

## **St. Joseph, the Silent Servant of God: The importance of Silence in Augustinian Spirituality:**

When we hear the word 'Silence' it doesn't indicate 'dumbness'. It could point to as a situation or state in which someone does not talk or answer questions about something. In the Bible we encounter very few lines about St. Joseph. He is seen as a **mystic** who knows and experiences the meaning of life in depth without expressing it in words. The Bible authentically speaks about him as a righteous man. He acts according to the inner voice that is linked with the word of God. He proved that he was an obedient servant to the will of God.

How did he resolve the first problem that he faced immediately after his betrothal? Any man can have a normal doubt when his betrothed is found to be pregnant without his intervention. The Scripture only says that as he was a righteous man and did not want to humiliate Mary before the public, so he decided to dismiss her quietly (Mt. 1,19). In the next moment he experiences the intervention of God in a dream, and he **changed his mind**. It was a kind of new discovery. Something that never happened before. It seems like God had touched his heart. In the next moment he recognized it as the **Word of God who spoke to his heart**. He realized his real vocation and he understood that a great **mission** is also to be fulfilled through him. This is none other than a reaction of a mystic. Similar to what had happened in the life of Mary, Joseph started **moving according to the Spirit of God**. We don't find any heated argument about it. Without saying anything **Joseph accepts both Mary and Jesus**.

What was the influential factor that made Joseph to change his decision? In the silence of night he had encountered the presence of God. It was just like a continuous flow of the spirit working in him. He was ready to open his heart to **listen to the word of God**. From where did the **mercy, compassion and forgiveness** embrace him? Surely, it was from God himself. It was not his intelligence that made him to think the other way round. He became more **attentive to the needs of Mary and Jesus in the womb**. He had to take up the role as foster father. **His alertness** to the will of God made him more and more responsible as a father in the family. He had to take **decisions for Mary and the child Jesus**. He had to re-order his whole life. What would others think about him? He never considered such a question. He understood it as a **loyal service to God**. He had been unveiling the mystery of living with Jesus and Mary day by day. He tasted the love of God in their presence. He enjoyed the inner happiness while serving Mary and Jesus.

Knowing that the child born from Mary is not of his blood he started pondering the meaning of adoption and considered Jesus as **his own child**. When Jesus was found in the temple, Mary said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, **your father and I** have been searching for you in great anxiety." (Lk 2,48). It shows that Joseph had already accepted Jesus as his own child. We again find how the child Jesus was protected following the words of God, taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt. He acts as an **alert guardian** and takes all possible measures to protect the family.

If we go through the above incidents of the life of St. Joseph, we understand that he became a **servant in action** following the Spirit of God. How did he achieve such positive energy to move about following the will of God? It is of course, from the close relationship that he nurtured with God in every moment.

Every religious is committed to follow Jesus closely. As an Augustinian, the **dimension of interiority** is very important in our life, where we find in No.23, of our Const: "It is necessary, then, turn back to ourselves, and **entering within**, diligently work toward perfecting our heart so that, praying with uninterrupted desire we may come to God: ***Do not go outside yourself, but turn back within, truth resides in the inner man; and if you discover that your nature is changeable, transcend yourself..Go to where the light of reason is enkindled.*** The light of the **interior teacher enlightens** temporal reality making authentic Augustinian contemplation possible: seeing the image of God in the human being, the reality of the total Christ in the Church, and the hope of our pilgrimage toward peace in history".

We know that it is possible only through **maintaining the interior silence**. In our modern world, to maintain silence is not an easy task. The greater involvement of media in our life has made our daily meditation as something of an oasis. Though we would like to have it, the worldly influence is tremendous. To listen to the will of God who speaks through the Word of God must be our daily routine. It was the method followed by our Father St. Augustine. While reflecting on St. Joseph as the silent servant of God, our spirituality also emphasizes the importance of silence in our day-to-day life.

We could say that the depth of interiority of St. Joseph made him seemingly solve the problems of life without much stress. To lead a complaint-less life in a community and to do everything according to the will of God, we need an internal energy from the Spirit of God which we get only through prayer and meditation. The silence of St. Joseph was not something that he had kept inside and not spoken out. In our communities we may sometimes have certain discord among the members, and we may at times keep it in our hearts for a long time and search for an occasion for revenge. There the silence is dangerous. The silence of St. Joseph is the result of contemplation and meditation only to do good for others and searching every occasion to sacrifice one's life for the common good. In short, the silence of St. Joseph is an inevitable factor to lead an Augustinian way of life.

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