



# LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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## THE ROSARY; OUR CHAIN OF HOPE AND ANCHOR IN HEAVEN

by Br. John Paul Puschautz

[Br. John Paul Puschautz joined the Brothers of Saint John at their American novitiate in Princeville, IL in 2010. He continued his formation with them in both France and the US during these intervening years. During his three years of apostolic internship, he served as a campus minister at Seton Hall University in NJ. He also completed his M.A. in Scientific Theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary. After careful discernment, he will be entering the Order of Preachers through the Western Dominican Province in August 2021.]

After a couple of challenging but enriching years of study in France, I was inspired to ask my superior to renew my consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary by making a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Fatima. I received permission to embark on this adventure with Br. Patrick but we were told to set out in the simplicity and abandonment of the apostles, which meant we were to hitchhike without any phone, money, or plans. Let go and let God. Let go of all our illusions of control and let God reveal his paternal providence. St. Thomas Aquinas says that hope is born from a desire for a good that is "difficult but possible to attain" (ST II-II 17.1). I was invited to exercise this theological virtue countless times on this journey to our Heavenly Mother. This amazing experience taught me so much about our pilgrimage through the lacrimarum valle, or "vale of tears," which is life. On earth we are "en route" to our celestial home and hope sustains us through the many challenges of life. We are constantly tempted to despair of attaining our ultimate good when we are bombarded by the worries of the world; by the social and political turmoil, by the increasingly hostile, secularized, and consumerist culture, and by the scandal in the Church. All of these difficulties, on top of our daily personal trials, drag us down. We need hope. The author of the letter to



THE VIRGIN OF THE ROSARY  
BARTOLOME ESTEBAN MURILLO

the Hebrews tells us that hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" which "enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain" (Heb. 6:19). We have hope because Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the forerunner who has run the race and traced a path "behind the curtain" to eternal happiness.

When we lose sight of our "upward calling" (cf. Phil. 3:14) we need to imitate the perfect disciple, Mary, and to hold on tight to our chain of hope, the Rosary. By meditating daily on the mysteries of Jesus with Mary, we learn little by little how to live *in the world without living of the world*. Mary is our mother who faced incredible challenges without ever letting go of the anchor of hope. She knows our fears because she herself experienced them before the Nativity and the finding of Jesus in the Temple. She knows our heartache because her heart was pierced at the slaughter of the Holy Innocents and the slaughter of the Holy Innocent on Calvary. Faced with desperation Mary "hoped against hope" (Rm 4:18) even when all seemed dead and lost. She is the *stabat mater*, the mother who was standing at the foot of the cross, who responded always to God's mysterious will with her *fiat*, "Let it be done unto me according to your will" (Lk 1:38). Like the psalmist praying "I will awake the dawn," she hastened with her loving desire, the rising of the "morning star" (Rev. 22:16) at the Resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost where she helped give birth to the Church. Hope sustained her during the long years of anticipation before her glorious Assumption and now she is the woman clothed with the sun and crowned with stars as Queen of heaven and earth (cf. Rev.12:1).

Mary reigns as Queen to intercede for her children as they traverse the desert of this world. Because of the sins of our first parents and our sin, we have been exiled out of the Garden, and we wander through this thorny "wilderness of Sin"<sup>1</sup> like the Israelites on pilgrimage to the

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# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church

By Fr. Brian Mullady, O.P., S.T.D.

*Prottetore della mia agonia, tu m'assisti morte mia, con Gesu e con Maria.* (Protector in my agony, you assist me in my death, with Jesus and Mary.) This little rhyme is sung in Southern Italy in heart felt devotion to St. Joseph. It expresses the fact that Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, something we all hope to do. Yet this is only one aspect of the marvelous example and place of St. Joseph in the life of the Church.

This year we are celebrating a year of St. Joseph in the Catholic Church and it is altogether fitting and proper that one should dwell at length on the many faceted character of the mission of Joseph. St. Joseph is a model to many vocations in the Church. He is the patron of workers because he worked with his hands. At the same time, he is the patron of contemplatives because of his constant spiritual presence with Jesus. He is the patron of fathers, but also of a happy death. He is the patron of marriage and yet also was a virgin.

The age of St. Joseph is an issue. Christian iconography for many centuries has been accustomed to portray Joseph as an old man to insure both virgin birth and divine personhood of Christ. This is against an ancient heresy that Joseph was the natural father of Christ. It is also founded on Scriptural texts which cite the fact that Jesus had brother and sister. (Mark 6:3) and (Mt. 13: 55-56) Yet the Jews were accustomed to give these terms to extended members of the family as is clear from the Old Testament. Joseph was portrayed as an old man to put him past childbearing age. Joseph and Mary had a real marriage but one which was not consummated. This is to prove the truth of the Incarnation and encourage belief that he was connected to a true marriage and raised in a real family just like any other human child.

Understanding Jewish wedding customs of the time is essential to unwrapping this mystery. The marriage of Mary and Joseph obeyed the societal norms of the time. Jewish wedding customs separated the betrothed from the coming together until the actual wedding ceremony. The betrothal was more than that. Vows were exchanged but cohabitation did not begin. The husband built a home for the wife. The wife remained with her family, and then with the home prepared, the husband escorted the wife from her home and they cohabited. This was the actual marriage. It was during this time that Mary went to be a midwife for Elizabeth having learned from the angel that her cousin was pregnant after the normal age. It was during this time that Joseph came to know of the mystery. Husband and wife often went together, but not as to living at home or having sexual relations. Joseph was troubled at learning of this mystery. But the source of his anxiety has often been misinterpreted as doubting Mary's virginity.

One answer to this mystery, and supported in some ways by the present translation of the Bible used at Mass is that Joseph wanted to divorce her quietly. Feminists have supported this idea sometimes invoking Mary as an unwed mother.

First as to his age, as I said, Joseph is often portrayed as 80 years old because of the anxiety to safeguard the mystery

of Mary and Jesus. In Christ's time, however, Jewish men often married between 18 and 30. Joseph in later art became a young and virile man. He could not have protected Jesus and Mary if he were not. Furthermore, how could someone divorce someone quietly in a place as small as Nazareth? This is not possible. The anxiety he felt must not have been about the virginity of Mary but about his own participation in this mystery. He had no questions or doubts about Mary's faithfulness, and was certain that the child Mary had conceived was not conceived by man.

Joseph's anxiety concerned his own participation as a limited creature in such a stupendous mystery — what was his place? One can discern others who reacted similarly from a number of incidents in Scripture. For example, Peter on experiencing the miraculous catch of fish is greatly moved by the mysterious event and expresses his reservations about his own participation in such a miracle by saying: "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.*" (Lk 5:8) When Mary, as the new Ark of the Covenant, came to visit her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth is like the Old Testament figure who did not take the Ark into Jerusalem for fear of its power and left it on the threshing floor outside the city: "*Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" (Lk 1:43) Each did not understand the source of the mystery but knew it was wonderful and needed to be convinced that they would not be consumed by it. Ancient meditations on Moses and the Burning Bush use icons with Mary and Jesus, and Moses so dazzled by the divine presence that he wanted to remove his shoes and worship lest he be burned in the fire.

The reaction of St. Joseph is the same. At the time he did not know the source, but knew it was wonderful and wondered what his place could be in it. He asked himself "who am I to be chosen to associate myself with such a miracle." A new translation of this important passage in the work of Dr. John Saward in his book, *Redeemer in the Womb* (p. 38) shows clearly that Joseph's reaction was not an angry response to the possible violation of Mary's virginity nor as a compassionate response towards her to spare her the Mosaic law against adultery. In no way is she an unwed mother. The betrothal was equivalent to the marriage contract. Mary did not violate her marriage vows. Rather, Joseph's reaction concerned himself. Matthew's account of Jesus as Messiah is as follows. "*When his Mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being an upright man and not wanting to reveal her mystery, resolved to withdraw from her quietly.*" (Mt. 1:18-19)

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It is at this point that Joseph receives the third annunciation in Holy Scripture. The first was the birth of John the Baptist; the second as the conception of Christ. The third now concerns the role that Joseph will play in the mystery, Guardian of the Redeemer and the Virginity of Our Lady. "But when he had formed this intention, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, *"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for her child has indeed been conceived by the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* (Mt. 1:20-25) Notice that the role of the father of the family was to name the child and so Joseph is the first person to pronounce the Holy Name of Jesus. Joseph is thus told in his own annunciation that his task is to be the silent guardian and protector of the mystery. Since the truth of Mary's virginal conception is first silently revealed by the angel, he is the first silent witness to the mystery.

In obedience to the angel Joseph found in the spirit the source of his love. He was a faithful husband to Mary and through her, a guardian of the Word. He thus presents us with a marvelous example of evangelization. The marriage of Mary and Joseph is a true marriage. They did not reject consummation of their marriage but each gave themselves in faith up to the providence of God. Each realized that they were to remain virginal. In fact, there is a Christian tradition that each took a vow of virginity. But the condition was that should God ever reveal to them that they should consummate their marriage, they were willing to obey in love.

Joseph's marriage to Mary is the juridical basis for his fatherhood. They each gave themselves to each other in freedom according to what the providence of God had prepared for them. Thus, they passed their days in the quiet joy of infused contemplation. Mary had after all married the Trinity in the Annunciation and Joseph had accepted his devotion to Mary and Jesus in his own obedience. One can see this obedience lived in the silence of St. Joseph. One preacher compares this to the sanctuary lamp burning in silent witness to the presence of Christ in the tabernacle.

This silent witness is replete in Scripture where Joseph does all his fatherly tasks including the flight into Egypt simply at the word of divine providence from the angel. It would seem that Joseph played midwife to Our Lord. Here is the justification of St. Joseph in faith. The faith of Mary meets the faith of Joseph and they share their pilgrimage together with their Son. Of course, Joseph's pilgrimage on earth ends first. He does not directly witness Calvary or Pentecost. But he dies happy in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

All the spiritual authors are clear that authentic growth in prayer is not a matter of some spectacular experience. True, the virgin birth is an extraordinary miracle, and a very quiet one as very few knew of it at the time. Authentic spirituality is rather an exercise in growing in humility and detachment. Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. Detachment is surrendering all that the self holds dear as a substitute for God, and to serve the Lord more faithfully. Once one has formed these virtues by listening to God and acting, as Joseph did in his annunciation, this cannot help but affect human relationships as well. The Son of Mary is Joseph's son by reason of the marriage bond. But this is

not a fatherhood of the flesh but of the spirit and the Word. Union of hearts and spiritual union always come first and that is certainly true with the Holy Family. Joseph serves a vital proof that the spiritual presence of the father is necessary in the domestic church for it to truly be a community of love and spiritual growth. That spiritual presence is exemplified in his humility and detachment.

Joseph demonstrates the authority of a father in his service of Christ, his legal authority by his gift of self and his family love by his complete offering of himself. As guardian and father, Joseph's humility and detachment are a part of his personal experience with Jesus in many of the important actions of Jesus's.

In the census they journey to his ancestral town. In the birth the true light comes forth from Mary's womb to enlighten the world. In the circumcision, the first shedding of the blood of the Redeemer takes place and He is made a member of Israel. He will fulfill the law. In the giving of the Holy Name, the Redeemer is proclaimed to the world. In the presentation in the Temple, the Lord of the Temple comes to meet the Temple as a child and the longing of human hearts for redemption is finally fulfilled in Simeon and Anna. The fateful sword of the passion is promised to Mary. In the flight into Egypt, Our Lord is taken to the ancient land of Egypt, a land tainted with idolatry from which Moses came to give the law and redeem the people from slavery. In the finding in the Temple, Joseph and Mary are gently teased by Our Lord. They know who he is, why look for him for three days? Where else would wisdom itself be but in the Temple engaging the doctors of the law? In the support and education of Christ, he is apprenticed to Joseph to work also with his hands at honest trade. Christ experiences the virtue of industriousness.

St. Joseph witnessed and was personally present for all these events. Justly is he called the patron of the universal Church. Among other titles in the litany of St. Joseph he is invoked as the "terror of demons." One reason for this is that the devil tempts us with all kinds of things to show our power in domination over others. In the humility and detachment of St. Joseph we see this for just what it is, false stumpery. Only God can give us freedom, truth and spiritual treasure. In our modern godless world characterized by the lack of any spirituality the humble and detached but strong manly Joseph is a fit patron for constant concern for the dear neighbor whoever that may be. We should therefore say daily: ***Ite ad Joseph. (Go to Joseph.)***

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### **The Rosary...** (Continued from page 1)

Promised Land 3500 years ago. Like our ancestors in faith, we are tempted to murmur and doubt God's providence, after all, the desert is a place of intense thirst and danger. But paradoxically, in the Bible, the impoverishing desert (ἔρημος) can also be a place of refuge and encounter with the living God as told in the book of Revelation, "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for 1,260 days" (Rev. 12:6).<sup>2</sup> This wilderness has been transformed by Christ conquering Satan; "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Mt 4:1). The desert of this world becomes the intimate place of encounter with the Bridegroom of our souls where God nourishes us and wins back our heart as he said through the prophet Hosea, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (2:14). Perhaps this thirst we experience in the desert is actually for our good, for it pushes us to work for the food that "endures for eternal life" (Jn 6:27) and to discover the living water, who is Christ, who tells us that "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). Hope is this source of living water for with it we possess already, in a germ form, the mustard seed of the Kingdom of God within us (cf. Lk 17:21). Hope is not a mere psychological optimism about the future, but a supernatural assurance of our will in God, for whom all things are possible (cf. Mt 19:26). As a theological virtue, hope has God himself as its object, and therefore through it we "attain God on Whose help it leans."<sup>3</sup>

While we are lost at sea, hope is the anchor in heaven which establishes us firmly in our heavenly port and Mary is our *Stella Maris*, our guiding star. The Rosary is the chain of hope which connects us to heaven through Mary. When we hold our rosary in faith, we hold the hand of Our Mother which gives us the confidence to face any danger with courageous hope. An image of this is the cord you sometimes see toddlers holding connecting them to their parents in order to not get lost in the crowds. In the crowds and distractions of this world we can hold on tight to our chain of hope to guide us to our heavenly home.

The Rosary also unites us to our brothers and sisters. If we ever feel alone, we just need to think of the thousands of members of the confraternity, the thousands of consecrated religious men and women around the world, and the countless faithful in heaven and on earth who intercede for us as members of the Body of Christ. Another image that comes to mind is the unique experience of navigating through crowds of millions at World Youth Days. In order to not get separated from each other, groups need to link together as a human chain and hold on for their lives. Much like this human chain, the Rosary unites all of Mary's beloved children. We have our hands on our neighbor's shoulders who leads us and we lead our neighbor who has their hands on our shoulders. Mary is the mediatrix connecting us to Jesus who leads the way through the crowd. She is the intercessor Queen who presents our prayer before the King as St. Louis

De Montfort so beautifully described. She knows our suffering and trials and she gives us hope because she has gone before us and leads us. Mary Our Mother, the Immaculate Conception, is guiding us on our pilgrimage to perfection, guiding us to heaven where we too will be "holy and immaculate in God's sight" (cf. Col 1:22).

Until that day when the veil is lifted, we are called to live in hope. Despair is the vice contrary to hope. It is like a virus that creeps in and little by little discourages us and leads us to doubt God's infinite goodness. A Rosary a day keeps the devil away by anchoring us in heaven. It is the perfect antidote in whatever trial, for it brings us "to Jesus through Mary." On my pilgrimage to Fatima, I experienced daily miracles of God's presence through Mary's intercession. On my last day traveling, I was dropped off in a foreign city in the middle of the night. Without many options, I started walking and praying my rosary. I asked a factory worker on a night shift taking a smoke break if I was going in the right direction. After confirming this he asked what I was doing in that part of town, at that time of night with such strange clothes. I explained that I was a Catholic religious brother on the last leg of a 15 day hitchhiking pilgrimage, just a couple of hours away from my destination. Much to my surprise he offered to drive me the rest of the way after he got out of work. God arranged this meeting. This man needed a sign of God's presence in his life as much as I needed a ride, and I was able to be that sign for him. In my poverty, I was tempted to despair in this trial and to forget God's providence. Sometimes we feel lost at night in a strange city. Remember our anchor in heaven. Do not lose hope! Invoke Mary! Let us pray with St Bernard "If the winds of temptation arise; if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary."<sup>4</sup> ■

1 cf. Ex. 16:1. The Israelites wandered through the desert of Sin (from the Hebrew word סִינַי for "thorny") for 40 years before reaching the Promised Land.

2 Cf. Deu 2:7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands; he knows your going through this great wilderness; these forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing. Jer 2:2 RSV "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown." Jer 31:2 "Thus says the LORD: 'The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest.'"

3 Aquinas, ST. II-II 17.1 emphasis mine.

4 Hom. II super "Missus est," 17.

**NOVEMBER**

**MONTH OF THE HOLY SOULS**

The month of November has traditionally been dedicated to prayers for the deceased. In preparation, we invite you to mail in the names of your deceased loved ones to the Rosary Center by October 17. A daily mass will be offered for them during the month of November.