the right bearing a gold crown, the one on the left, a gold scepter. The angels were all white, even their faces and hair. It was a beautiful whiteness that reminded me of the stainlessness of heaven. Then I heard these words: “Thus should he be honored whom the King desires to honor.”<sup>8</sup>



Whoa! If you didn't get that, read it again. Everything that modern man needs to know about the greatness of St. Joseph is contained in the messages given to Sr. Mary Ephrem: Saint Joseph's spiritual fatherhood, virginal fatherhood, youthful appearance, kingship, crown, heart, and cloak. Saint Joseph speaks of his protection of the family, the importance of fatherhood, and heaven's desire that a special feast day in honor of St. Joseph's fatherhood be established. God wants St. Joseph to be known and loved!

My friends, do you realize what this means? The fatherhood of St. Joseph is a game-changer! The significance of a feast day in honor of St. Joseph's fatherhood would do so much spiritual good for the Church, families, and the world. Saint Joseph is worthy to be crowned by his beloved children!

The apparition to Sr. Mary Ephrem also teaches us that St. Joseph has an essential role in bringing peace to the world. Saint Joseph is evidently an integral part of the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (hence, his appearance at Fatima on Oct. 13). Our Lady's Heart will triumph when the restoration of the family, and God's rightful place in it, takes place. None of this will happen until St. Joseph's fatherhood is fully recognized by the Church. Now is the time of St. Joseph!

He that is the lesser among you, he is the greater.

— Lk 9:48

Let us allow ourselves to be filled with St Joseph's silence! In a world that is often too noisy, that encourages neither recollection nor listening to God's voice, we are in such deep need of it.<sup>9</sup>

— Pope Benedict XVI