



March 19—St. Joseph

The religious spirit consists in the knowledge and love of the duties of one's vocation and has as its effect to make us increase in the love of our vocation, fulfill its obligations with exactitude, and defend as we ought its honor and interests. The dispositions that I have just mentioned were never better illustrated than by our glorious patron, St. Joseph. Let us then have recourse to him in order that we may understand the sentiments which we should make our own evermore wholeheartedly and obtain, by his powerful intercession before God, the grace of sincere esteem of our state of life, deep conviction of its duties, and the strength to manifest these sentiments in all times and places. If, however, we are to honor him as he desires, it is not enough to invoke him; we must further devotion to him and, above all, imitate his virtues and set them in opposition to the spirit of the world. This it is which makes devotion to him so timely.

—Basil Moreau

At the foot of Mount Royal in Montreal, there is a statue of St. Joseph that greets the millions of pilgrims who come to St. Joseph's Oratory every year to pay homage to this glorious saint. On the statue's pedestal, we read the words: *Ite Ad Joseph*—Go to Joseph. These words were the mantra of Br. André Bessette, C.S.C., the founder of St. Joseph's Oratory, whose legendary holiness and healing powers gave him the name, "Miracle Man of Montreal." Br. André's stalwart devotion to St. Joseph was partly attributed to the esteemed position that the foster father of Jesus holds in the heart of every Holy Cross religious. It was Fr. Moreau who declared St. Joseph as one of the glorious patrons of his newly formed Congregation of Holy Cross.

But why should we go to Joseph? What is so special about St. Joseph that we, in the spirit of Fr. Moreau and Br. André, should go to him with our aching souls, our hearts' desires, and our longings for holiness?

The answer is simple. In all of his ordinariness, St. Joseph embodies the religious spirit for which all Christians long—integrity, fortitude, fidelity, and yes, sanctity. In living out his foreboding vocation of being the husband of Mary and the foster father of the Messiah, St. Joseph remained unwavering in his loyalty, faithful to his mission, and unselfishly open to the will of God. St. Joseph did this not out of blind obedience or ignorance; he did it simply out of love.

For those who are discerning their vocation in life and for those who are already living theirs out, St. Joseph remains a model of how to live out our baptismal call to holiness and how to do it well. Fr. Moreau recognized this and encouraged us to seek the intercession of St. Joseph so that we, too, may obtain the grace of sincere esteem of our state of life, deep conviction of its duties, and the strength to manifest these sentiments in all times and places. Through St. Joseph's example, we see how a vocation to marriage, single life, priesthood, or religious life requires more than just duty, more than just putting in our time and fulfilling our obligations. It requires love, a love for the One who calls us and a love for those we are called to serve. After all, a vocation not rooted in love is a vocation not rooted in God. Fr. Moreau knew this. Br. André knew this.

That is why we need to go to Joseph, and not just with our prayers of intercession and petition. We need to go to him so that we can learn how to live our own vocations well. By deepening our devotion to St. Joseph and learning how to love as he loved, we will be able to embrace more fully the holiness that is integral to our own vocations. In so doing, in the words of Fr. Moreau, we will honor him as he desires. We cannot wait. We must go to Joseph.

Paul Bednarczyk, C.S.C.