

Saint Joseph, the Saint for our Times

Wednesday, June 9, 2021 ~ St. Joseph, Terror of Demons



A few days ago, the Sisters heard a story that we thoroughly enjoyed – and I thought it would be a wonderful way to begin this talk. A young priest (not of this diocese) lamented that his parents, as many others of their generation, hadn't prayed the Rosary for years. On a quick home visit, to his delight, he found his mother praying the Rosary. He recounted, "...the interesting thing I noticed was her pace: rapid-firing on all cylinders, racing around the beads as fast as she could...." He asked his mother to pause while he explained how the Rosary is a meditation on Scripture, with the Hail Mary's as "background music". His mother replied: "Wait a minute. I heard that every time you say a Hail Mary, it's like shooting a bullet into the devil!" She held up the Rosary, exclaiming, 'And this is my machine gun!'" (Alar 121-122)

While the Rosary may not really be a machine gun shooting bullets at the devil, we are confident in the belief that Mary can exercise dominion over the devil. This enmity, to use the vocabulary of Genesis 3:15, or total opposition, to the devil is based in the grace of her Immaculate Conception, her purity, humility, obedience – and every other virtue she exemplifies. We have no doubt that Our Lady is a powerful weapon against the attacks of the devil. But St. Joseph? How is he the "Terror of Demons"?

Bishop Robert Gruss from the Diocese of Saginaw wrote: "One may wonder why St. Joseph would be given such a title – Terror of Demons. A little history – In the late 1930's, Pope Pius XI began to see the serious threat that communism posed to the common good and called upon St. Joseph to protect the Church from the errors of communism. As a result, Catholics fervently began to pray to St. Joseph, specifically under the title "Terror of Demons" to combat the atheism and the atheistic ideas of communism". Bishop Gruss continues: "We live in a world that is filled with disorder, disunity, division, outright evil, sin...and grave sin, in fact. One

may think that it is just a part of fallen human nature; and it is. But it is much more than this. It is, in my opinion, the result of the work of the Evil One in our world. The more chaos and division, the more evil and sin, the more he is at work. I would surmise that most people do not often think of the work of the Evil One in the world, nor the effect of the Evil One in our own lives” (Gruss). Bishop Gruss encouraged the faithful in today’s world to turn to St. Joseph, “Terror of Demons”.

Fr. Donald Calloway, in his *Consecration to St. Joseph*, writes that “The title ‘Terror of Demons’ is the most unique title of St. Joseph. It is a fearsome and commanding title. It is the title of a warrior. The lily St. Joseph holds in his hand is a mighty spiritual weapon, a sword of purity”. (73) St. Alphonsus Liguori simply states that: “St. Joseph is most powerful against the demons which fight against us.” (Calloway 217) “Blessed Bartolo Longo, a former satanic priest before his conversion, said: ‘It is a great blessing for souls to be under the protection of [St. Joseph] whose name makes demons tremble and flee’” (Gruss). Quite the testimony. However, the question is still there – why does St. Joseph make demons “tremble and flee”?

A good place to start is to define our terms. According to the Miriam-Webster dictionary, the word “terror” can mean “someone or something that inspires fear”. The example they gave made me smile: “I stood before fierce Mrs. Mabel Johnston, his secretary and the terror of the office”. (Miriam-Webster) There may be someone in your past whom you might use as your own example of a “terror”, but St. Joseph? A terror? What we don’t want to overlook is to whom St. Joseph is a terror – to demons. Maybe the very reason why we can’t picture St. Joseph as a terror is the very reason why he IS the “Terror of Demons”. I would like to focus on two ways that St. Joseph is truly the Terror of Demons – in his fatherhood and in his virtues, particularly humility and purity.

To begin our exploration of St. Joseph’s fatherhood, I’d like to quote Fr. Tim McCauley from *Crisis* magazine:

In chapter 8 of the Gospel of John, Jesus offers some fascinating insights into the deeper meaning of fatherhood. His opponents begin by boasting of their status, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus replies, ‘if you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but you are trying to kill me ... if God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God ... you are from your father the devil.’

According to Jesus, a creature different from our biological [father] can be our 'father.' If we follow the example of a particular person and carry out his wishes, he may be called our 'father.' 'If Abraham were your father, you would be doing what Abraham did.' Jesus is speaking of a fatherhood not of genetics, but of imitation. Only if they lived and acted like Abraham could Jesus's listeners claim Abraham as their father. If they were set on evil ways, they reveal they are sons of their father the devil. It is a sobering reminder that Satan can indeed become our 'father,' and we can become devils. As Jesus once solemnly spoke, 'I have chosen twelve of you, and is not one of you a devil?' In Neal Lozano's book *Abba's Heart*, he reminds us that Satan, in addition to being a liar and a murderer, is also a counterfeit father. 'He will do anything to distort our view of [God] the Father and who we are in the Father's image.' (McCauley)

All fatherhood has its origin in God and finds its earthly model in St. Joseph. Fr. McCauley refers to St. Joseph as an "icon" of the Father. "An icon is an image that speaks a thousand words and mysteriously makes present what it signifies. St. Joseph in his very person is an icon of God the Father, a living representation of many of the qualities and characteristics of the eternal Father.... If St. Joseph helps us see more clearly the truth about God, then we are more likely to live accordingly as beloved children of our Father in heaven." (McCauley). Lucifer fears the fatherhood of St. Joseph more than any other creaturely fatherhood because the devil knows that there is no created person who has a greater participation in the fatherhood of God than St. Joseph. By his fatherhood, St. Joseph helps us see God the Father as loving, caring, protecting, compassionate, patient and humble. This counteracts the lies the devil wishes us to believe about God the Father. "In other words, believing the devil's lies about God the Father could eventually make us children of our 'father' the devil." (McCauley) The last thing the devil wants is for men to pattern their fatherhood off of St. Joseph. If we reject the lies, shown to us by the living icon of St. Joseph, then we can become the true children of our Heavenly Father, or living icons of Jesus, His Son.

Since Joseph is the icon of God the Father on earth, Jesus submitted to Joseph's authority under the fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother (Ex 20:12). This submission of God to mortals is incomprehensible to the devil and infuriates him. In heaven, Jesus continues to listen to his virginal father because St. Joseph's desires are always in

accord with God's most holy will. His intercession with his Son can thwart the devil at every turn, and he knows it. Multiple saints attest to the intercessory power of St. Joseph:

St. Augustine: "What could Jesus Christ refuse St. Joseph who never refused him anything during his mortal life on earth?"

St. Ambrose: "Since it is written that God 'will do the will of them that fear him', how can he refuse to do the will of St. Joseph who nourished him for so long with the sweat of his brow?"

St. Thomas Aquinas: "It is true that the other saints enjoy great power in heaven, but they ask as servants and do not command as masters. St. Joseph, to whose authority Jesus was subject on earth, obtains what he desires from his kingly foster Son in heaven."

St. Teresa of Avila: "The Lord wants us to understand that just as he was subject to St. Joseph on earth...so in heaven God does whatever he commands." (Calloway 225)

Just because we have no recorded words of St. Joseph in the Scriptures, giving us an image of a quiet man, this does not mean that St. Joseph was a timid or a weak man. Far from it. He was a strong father that protected the Holy Family from many dangers. Fr. McCauley wrote: "A case can be made that it is precisely as an icon of [God] the Father that Joseph is the 'Terror of Demons'. In one of the bas-reliefs in the votive chapel at the [St. Joseph] Oratory [in Canada], St. Joseph is portrayed, like a strong father, protecting two young people from the forces of evil. With a face set like flint in righteous anger, his outstretched arm and pointed finger cast out the demons, who shrink back like grotesque insects scurrying away from the light." (McCauley). "St. Joseph was given the task of guarding and protecting the church — the Holy Family, which was the Church in her infancy — at its very conception" (Moore). St. Joseph is still a strong father who knows how to protect his family from present danger, especially from the devil. Expressing Jesus' confidence in his earthly father, Pope Francis simply states: "Jesus slept with the protection of Joseph" (Armstrong).

Just as Mary's Immaculate Heart is a terror to the devil, so too is St. Joseph's holiness. For some people St. Joseph's life of holiness actually seems to be more imitable than that of Mary's since St. Joseph was born with original sin. He's seems to be more like "one of us".

What primary virtue of St. Joseph terrorizes Satan? I suggest that of humility. If pride is the root of all sin, then humility is the root of all virtue. St. Joseph was a humble man. This humility of St. Joseph made him hard-working and prudent, and he fulfilled his duties as a carpenter and father quietly and well. He didn't try to impress everyone by telling all his neighbors that his son was the Messiah so that they would respect or fear him. He didn't become despondent and fall into despair because he'd never be a worthy father for his Son. He didn't demand to know God's plan, but chose silent acceptance and obedience. Joseph just did what he was supposed to do out of love of God and love of Mary and Jesus. Imagine how terrified the devil must have been every time that Joseph refused to give him the time of day? Every trick that the devil pulled on Joseph, Joseph countered perfectly. (Federoff)

Because St. Joseph was humble, he was pure. As Sr. Joseph Mary so beautifully brought out in her talk, St. Joseph chose to live a life of continence, joining his total gift of self to God in union with Mary's vow of virginity. Jesus tells us in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God". (Mt 5:8) This purity of St. Joseph is a powerful weapon against the devil. If the pure of heart see God, then an impure heart blinds a person to the face of God. Their vision is centered on self-centered passions, on "user" relationships, and the darkness of sight in which the devil works. If I cannot see God, then I cannot follow him, turn to him for help, or even think about him – exactly what the devil wants to happen. The spiritual plague of impurity is destroying the hearts and minds of men, women and children daily. Fr. Calloway reflects: "Men who are impure have no power. Impure men pose no threat to the devil because they are spiritually impotent.... The devil doesn't fear many men today Satan has nothing to fear from a man who has freely chosen to let demons into his life through lust, pornography, immoral desires, and every other form of perversion..... If men want to see God and have power over darkness, they must strive to have a chaste and loving heart like St. Joseph". (Calloway 223)

"St. Joseph sees the face of God and has power over evil because he is pure. On earth, he gazed upon the face of Jesus for decades. In heaven, he gazes upon the divine countenance forever. The radiance of St. Joseph's face blinds the demons of hell." (Calloway 223) Purity repulses the devil. It pierces him.

Joseph is truly a “Terror of Demons”. Jessie Romero, a retired policeman, shared this personal experience: One day he was present as a helper at an exorcism. During the exorcism, “the priest called on St. Joseph under the title of St. Joseph, Terror of Demons and the demon started to immediately cry out in pain “No Joseph! No! No Joseph!” and the person was immediately delivered.”

All men can become a terror of demons if they imitate St. Joseph To quote St. Francis de Sales: “Valiant and strong is the man who, like St. Joseph, perseveres in humility; he will be conqueror at once of the devil and the world, which is full of ambition, vanity and pride.” (Calloway 224)

The next time that you feel tempted, Go to Joseph! God trusted this humble man with the care of Jesus and Our Lady, and he can be trusted to care of us, too.

At the end of the 19th century Pope Leo XIII recognized the increased attacks of the devil upon the world. He desired to fight it and “forged together two of the greatest spiritual weapons the Church has in her arsenal: the rosary and St. Joseph”. (Calloway 224) He requested that a prayer to St. Joseph be prayed at the end of the Rosary, especially in the month of October. This prayer is ordinarily enriched with a partial indulgence. During the Year of Saint Joseph, however—which lasts from December 8, 2020 to December 8, 2021—the use of this prayer has been included among those enriched with a plenary indulgence. This prayer may be said on any day of the Year of Saint Joseph, but especially encouraged on his various feast days, the nineteen of each month, and every Wednesday – the day of the week traditionally dedicated to St. Joseph (USCCB). We have placed a copy of this prayer on the table in the back of the chapel for anyone who would like to take a copy and include it within their own prayer arsenal. It may not be the “machine gun” Rosary, but it is a weapon that we can use in our fight against evil as we invoke the power of St. Joseph, Terror of Demons.

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