



MARCH
2021

Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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Taipei, Taiwan

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Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres around the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.



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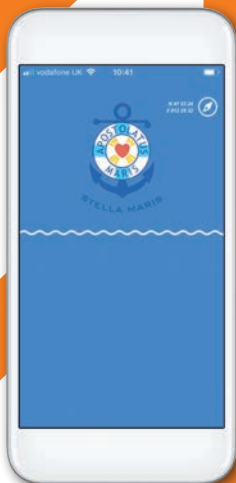
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Stella Maris
provides seafarers
with practical
support, information
and a listening ear



The Migrant Workers' Concern Desk (MWCD) was organized as a unit under the auspices of the commission for the social development of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference (CRBC) of Taiwan, established in 1989 to address the needs of foreign workers in Taiwan (R.O.C). MWCD envisions a society in which the rights of migrants are protected and guaranteed and to promote awareness locally and internationally of the social and spiritual issues of migrant workers and to put into practice Jesus's words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35). MWCD aims to be the voice of the voiceless and to sensitize society and government of their responsibility and obligation in assisting and caring for foreigners.

In 2008 the Archdiocese of Taipei decided to transfer MWCD from the compound of Caritas Taiwan to St. Christopher Church under the management of the Scalabrini Fathers (Missionaries of St. Charles Scalabrini) whose mission is to serve migrants. Currently MWCD is working under the leadership of Fr. Edward M. Pacquing, CS- Director, Fr. Tran Van Thiet, CS and Fr. Hendrikus Arianto Ukat, CS, assistant priests, with staffs of Leoni Pascual Ngo and Sister Mary Nguyen Thi Hong Diem, DC, and 38 volunteers.

Due to various factors, MWCD focuses especially on migrant fishermen. After some time analysing the issues which affect fishermen, we noticed that those who worked continuously for many days off-shore, put their bodies under strain and made them susceptible to physical injury and mental stress. Arduous work and inadequate rest led to distraction at work and many tragic accidents had occurred. Harsh working conditions were often causing injuries and illness yet half of foreign fishers in Taiwan did not have labour insurance. Most of them have little knowledge of their rights in accordance with Labour Laws in Taiwan. This led to many abuses in working conditions.

Our mission for migrant fishers received support from Stella Maris and the Scalabrini network together with generous sponsors and friends who carried out various activities in

support of the migrant fishermen. We worked in three main areas:

Protection with weekly visitation, Holy Mass, offered free food, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), providing winter clothes (jacket, wool cap, shirts, pants, scarfs etc.) distributing food (noodles, chicken meat, pork, rice, cooking oil, soy sauce);

Empowerment and Employment Access with a number of activities, improving the health care services- emergency services, providing medical services (i.e., medical doctors, check-ups, surgical masks, hand sanitizers), labour seminars, basic physicals, and temporary shelters.

Legal Assistance and Advocacy.

Since 2017 we have helped more than 9,500 fishers from three main ports of Taipei, Keelung and Suao while another 31 fishing harbours received our service one or more times.

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Sunday at Sea with Fr Pio Idowu

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
7TH MARCH 2021

GOSPEL JOHN 2:13-25

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The three Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark and St Luke narrate the episode of the cleansing of the Temple at the end of Jesus' ministry. But the Gospel of St John, however, places it at the beginning, right after the miracle of the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. John may have done this perhaps to teach us a lesson for the spiritual life: that in the soul, the temple of the living God, the work of sanctification must begin first with purification.

Allegorically, the temple *"is the undisciplined soul, filled, not with animals and merchants, but with earthly and senseless attachments. Christ must expel them with the whip of his divine doctrine to make spiritual worship possible."* Christ even identifies Himself with temple when, in reply to the question of the Jews: *"What sign have you to show us for doing this?"*, He replied, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* John the Evangelist explains that Jesus was speaking here of His body.

The Body of Christ was the living Temple of God because in Him dwelt the fulness of the divinity. Our bodies, too, are temples of the Holy Spirit just as St Paul says: *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3:16). Therefore, care must be taken not to defile this dwelling of God because: *"If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are"* (1 Cor 3:17).

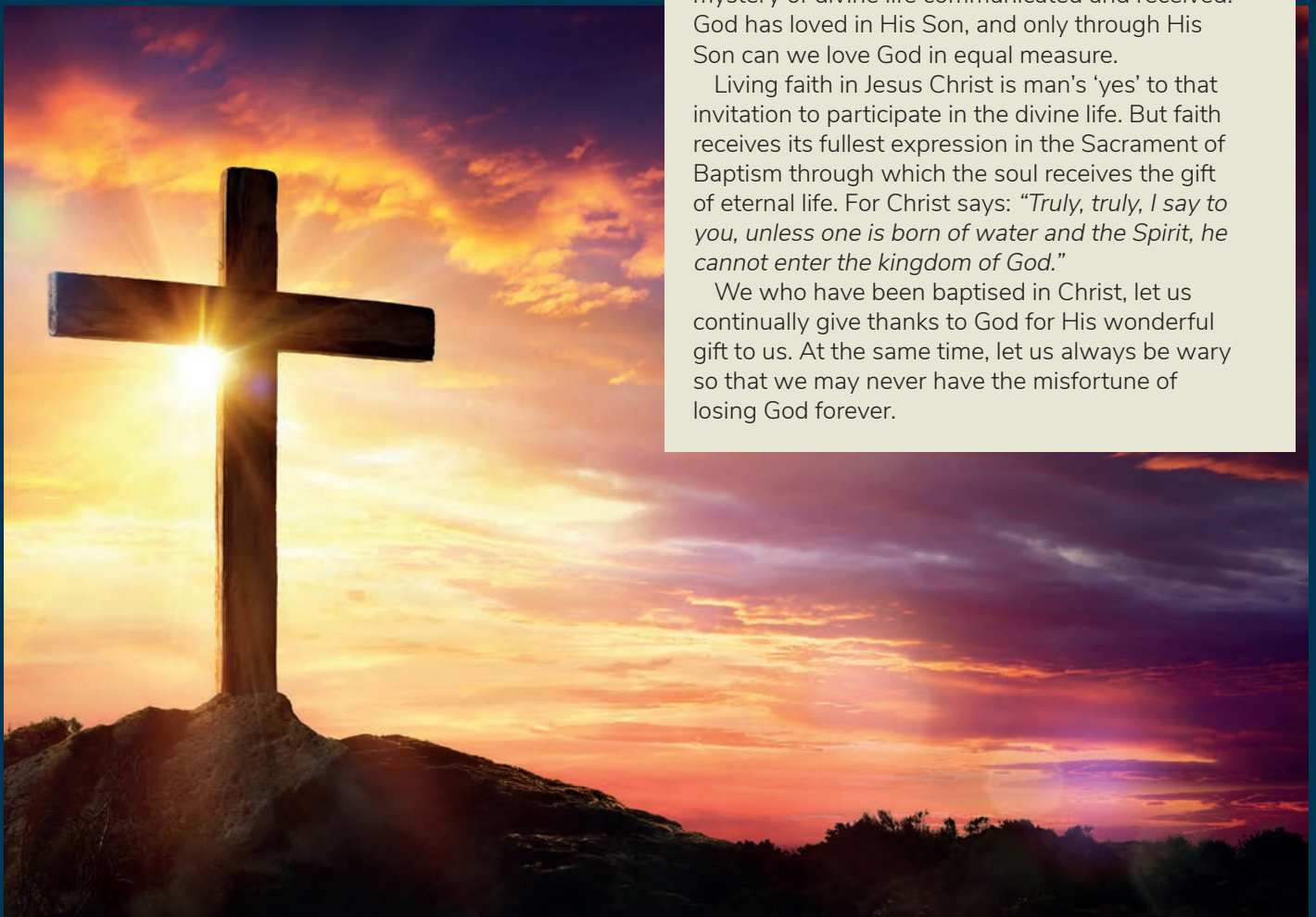
May we always keep in mind these words of admonition of Pope St Leo the Great: *"Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. ...Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ."*

**FOURTH SUNDAY
IN LENT**
SUNDAY 14TH MARCH 2021

GOSPEL JOHN 3:14-21

At that time:

Jesus said to Nicodemus,
"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,
so must the Son of man be lifted up,
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.
For God so loved the world that he gave his
only-begotten Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.
For God sent the Son into the world,
not to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.
He who believes in him is not condemned;
he who does not believe is condemned already,
because he has not believed in the name
of the only-begotten Son of God.
And this is the judgement,
that the light has come into the world,
and men loved darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil.



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

What we have here is the image of a loving and caring God. In Psalm 8:4 the psalmist asks this question: *"what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"* God created man, and not only did He place him in charge of everything He made, but He also bestowed on man innumerable graces and blessings. And even after man's disobedience, God did not abandon him but promised him a Messiah who would come to redeem him. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ who was sent *"not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."*

The gift of eternal life which we receive in Jesus Christ is an invitation to holiness. Blessed Columba Marmion says that holiness is "a mystery of divine life communicated and received." In the Holy Trinity, the Father communicates Himself to the Son in an eternal communication of love. The Son receives this communication and loves the Father in equal measure. From this union of love, which unites the Father and the Son, proceeds the Holy Ghost. In Jesus Christ, God invites us into this mystery of divine life communicated and received. God has loved in His Son, and only through His Son can we love God in equal measure.

Living faith in Jesus Christ is man's 'yes' to that invitation to participate in the divine life. But faith receives its fullest expression in the Sacrament of Baptism through which the soul receives the gift of eternal life. For Christ says: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

We who have been baptised in Christ, let us continually give thanks to God for His wonderful gift to us. At the same time, let us always be wary so that we may never have the misfortune of losing God forever.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT SUNDAY 21ST MARCH 2021

GOSPEL JOHN 12:20-33

At that time:

Among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee,

and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew;

Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them.

"The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.

Truly, truly, I say to you,

unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone;

but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He who loves his life loses it,

and he who hates his life in this world

will keep it for eternal life.

If any one serves me, he must follow me;

and where I am, there shall my servant be also;

if any one serves me, the Father will honour him.

"Now is my soul troubled.

And what shall I say?

'Father, save me from this hour'?

No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came from heaven,

"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered.

Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

Now is the judgement of this world,

now shall the ruler of this world be cast out;

and I, when I am lifted up from the earth,

will draw all men to myself."

He said this to show by what death he was to die.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

"Among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'"

These Greeks who had come to worship at the feast were either proselytes who had embraced the Jewish Law and customs or at least they were God-fearing pagans who were attracted to Judaism but had not yet embraced it fully. They approached Philip who probably spoke Greek and requested to see Jesus. *"Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus."*

This episode is narrated right after the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. So, one can assume that they had heard of Jesus and their request manifested a desire to know more about Him, and perhaps to profess their faith in Him. Hence, the request: we wish to see Jesus.

Many times, in the Gospel of St John, the verb to see is interchangeable with another verb to believe. John the Beloved, who entered the empty tomb on Easter Sunday and 'saw and believed' is the perfect model of the soul who believes in Christ. So, by requesting to see Jesus, these God-fearing pagans were eager to hear the Gospel and were actively disposed to accept it.

Something else we notice is that these Greeks did not go directly to Jesus but went through Philip who spoke their language. Philip, on his part, went to speak to Andrew and both of them approached Jesus with the request of the Greeks. This fact suggests to us the importance of the Church's role as mediator in the faith encounter with Christ. Through Baptism the soul accepts in faith the Gospel of Christ and begins to live in conformity with His teachings.

We can also think of the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mediatrix of all Graces, in the life of each individual Christian. Devotion to the heavenly Mother of God is a way of being completely devoted to God. At Fatima, Our Lady said to Lucy, *"My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God."* May She lead us to the Sacred Heart, just as Philip and Andrew led the Greeks to see Jesus.



PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

SUNDAY 28TH MARCH 2021



GOSPEL MARK 27:11-54

As soon as it was morning the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate.

And Pilate asked him,

“Are you the King of the Jews?”

And he answered him,

“You have said so.”

And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him,

“Have you no answer to make?

See how many charges they bring against you.”

But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate wondered.

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.

And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he always did for them.

And he answered them,

“Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”

For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

And Pilate again said to them,

“Then what shall I do with the man whom you call the King of the Jews?”

And they cried out again,

“Crucify him.”

And Pilate said to them,

“Why, what evil has he done?”

But they shouted all the more,

“Crucify him.”

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the praetorium);

and they called together the whole battalion.

And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on him.

And they began to salute him,

“Hail, King of the Jews!”

And they struck his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and they knelt down in homage to him.

And when they had mocked him,

they stripped him of the purple cloak,

and put his own clothes on him.

And they led him out to crucify him.

And they compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull).

And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not take it.

And they crucified him, and divided his garments among them,

casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

And it was the third hour, when they crucified him.

And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.”

And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.

And those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads, and saying,

“Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days,

save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying,

“He saved others; he cannot save himself.

Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.”

Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

And when the sixth hour had come

there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”

which means,

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

And some of the bystanders hearing it said,

“Behold, he is calling Elijah.”

And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying,

“Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”

And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said,

“Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Continued over >

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Palm Sunday is the commemoration of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. On this day Jesus allows himself to be borne in triumph and He submits to being publicly acclaimed as the Messiah. With the coronavirus pandemic still very much with us, in many places around the world it will not be possible to have the traditional procession with palms.

It used to be that on Palm Sunday, when the procession reached the church, the doors were found to be shut. Then the subdeacon would strike the doors three times with the staff of the Cross, upon which they would be opened, and everyone could then enter the church. The closed doors of the church represent the gates of heaven closed because of man's sin, the sin of our first parents. But Christ, by His Passion and Death on the Cross has opened for us the gates of heaven. And so, we who, in faith, embrace the Gospel of Christ, obtain salvation, and can now enter joyfully into heaven.

The palms which are supposed to be blessed and carried in procession today are a symbol of the triumph of Christ over death and the devil. They are an expression of faith in Christ the Redeemer of the world. It was not necessary for Christ to suffer and die on the Cross to redeem us. Just one drop of blood would have been enough to save all humanity. But He bled and died for our sake to show us how much God loves us, and to compel us to love Him in return.

Some saints affirm that it would be impossible to truly meditate on the Passion of Christ without being moved to tears. A highly profitable way to live the events of this Holy Week would be together with Mary, the Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross. Mary is a model for us Christians because she teaches us how to suffer with Christ, how to feel compassion for him. Let us pray to Her especially for two graces: first to be united spiritually to the pain and sufferings of Christ, and second, to feel in our hearts, the love which compelled Jesus to endure so much suffering for our sake.

“Just one drop of blood would have been enough to save all humanity.”

COVID-19: CALLS GROW FOR SEAFARERS TO BE GIVEN “KEY WORKER” STATUS

There are growing calls for seafarers to be recognized as key workers and vaccinated so that they can continue their vital work during this pandemic and transit to and from their countries of origin

By Lydia O’Kane





There are currently 400,000 seafarers at sea not knowing when they will be able to return home to their families.

They remain on board their vessels, despite the fact that their contracts have expired, in many cases months ago.

This present situation, which is being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been described by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) as a humanitarian crisis at sea.

The Chief Executive of Catholic charity Stella Maris UK (formerly the Apostleship of the Sea) Martin Foley says this is an apt description of the current plight of seafarers.

"I was in touch with a seafarer today, actually from Samoa, who's been on board since May 2019, almost 2 years on board and desperate to get home."

Neptune Declaration

There are increasing calls for seafarers to be designated as "key workers" so they can get back to their countries of origin amid the pandemic.

A least 300 NGO'S, companies and trade unions have signed what is known as "the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change" which calls on governments to implement these protocols.

Commenting on the declaration, Mr Foley says it's very encouraging the way in which this coalition has "come together to call upon governments around the world to recognize seafarers as key workers."

He is also keen to point out that the vaccinations that people are depending on are brought "to our shores on ships by seafarers, and it seems to me slightly unfair that the very individuals who are transporting these vaccinations to our shores to enable us to resume normal lives are not themselves at the front of the queue for these vaccinations."

The Stella Maris CEO goes on to say that the fact that our supermarket shelves have continued to be stocked during this pandemic is a testament to the hard work of seafarers.

This is all the more reason, he adds, that they should be recognized as key workers and vaccinated so that they can continue their vital work during this pandemic and transit to and from their countries of origin.

Need for crew changes

According to the International Maritime Organisation "crew changes are vital to prevent fatigue and protect seafarers' health, safety and wellbeing – thereby ensuring the safe operation of maritime trade.

The body underlines that "They cannot be postponed indefinitely."

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, thousands of seafarers are spending extended periods at sea. This can mean that they are more at risk of adverse health effects, including physical and mental health issues.

The International Labour Organisation points out that "the maximum continuous period that a seafarer should serve on board a vessel without leave is 11 months." However, due to the pandemic, many seafarers have not been able to disembark their vessels.

"The longer they remain on board after the expiry of their contracts, says Mr Foley, "the greater the likelihood that they will succumb to some sort of either psychological trauma or physical trauma."

Chaplains amid the pandemic

When at sea, Chaplains are there to give vital support to people in this maritime sector. But as this pandemic continues, Chaplains in some ports have greater difficulty gaining access to crews on board. With that in mind, they are using remote ways to connect with seafarers far from home, such as the telephone, social media and digital messaging.

As thousands of seafarers await the opportunity to disembark their ships, the Chief Executive says, that people too can play their part in supporting these unsung heroes of the pandemic. He mentions, in particular, the power of prayer, and the importance of remembering seafarers when we go to supermarkets to buy the food which eventually ends up on our dinner tables.

Article courtesy of Vatican News (c) January 2021

DEVOTION TO ST JOSEPH

Devotion to St Joseph is not a modern phenomenon, though it was not until the sixteenth century that the whole of the Universal Church began to celebrate a feast day in his honour. We know very little of his life but, notwithstanding, he stands before us as a distinct figure, strong, silent, dedicated, upright (as some translations have it – others say “righteous”), not too proud to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, which he does on at least three occasions as recorded in St Matthew’s gospel. He is Spouse of our Lady and Guardian of God incarnate. (19 March) He is troubled about Mary’s pregnancy (Mt 1:18f), receives Divine reassurance and then takes her as “his wife” (Mt 1:24). The bond of marriage is thereby confirmed. Joseph carefully protects Mary with her ever-growing Son within, as they travel to Bethlehem at the behest of the “authorities”. It would have been no simple journey from Nazareth, cross country and down the eastern side of the Jordan, and eventually across to Bethlehem, a few miles due south of Jerusalem. Failure to



“Some traditions have made Joseph an old man at the time of his marriage to Mary; but there is no particular reason to think this, and he is also often shown as a vigorous man in the prime of life.”

make this journey would, presumably, have resulted in a severe penalty.

They are, perhaps, accommodated in the stable of an “innkeeper” – the owner of a collection of mean dwelling huts for travellers. This stable may well have been in fact an old-fashioned, indigenous, iron-age style house, lacking any Roman influence, with a few animals on the ground floor and family living-quarters on a mezzanine. There Mary would be given a bed and, maybe, a small sheep’s manger was brought up from below, alongside her bedding, because there was no suitable cot and no other place for her baby.

We may imagine Joseph willingly carrying the manger up the ladder-like stairway to Mary’s bedside, perhaps examining its construction as he does so. Afterwards, the Circumcision must be arranged and the journey to Jerusalem for the Purification and Presentation must be made. Foreign strangers – merchants, perhaps – visit them now, just as shepherds did before. All the time Joseph is vigilant. Now for the second time he responds to the Holy Spirit’s promptings and the Holy Family flee along the coast to the Jewish community in eastern Egypt. Sometime later, when Herod the Great is dead, Joseph returns to the Holy Land and to Nazareth where he settles and provides for his family, working as a craftsman and carpenter (Joseph the Worker 1 May). He is well known at the beginning of Jesus’s ministry but we hear no more of him as the ministry progresses.

Some traditions have made Joseph an old man at the time of his marriage to Mary; but there is no particular reason to think this, and he is also often shown as a vigorous man in the prime of life.

Are we dependable as Christians? Do we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit even if we are urged into the unknown?

Prayer

Pray for all those who work selflessly for their families. O Spouse of Mary, pray for us.



19th March is the Solemnity of St Joseph

Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen.



STELLA MARIS

Stella Maris is the largest ship-visiting network in the world. We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy, and spiritual support.



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