

MARIA VALTORTA READERS GROUP

Postal address: 162 Burke Road, Glen Iris, Victoria, 3146 Australia
Phone: (03) 9885 9710 E-mail: catherine @valtorta.org.au Website: http://www.valtorta.org.au

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THE SUPPLEMENT No. 97 – MARCH 2020



SAINT JOSEPH - PART ONE

Joseph - the Spouse of Mary

(Maria says:) I see a rich hall [... which] must still be part of the Temple: there are priests in it, including [...] many men of every age, from twenty to fifty approximately. [...] In a corner, I can see Joseph. [He] is about thirty-years-old. He is a handsome man with short and rather curly hair, dark brown like his beard and his moustache, which cover a well-shaped chin and rise towards his rosy-brown cheeks, which are not olive-coloured as is normal in most people with a brown complexion. His eyes are dark, kindly and deep, very serious and perhaps somewhat sad. But when he smiles, [...] they become gay and young-looking. He is dressed in light brown, very simple but very tidy. [...]

The Pontiff goes to the table and begins to speak, standing up. 'Men of the race of David, gathered here at my request, please listen. The Lord has spoken. Glory be to Him! [...] The name of the husband [of Mary] is Joseph of Jacob of Bethlehem, of the tribe of David, a carpenter in Nazareth in Galilee. Joseph, come forward.' [...] Joseph, blushing and embarrassed moves forward.

(*Poem, Vol. 1, pp. 61-3; Gospel, Vol. 1, pp.77-9*)

Joseph – Angelic Union with Mary

(Mary is brought to meet her spouse) (Maria says:) Mary is standing with her head bowed. Joseph, who is also red in the face, looks at her and tries to find the first words to be said. He eventually finds them and a bright smile lights up his eyes. He says: 'I welcome you, Mary. I saw you when you were a little baby, only a few days old... I was a friend of your father's and I have a nephew, the son of my brother, Alphaeus, who was a great friend of your mother. [...] And I remember the evening you were born [...]. I made a cradle for you. A tiny little cradle, with roses carved all over it because your mother wanted it like

that. Perhaps it is still in the house... I am old, Mary. When you were born I was beginning to work. I was already working... I would never have believed that I was going to have you as a spouse! Perhaps your parents would have died a happier death if they had known because they were my friends. I buried your father, mourning over his death with a sincere heart because he was a good teacher to me. [...] As you know, your house is still intact, [...but] rather neglected. For over three years, the trees and the vines have never been pruned and the land is untilled and hard. But the trees that saw you when you were a little girl are still there, and if you agree, I will at once take care of them.'

'Thank you, Joseph. But you have your work...'

'I will work in your orchard in the morning and in the evening. The days are getting longer and longer. By springtime, I want everything to be in order for your happiness. [...] I was not expecting to be the chosen one as I am a Nazirite. [...Therefore,] I will join my sacrifice to yours and we shall love the Eternal Father so much with our chastity that He will send His Saviour to the world earlier, and will allow us to see His Light shining in the world. Come, Mary. Let us go before His House and take an oath that we shall love each other as the angels do. Then I will go to Nazareth to prepare everything for you, in your house, if you wish to go there, or elsewhere if you wish so.'

'In my house... there was a grotto down at the bottom... Is it still there?'

'It is, but it is no longer yours [...] But I will build another one for you where it will be cool and quiet during the hottest hours of the day. I will make it as much as possible identical to the older one. [...] Then I will come as soon as the house is ready. I will not touch anything. I want you to find it as your mother left it. But I want it to be bright and clean, to

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receive you without any sadness. Come, Mary. Let us go and tell the Most High that we bless Him.'

(Poem, Vol 1, pp. 64-6; Gospel, Vol. 1, pp. 80-2)

Joseph - Chaste and Wise

(Jesus says to Maria:) 'You have seen how Joseph, not by human culture but by supernatural education, can read in the sealed book of the Immaculate Virgin and how he borders upon prophetic truths by his "seeing" a superhuman mystery where others could only see a great virtue. Since he is imbued with this wisdom, which is a breath of the power of God and a definite emanation of the Almighty, he sails with a secure spirit, the sea of this mystery of grace which is Mary. He penetrates with Her spiritual contacts, in which, rather than the lips, the two spirits speak to each other in the sacred silence of their souls, where only God can hear voices and those who are well liked by God, because they are His faithful servants and are full of Him.

The wisdom of the Just man, which increases by his union and closeness to Mary, Full of Grace, prepares him to penetrate the deepest secrets of God, and enables him to protect and defend them from the snares of man and demon. And in the meantime, it invigorates him. It makes the Just man, a saint and the guardian of the Spouse and of the Son of God.'

(Poem, Vol 1, p.71; Gospel, Vol. 1, p.88)

Joseph and Mary Arrive In Nazareth

(Maria says:) Joseph takes Mary by her hand and they go in. On the threshold, he says to her: 'And now, on this threshold, I want a promise from you. That whatever may happen to you, whatever you may need, there is no other friend whom to apply to but Joseph and that, for no reason whatsoever, may you worry all by yourself. Remember that I am everything for you and it will be a joy for me to make your life happy and, since happiness is not always in our power, I will at least make it peaceful and safe.'

(Poem, Vol 1, p.76; Gospel, Vol. 1, p. 89)

The Journey to Bethlehem

(Maria says:) Mary is on a little grey donkey. She is all enveloped in a heavy mantle. [...] Joseph is walking on the side holding the reins. 'Are you tired?' he asks her now and again.

Mary looks at him smiling and replies: 'No, I am not.' The third time she adds: 'You must be tired walking.' 'Oh! Me! It's nothing for me. I was only thinking that if I had found another donkey, you would have been more comfortable, and we could have travelled faster. [...] Are you cold?' asks Joseph when the wind starts blowing.

'No, thank you.'

But Joseph is not too happy. He touches her feet, which are shod in sandals and are hanging down along the side of the donkey and can hardly be seen coming out from under her long dress. He must feel them cold because he shakes his head and takes a

blanket which he has across his shoulders and envelops Mary's legs in it, and he spreads it also on her lap so that her hands may be kept warm, being covered by the blanket and her mantle.'

(Poem, Vol 1, p.134; Gospel, Vol. 1, p.160)

The Death of Joseph

(Maria says:) The room is poor but tidy. There is a low bed, covered with small mattresses. [...] On it leaning on many cushions, there is Joseph. He is dying. It is obvious from the livid paleness of his face, his lifeless eyes, his panting chest, and the total relaxation of all his body.

Mary goes to his left-hand side, takes his wrinkled hand now livid near its nails, rubs it, caresses it and kisses it. She dries the perspiration that forms shiny lines at his temples with a small piece of cloth. She wipes a glassy tear in the corner of his eye. She moistens his lips with a piece of linen dipped into a liquid which I think is white wine.

Jesus goes to his right-hand side. He lifts quickly and carefully the body which has sunk. He straightens him onto the cushions which He then adjusts together with Mary. He caresses the forehead of the dying man and endeavours to encourage him.

Mary is weeping softly, without any noise, but she is weeping. Her large tears run down her pale cheeks.

Joseph recovers somewhat, and stares at Jesus. He takes Jesus' hand as if he wanted to say something and also to receive strength for the last trial from the divine contact. Jesus bends over that hand and kisses it. Joseph smiles. He then turns round and, with his eyes, he looks for Mary and smiles also at her. Mary kneels down near the bed endeavouring to smile. But she does not succeed and she bends her head. Joseph lays his hand on her head with a chaste caress that looks like a blessing. [...] Then Jesus, bending over the dying man, whispers a psalm.

[...] Joseph cheers up a little and with a more lively look, he smiles at Jesus and presses His fingers.

Jesus replies to the smile with a smile of His own, and to the pressure on His fingers with a caress. [...] Joseph, sobbing, looks at Jesus and makes an effort to speak as if to bless Him. But he cannot. He obviously understands but has an impediment in his speech. But he is happy and looks at his Jesus with liveliness and trust. [...] 'Thank you, My father, on My behalf and on behalf of My Mother. You have been a Just father to Me, and the Eternal Father chose you as the guardian of His Christ and of His Ark. You have been the lamp trimmed for Him and, for the Fruit of the holy womb, you have had a loving heart. Go in peace, father. Your Widow will not be helpless. God has arranged that she must not be alone. Go peacefully to your rest. I tell you.'

Mary is crying with her face bent down on the blankets ... which are stretched on Joseph's body,

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and which is now getting cold. Jesus hastens to comfort him because he is breathing with great difficulty and his eyes are growing dim once again.

'The just man will be remembered forever. His justice is eternal and his power will rise and become a glory. You, father, will have that glory. I will soon come to take you, with the Patriarchs who have preceded you, to the glory which is waiting for you. May your spirit rejoice in My word.[...] Because you have lifted your voice to Him, He will hear you, He will be with you in your last affliction, He will glorify you after this life, showing you even now His Salvation. And in future life, He will let you enter because of the Saviour who is now comforting you and who very soon, Oh! I repeat it, He will come very soon and hold you in His divine embrace and take you at the head of all the Patriarchs, where the dwelling place has been prepared for the Just man of God who was My blessed father. Go before Me and tell the Patriarchs that the Saviour is in the world and the Kingdom of Heaven will soon be opened to them. Go, father. May My blessing accompany you.'

Jesus has raised His voice to reach the heart of Joseph, who is sinking into the mists of death. His end is impending. He is panting very painfully. Mary caresses him, Jesus sits on the edge of the little bed, embraces him, and draws to Himself the dying man, who collapses and passes away peacefully. The scene is full of a solemn peace. Jesus lays the Patriarch down again and embraces Mary, who at the last moment, broken-hearted, had gone near Jesus. (*Poem, Vol.1, pp.222-8; Gospel, Vol. 1, pp. 267-74*)

The Two Carpenters

(Jesus is on the mountain with the Apostles. Peter says:) 'It is easy to draw a straight line...'

(Jesus replies:) 'Do you think so? You are wrong. In a drawing, even if it is a complicated one, some imperfections may not be noticed. But an error is noticed at once in a straight line: either in inclination or uncertainty. Joseph, when he taught Me the trade, insisted a great deal that the boards should be straight and quite rightly, he used to say: "See, son? A small imperfection may not be seen in a decoration or in turned work because the eye, unless it is very experienced, if it watches one point, does not see another. But if a board is not as straight as it should be, even the most simple work will not be satisfactory, such as a poor table for a peasant. It will be on a slant or it will wobble. It is only good for the fire. We can say the same applies to souls. If we do not want to be good but for the eternal fire, that is, if we want to conquer Heaven, we must be perfect like a board which is planed and squared properly. Whoever starts his spiritual work in an unplanned manner, starting from useless things, jumping from one thing to another like a restless bird, will end up by not being able to join the various parts of his

work. They will not fit in. Therefore, order and charity. Then, holding those two extremities firm in two vices so that they may not move, you can work at all the rest, decorations or carving, whatever it may be. Have you understood?'

(*Poem, Vol 1, p.761; Gospel, Vol. 2, p. 425*)

Joseph, the Storyteller

(It is the Sabbath at Gethsemane and the shepherds want to hear more about Mary's early life.)

'Tell us more about your Mother. Her childhood is so bright! The very reflection of that brilliance makes our souls pure, and I, a poor sinner, need that light so badly!' exclaims Matthew.

'What shall I tell you? There are so many episodes, one more touching than the other...'

'Did she tell You about them?'

'Yes, some. But Joseph told Me many more, as the most beautiful stories he could tell a child...'

(*Poem, Vol 2, p. 286; Gospel, Vol. 3, p. 273*)

Nephew James is like Joseph

(James is speaking about the difficulties with his brother) 'He offended me seriously by offending you very seriously.' says James.

'You are very much like My father Joseph. And your brother Joseph is like your father Alphaeus. Well, Joseph was often criticised by his elder brother, but he bore with him and always forgave him because My father was a great Just man! Be the same yourself.' (*Poem, Vol 4, p.486; Gospel, Vol. 7, p. 475*)

Joseph is Just

(Jesus has secretly met with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Jesus says:) 'Goodbye, Joseph. Be just. Just like him who was My guardian for so many years and who was capable of every renovation to serve the Lord his God. If he were here, among us, Oh! How he would teach you to serve the Lord perfectly, to be just, just, just. But it is right that he should already be in Abraham's bosom...in order not to see the injustice of Israel. Holy servant of God! A new Abraham with a broken heart but with perfect will, he would not have advised Me to be cowardly, but he would have spoken the words that he used to utter when anything painful weighed heavily on us: "Let us raise our spirits. We shall meet the yes of God and we shall forget that it is men who grieve us. And let us do whatever is burdensome as if the Most High presented it to us. In this way, we shall sanctify also the least things, and God will love us". Oh! He would have said so also to comfort Me to suffer the deepest sorrows... He would have comforted us... Oh! My Mother!...' (*Poem, Vol.5, pp.154-5; Gospel, Vol.9, p.56*)

Joseph's Faith

(Mary, Mary of Alphaeus, Jesus and the Apostles are walking along the road. Maria says:)

Mary smiles lightly at her sister-in-law (who says:) 'And Joseph, my husband's brother, [...] who could

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have told him then that you were to become his star? When he came back from Jerusalem, after being chosen as your spouse, the whole of Nazareth wanted to celebrate the event with him because great was the honour that had come to him from Heaven because of his nuptials with you, the daughter of Joachim and Anne. He kindly but firmly refused all celebrations, amazing everybody. Because which man, destined to such an honourable wedding and by such a decree of the Most High, would not celebrate the happiness of his soul, flesh and blood? But he used to say: "A severe preparation is required for a great appointment". And with sparing use of words and food, because he had always practised all other continence, he spent that time working and praying, because I believe that every hammer-stroke, every chisel-mark became a prayer, if it is possible to pray working. His face was enraptured. I used to go to tidy up the house, to bleach sheets and all other things left by your mother and which had yellowed with age, and I used to watch him working in the kitchen garden and in the house, making them as beautiful as if they had never been neglected. And I used to speak to him, too... but he was engrossed in thought. He used to smile. Not at me or at anybody else, but at a thought of his, that was not the thought of every man about to get married. That is a smile of mischievous sensual pleasure... But Joseph seemed to smile at the invisible angels of God, and to speak to them and to consult with them... Oh! I am sure they told him how to treat you! Because later - and this amazed everybody in Nazareth and almost irritated my Alphaeus - he put off the wedding as long as possible, and we never understood why he suddenly made up his mind before the fixed time. And also when we heard you were a mother, how surprised was Nazareth at his contained joy! [...] Also, my James is somewhat like that. And he is becoming so more and more. Now that I watch him carefully - I don't know why, but since we came from Ephraim, he seems to have changed completely - I see him thus... just like Joseph. Look at him even now, Mary, now that he turns round again to look at us. Does he not have the pensive attitude so habitual to your spouse Joseph? He smiles, but I do not know whether his smile is a sad or vague one. He looks, but he seems to be looking far away, beyond us, as Joseph did so often. Do you remember how Alphaeus used to tease him? He used to say: "Brother, are you still looking at the pyramids?" He would shake his head without speaking, patient and engrossed in thought. He was never talkative. But when you came back from Hebron, he did not even come to the fountain by himself any longer, as he used to do and as everybody does. He was either with you or at his work. And with the exception of the

Sabbaths when he went to the synagogue, or when he went somewhere on business, no one can say that they saw Joseph loitering about during those months. (*Poem, Vol.5, pp.294-6; Gospel, Vol.9, pp.230-2*)

The Spirit of Joseph

(The Disciples are taking their seat for the Passover meal- the Last supper. Jesus says:)

'And now to your seats. I here, and here (at His right side) John, and on the other side My faithful James, the first two disciples. After John, My strong Stone, and after James, he who is like the air. He is never noticed, but is always present and comforting: Andrew. Beside him, My cousin James. You are not sorry, My kind brother, if I give the first place to the first ones? You are the nephew of the Just One, whose spirit palpitates and quivers over Me this evening, more than ever. Have peace, father of My childish weakness, oak-tree in whose shadow the Mother and Son had solace! Have peace!...' (*Poem, Vol. 5, pp. 495-6; Gospel, Vol.9, 481-2*)

Joseph believed

(Mary is with Joseph, the son of Alphaeus, after Jesus' death.) Mary is speaking. 'On the third day, He will rise and He will speak to those whom He loves. The whole world is awaiting His Voice.'

'You are blessed, since You can believe...' (says Joseph of Alphaeus.)

'Joseph! Joseph! My spouse was your uncle. And he believed something that is much more difficult to believe than this. He did believe that poor Mary of Nazareth was the Spouse and Mother of God. Why can you, the nephew of that Just man after whom you are named, not believe that a God can say to Death: "Enough!" and to Life: "Come back!?"'

'I do not deserve that faith because I have been bad. I was unfair to Him. Bless me. Forgive me... Give me peace...' (*Poem, Vol. 5, p.680; Gospel, Vol. 10, p.213*)

Joseph at the Assumption

(Mary is assumed into heaven. She says:)

I ascended with my spirit singing hosannas to the feet of the Three, whom I had always worshipped. Then, at the right moment, [I was] assisted at first, then followed by the procession of the angelic spirits [...] expected by My Jesus even before the threshold of Heaven and, on its threshold, by My Just earthly spouse. [Then] by the Kings and Patriarchs of My stock, by the first saints and martyrs, I entered as Queen, after so much grief and so much humility of the poor maid of God, into the kingdom of infinite delight. And Heaven closed again on the joy of having Me, of having its Queen, whose flesh, the only one among all mortal flesh, was acquainted with glorification before the final resurrection and the last judgement.' (*Poem, Vol 5 pp.942-3; Gospel, Vol. 10, p. 538*)