

The Book of Devotions inspired by the life of St. Joseph.

Fr Richard Lear cj



Fr Richard made a meditation on St Joseph with 10 stained-glass windows as starting point. This is his first meditation.

Le P. Richard a rédigé des méditations sur St Joseph à partir de 10 vitraux. Voici sa première méditation. Le texte existe seulement en anglais.

The first of the stained glass windows is found in St. Joseph's school in Karmelietenstraat in Geraardsbergen. This school can be considered as the prototype of the Josephite schools as it was the first to be established and it has remained the mother house of the Josephite Congregation. This window is found in the school itself, in a prominent position on the main stairway rather than in the Chapel, and represents for me the truest way in which devotion to St. Joseph influences our spirituality.

This window shows the Holy Family and they are shown essentially as people similar to the families of those who would see this stained glass picture. That is, the community,

the staff and the pupils of the school first of all, who would pass by this window daily. The model for Mary was the sister of one of the community, and is a typical fair Flemish woman. Joseph is shown as a mature man, but in his prime, with not a grey hair. Jesus is a boy of about the age that pupils would start their education in this school.

To my mind, that is the first element of Josephite devotion. That is to say that the spirituality is rooted in the local and the familiar, although the story being told in the picture is a universal gospel truth. The clothes and the physical setting are not intended to depart from the normal way of representing the Holy Family. As a boy, you could say to yourself that Mary looks just like my own mother, Joseph looks just like my own father, and Jesus looks just like my own little brother, or as I did when I first came to this school.

Next, there is though, a certain formality in the posture and gestures of the three. Mary has her hands folded in prayer and looks towards Jesus; Joseph is seated and looks towards Mary. He has in his hand an axe representing the tools of his trade. Jesus is standing in an elevated position indeed, but it is on an ordinary carpenter's bench. He has his hands outstretched to include both Mary and Joseph, but he is looking directly at you, if you are looking at the picture.

All three have haloes, universally recognised as a symbol of holiness, and Jesus' halo differs from those of Mary and Joseph. As a background there are lilies; Madonna lilies are especially associated with Mary, and lilies are often shown with Joseph, too. Another, even more important symbol, is shown on Jesus' breast and it is the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, usually shown on the adult Jesus, is the second major strand of Josephite devotion. The symbolism of this heart burning with love for us was one that was very important to our founder and was especially important in our schools, where every cubicle in the dormitories usually had this image rather than a crucifix, for example. Here, in the

stained glass, it is shown even on the boy Jesus, so as to convey the message that Jesus loves each one of us, and wants each one to look at him directly and receive that love.

So the role of Joseph, as head of the household, is to provide for the needs of his family, and to encourage and support both Mary and Jesus. His own pride comes from their achievements, and his own joy from their happiness.



The Angel speaks to Joseph in a dream



The birth of Jesus



The Circumcision of Jesus



The prophecy of Simeon



The Flight into Egypt



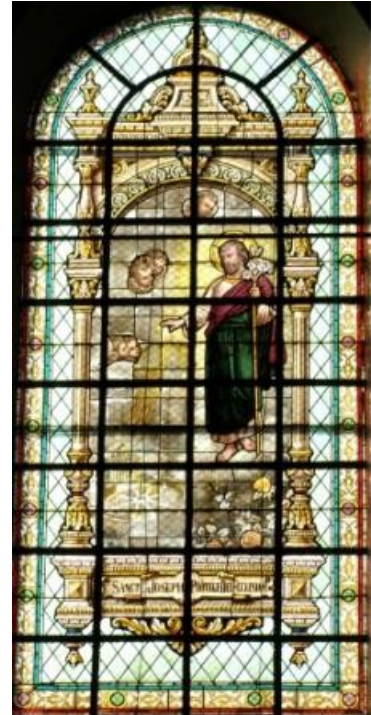
Joseph at work



The boy Jesus in the Temple



The death of Joseph



St Joseph

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Would you like the whole meditation (5,82 MB)?
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