



The Influence of the Kulturkampf on the Formation of Devotion to Saint Joseph in the life of Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus

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Abstract: Saint Joseph positioned himself on the sidelines of Jesus' events. The focus was not on him, but on the child Jesus. Nevertheless, the evangelists portray Saint Joseph as a figure who accomplishes seemingly impossible tasks within the Holy Family's life. This research employed the qualitative literature review method. Through an extensive examination of relevant scholarly works, this study investigates the factors contributing to the development of devotion to Saint Joseph within the context of the Congregation of PIJ (=Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus). The analysis delves into various dimensions, including historical, cultural, and religious aspects, to understand the complex influences shaping this form of devotion. By synthesizing existing knowledge and insights from diverse sources, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the phenomenon of devotion to Saint Joseph has evolved over time within the PIJ congregation. The findings of this study contributed to the broader scholarly discourse on religious practices, cultural dynamics, and the significance of saints in shaping religious identity and spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Catholic devotional practice encompasses a range of rituals and traditions aimed at deepening faith and fostering spiritual growth (Maldorado-Estrada, 2019). It often includes prayer, sacraments, veneration of saints, participation in Mass, reading scripture, rosary recitation, and acts of penance, all guided by Catholic teachings and doctrine (Tan, 2018).

Pope Francis commemorates the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as the Protector of the Universal Church with the Apostolic Letter "Patris corde" (With a Father's Heart). To mark this occasion, the Holy Father has declared it as the "Year of Saint Joseph" from December 8, 2020, to December 8, 2021. Through his letter, Pope Francis explains the significance of Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a gentle and loving father, a father who is obedient, a father who accepts; a creatively courageous father, a working father, and a father who accompanies in silence (Ponzo, 2019).

Saint Joseph is a person who is "unnoticed," who embraces mystery and places himself and his service in the midst of that mystery. Saint Joseph positions himself on the outskirts of Jesus' events. The focus is not on him but on the child Jesus. Nevertheless, the Gospels present Saint Joseph as a figure who accomplishes the impossible in the life of the Holy Family.

The Gospel of Matthew presents Saint Joseph in connection with the legal genealogy of Jesus' fatherhood in Judaism (cf. Matt. 1:16), his decision to accept the announcement of Jesus' birth as the Messiah (cf. Matt. 1:18-25), and to save the child Jesus and his mother by fleeing to Egypt (cf. Matt. 1:13-15). This flight to Egypt demonstrates human responsibility and participation in fulfilling God's plan hindered by human sin (cf. Matt. 1:16-18). Ultimately, he accompanies the child Jesus until the moment when Jesus declares himself as the embodiment of God's presence to humanity by dwelling in Nazareth (cf. Matt. 1:19-23). Through Matthew's proclamation, it is explained that Saint Joseph provides for his family through his profession as a carpenter.

The Gospel of Luke presents Joseph as a descendant of the house of David (cf. Luke 1:27). It is Joseph's connection to the house of David that leads him to take Mary to Bethlehem for the census (cf. Luke 2:4-5). Luke depicts Joseph's wonderment at the events surrounding Jesus' presentation at the Temple (cf. Luke 2:33) and when Jesus is twelve years old at the Temple (cf. Luke 3:48). Joseph treasures these wonders throughout his life while raising Jesus in Nazareth (cf. Luke 2:51). In this context, faith is about making room for experiencing the wonders when God is at work. This is expressed by Luke's portrayal of Mary as someone who treasures her experiences with Jesus in her heart (cf. Luke 2:51).

For centuries, the Church has been keenly aware of the dignity of St. Joseph. Pope John Paul II stated that "the early Church Fathers emphasized that just as St. Joseph lovingly cared for Mary and gladly dedicated himself to the upbringing of Jesus Christ, so he also watched over and protected the Mystical Body of Christ, that is, the Church" (RC 1). The Church became more explicit about Joseph's intercession during the Middle Ages. In the 15th century, Pope Sixtus V established March 19 as the feast day of St. Joseph.

Pope John Paul II declared that during his 26-year papacy, he had a devotion to Saint Joseph. He summarized this devotion in the Apostolic Exhortation "Redemptoris Custos" (RC) issued on August 15, 1989. The apostolic exhortation commemorates the 100th anniversary of Leo XIII's Encyclical "Quamquam Pluries." In the document, John Paul II refers to Saint Joseph's life as a living grace that explains the relationship between the charism of Mary's virginity and the grace of marriage. John Paul II argued that the difficulty in approaching the great mystery of their spousal union has led some people, since the second century, to view the elderly Joseph as a guardian rather than Mary's husband. However, John Paul II argued that Saint Joseph was not an elderly man. The interior perfection resulting from God's grace led him to live the spousal relationship with Mary in purity of virginity.

Pope Francis continues John Paul II's thought by describing it as the quality of Saint Joseph's life. The Pope depicts Saint Joseph's qualities as a true husband and father who "wholeheartedly accepts Mary" and as a father in his relationship with Jesus, "Jesus sees the gentle love of God." Saint Joseph, in fact, "concretely expresses his fatherhood" by making an offering of himself in a love that serves the Messiah growing up in his home. Due to his role in the transition from the Old to the New Testament, Saint Joseph "is always honored as a father by Christians" (PC, 1). In him, Jesus sees the gentle love of God, the God who helps

each person to accept their weaknesses, the God who works amidst human fears and weaknesses. Through Saint Joseph's life, Francis shows God as One who welcomes, embraces, supports, and forgives. Saint Joseph as a father is obedient to the Lord: through his commands, he protects Mary and Jesus and teaches his Son to "do the will of the Father."

Francis refers to Joseph as "a father who accepts," as he "wholeheartedly accepts Mary." Francis's expression is significant when news of psychological, verbal, and physical violence against women becomes commonplace. Saint Joseph is a person who, with faith in God, accepts events in his life even when he does not understand them, "setting aside his own ideas" and reconciling himself with his own history. Joseph's spiritual path is "not one of explanation but of acceptance" - which does not mean he is "resigned." On the contrary, he is "proactive with courage and firmness," because with the "gift of the Holy Spirit's strength," and full of hope, he is able to "accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations, and disappointments." In practice, through Saint Joseph, it is as if God repeats the statement: "Do not be afraid!" because faith gives meaning to every event, no matter how joyful or sad it may be. Saint Joseph does not seek shortcuts but faces reality with open eyes and accepts personal responsibility for it. For this reason, he encourages every Christian individual to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special care for the weak.

Francis also highlights Saint Joseph's creative courage that emerges when he faces difficulties. Saint Joseph is able to turn problems into possibilities by trusting in divine providence. Saint Joseph had to confront the concrete problems faced by his family, issues faced by other families in the world, and especially migrants. In this sense, Saint Joseph is a special protector of all those forced to leave their homeland due to war, hatred, persecution, and poverty. Every weak person is a "child" continuously protected by Joseph.

Francis refers to Saint Joseph as a carpenter who earns an honest living to support his family. Through his work, Saint Joseph teaches the value, dignity, and joy of earning bread that is the fruit of his own labor. There is a new need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, where Saint Joseph is an exemplary protector. Working is a means to participate in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop human talents and abilities, and to put them in the service of society and fraternal communion. Those who work cooperate with God himself and in some ways become creators of the world around us. Francis encourages everyone to rediscover the value, importance, and necessity of work to realize a 'new' normal where no one is excluded. Especially considering the increasing unemployment due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pope expresses his belief that there is no young person, no person at all, no family without work.

Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph's fatherhood to Jesus as a shadow of the heavenly worldly Father. "Fathers are not born, but made," says Francis. A man does not become a father merely by bringing a child into the world, but by taking responsibility for caring for that child. Unfortunately, in today's society, children often appear as orphans, lacking fathers capable of introducing them to the values of life and reality. Children need fathers who will not try to dominate them but raise them to be able to decide for themselves, enjoy freedom, and explore

new possibilities. Saint Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the center of everything. He did not think of himself but focused on the lives of Mary and Jesus. Happiness for Joseph involved true self-giving: In his life, there was never a sense of frustration; what was evident was trust.

His patient silence is the beginning of concrete trust expression. Therefore, Saint Joseph stands out as a model figure for our time, in a world that "needs fathers," and not "tyrants"; a society that "rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servitude, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction. True fathers, on the other hand, refuse to live their children's lives for them and instead respect their freedom. In this sense, says Francis, a father realizes that he is most a father and educator when he becomes useless, when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the path of life without a companion. Being a father has nothing to do with ownership but rather points to a greater fatherhood, that of the heavenly Father.

One congregation that considers the significance of Saint Joseph important is the sisters Congregation of PIJ. They have a devotion to Saint Joseph, evident in the devotional prayers they express, such as: "Saint Joseph, whose power encompasses all our needs, who makes possible what may seem impossible, look with wisdom as a father to the interests of your children. Saint Joseph, take care of our needs. Saint Joseph, we thank you for your assistance," prayers seeking protection from Saint Joseph, or litanies to Saint Joseph. The sisters make these prayers to Saint Joseph as an expression of faith, like Saint Joseph, who entrusted himself to God in living the life of the holy family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

This study seeks to deepen into the significance of devotion to Saint Joseph in the lives of the sisters. Devotion to Saint Joseph, like devotion to the saints, is a means to express their spiritual connection to the lives of the saints. Their service among poor and marginalized children and teenagers often puts them in difficult situations regarding financial constraints or the challenges of carrying out their work. They interpret their presence in difficult situations as Saint Joseph once found himself in similar circumstances. This context serves as the background for this study. In this regard, the following are the formulated questions that are the focus of the research: 1) the presence of Saint Joseph in the Scriptures, 2) the presence of Saint Joseph in the papal Magisterium, 3) the historical background of the emergence of these prayers, and 4) the relevance of devotion to Saint Joseph for Catholics today.

METHOD

This research is of a historical-hermeneutic nature. The material object of this study is the devotion of the PIJ sisters to Saint Joseph. Explanation regarding the material object requires an understanding of the significance of Saint Joseph in the Christian life. Therefore, the researcher attempts to seek an understanding of the significance of Saint Joseph as conveyed both by the New Testament and by the magisterium of Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis. Subsequently, the researcher traces the history of the congregation's establishment and its contemporary situation to observe the difficulties experienced by the founding sisters of the

congregation and the early generations of PIJ sisters. Descriptions of the various difficulties they faced will confirm their closeness to devotion to Saint Joseph. Finally, the research findings become central themes to be proposed as relevant themes for the sisters and Catholics today.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Pope Pius IX's pontificate lasted from 1846 to 1878. His pontificate is regarded as the most difficult transitional period in papal history. Amidst the shift from monarchy to republic in Europe and the rise of radical circles, Pius IX had no intention of relinquishing the Papal States to maintain papal independence. This immediately led to conflict with the anti-clerical nationalist movement in Italy (Schreuder, 1970). In November 1848, the Prime Minister of the Papal States was assassinated, armed uprisings broke out in Rome, and the pope fled to Gaeta in the Naples region. His power was restored by French forces, and he returned to Rome in 1850. For the next 20 years, his rule was sustained by the presence of French and Austrian troops. Meanwhile, nationalist Italian forces seized much of the Papal States, leaving only a small portion of territory along the coast and the city of Rome itself.

The 18th and 19th centuries were periods of change in Europe influenced by new philosophies and ideologies. New ideas such as Enlightenment, realism, positivism, materialism, nationalism, secularism, and liberalism characterized the era. The role of religion in society and the relationship between society and the church underwent significant changes. Many governments sought to strip the worldly power of the church, reduce its duties to spiritual matters by secularizing public spaces, separate church and state, and assert state supremacy.

Pius IX's predecessors had faced similar challenges due to their dual roles as Catholic religious leaders and heads of the Papal States. Napoleon Bonaparte's army invaded the Papal States in 1796, entered Rome in 1798, and expelled Pope Pius VI (reigned 1775-1799) from the city for refusing to surrender his authority as the leader of the Papal States. Pope Pius VI died in exile in 1799. Pope Pius VII (1800-1823) made peace with Napoleon in 1801 after assurances about Catholic life in France. However, in 1809, Napoleon's army invaded the Papal States again, annexing its territories to France. Napoleon expelled Pope Pius VII from Rome and took him to France in 1812. In 1814, Pius VII returned to Rome only after Napoleon's defeat. The Papal States were restored in the post-Napoleonic Congress of Vienna in 1815.

The experiences of Popes Pius VI and Pius VII influenced the perspectives of their successors on the events in Europe. Pius VII's surrender of the Papal States and his captivity by Napoleon strengthened subsequent popes' belief in the need to maintain their position as temporal rulers. Without the Papal States, Napoleon dominated Pius VII, compromising his spiritual authority as well. The lesson learned was that without the Papal States, the pope would become a pawn of whoever ruled Europe. The exercise of papal ministry freely required freedom for the pope, meaning he should not be subject to the laws or sovereignty of any particular ruler or nation. However, this belief would directly clash with the Italian unification

movement. The Papal States divided Italy into two, centered in Rome, the most important and historic city in Italy.

The reconstruction of Europe following the Congress of Vienna resulted in a new European order no longer centered on royal families but on nationalist ideas. Nationalism became a dangerous idea when national identity was equated with a specific race. This idea became more concerning for Popes Leo XII (1823-1829) and Gregory XVI (1831-1846) when accompanied by revolutionary ideas to hasten new forms of governance. However, at the same time, liberal and secularist ideas led to the separation of Church and State. New regimes dominated ecclesiastical governance. Church properties were confiscated, religious orders suppressed, and the Church barred from involvement in education. Governments would dictate the appointment of Church officials and enact anti-clerical laws. Papal authority to work with bishops within states would be severely restricted and require government permission. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Pope Gregory faced repeated attempts by governments to limit and suppress Church life. The emergence of papal infallibility in 1870 was urged by many bishops who saw the papacy as their protection from state persecution and control.

The overthrow of King Louis Philippe, which brought Napoleon Bonaparte back to power during the 1848 revolution, triggered uprisings in Italy. The uprisings stemmed from a growing popular movement for a united Italy. Within weeks of the election of Pope Gregory XVI, rebels seized many cities in the Papal States region. Pope Gregory XVI appealed to the Austrian government to help suppress the rebellion. This situation gave rise to anti-papal, anti-clerical, and anti-Catholic movements in Italy.

Pope Pius IX began his work at a time when the Papal States were at a historical low point. Pius IX granted amnesty to political prisoners detained during Pope Gregory XVI's reign, inadvertently facilitating activists to spread their political ideas. Pope Pius IX fled Rome when supporters of Italian unification stormed the city in 1848, proclaiming the establishment of the Roman Republic in 1849. He returned to Rome in 1850 and decided to reside in the Vatican. During the period from 1850 to 1870, Pope Pius IX ruled the Papal States under the protection of Austrian and French troops. Prussia ended the Austro-Prussian War with Austria's defeat in 1866. France withdrew its troops from Rome in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War. Without the support of Austrian and French troops, the Papal States' army could not defend itself. The Papal States came to an end when Victor Emmanuel II defeated the papal army in 1870. Pope Pius IX's temporal authority as head of state was lost, and the territory of the Papal States was merged with the united Italy. Pope Pius IX referred to himself as a prisoner and remained in the Vatican.

Pope Pius IX's presence as a prisoner garnered sympathy from Catholics, who viewed him as a defender of ecclesiastical freedom from governmental power. This enhanced the papacy's reputation worldwide. While secular governments saw the loss of the Papal States as a deadly blow to the Church, the loss of temporal authority for the Pope did not destroy his spiritual authority as the leader of the Catholic Church.

During the Italian unification that affected the Papal States, Pope Pius IX had issued the Syllabus of Errors in 1864, condemning 80 theses as false teachings, and the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, which opposed religious freedom and the separation of church and state. In the summer of 1870, the First Vatican Council affirmed the Pope's jurisdictional authority. Pope Pius IX died on February 7, 1878, after a pontificate of 32 years. Pope Pius IX had prepared the Catholic Church for a new era in the 20th century.

Liberal policies also dominated Germany, and the separation of church and state became a prominent issue in the mid-19th century. The German revolution of 1848–1849, opposed by the Catholic Church, failed to produce democratic reforms and efforts to resolve the issues of state-church relations. The end of the Franco-Prussian War resulted in the unification of all of Germany under the rule of the Prussian Emperor (.

Upon unification in 1871, the new German Empire encompassed 25.5 million Protestants (62% of the population) and 15 million Catholics (36.5% of the population). Although a minority in the empire, Catholics were the majority in several states. Since the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the population of Germany, whether in villages or cities, was generally divided along religious lines. Education was also separate and usually in the hands of the church. There was little mutual tolerance, interaction, or intermarriage between Protestant and Catholic couples. Protestants generally distrusted the Catholic Church. Liberals viewed the Catholic Church as a strong reactionary and anti-modernizing force, especially after the declaration of papal infallibility as one of the outcomes of the First Vatican Council in 1870 and the tightening of Vatican control over local bishops. In August 1871, Bismarck revealed his intention to oppose the Center Party, to separate state and church, to transfer supervision of schools to laypeople, to remove religious instruction from schools, and to transfer religious affairs to the justice minister.

From 1871 to 1876, the state parliament of Prussia and the federal legislative body (Reichstag), both with liberal majorities, enacted 22 laws in the context of the *Kulturkampf* (Bespalova, 2020). They were mainly aimed at the clergy: bishops, priests, and religious orders (anti-clerical) and enforced state supremacy over the church. Meanwhile, several specific laws targeting the Catholic Church emerged to combat the presence of Jesuits and religious orders perceived as loyal to the Pope in Rome. In 1871, Otto von Bismarck (Prussian chancellor) banned Catholic priests from publicly expressing their opinions on political matters. On March 11, 1872, Education Minister Adalbert Falk legally abolished the administration of Catholic or Protestant schools in Prussia and assigned supervision solely to the Ministry of Education. The government became the sole operator of educational institutions. In 1873, the Jesuits were expelled. The following year, members of the CSsR, CM, SVD congregations, and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart were expelled for allegedly collaborating with the Jesuits. Germany's relationship with the Vatican was severed after Pope Pius IX rejected Ambassador Gustav Adolf Hohenlohe in 1872. In 1875, all religious congregations were dissolved, except those caring for the sick.

These general laws affected both the Catholic and Protestant churches. In an attempt to overcome increasing resistance from the Catholic Church and its violations of the law, new regulations increasingly transcended state matters referring solely to internal church affairs. Several laws were also passed by the Reichstag and applied throughout Germany directly targeting the Catholic Church, imposing state control over Catholic schools and seminaries, and the appointment of bishops by the government without reference to Rome.

Almost all bishops, priests, and laypeople in Germany rejected the new laws and, in defiance, faced increasingly severe punishments, trials, and imprisonment. By 1878, only three of the eight Prussian dioceses still had bishops, around 1,125 of the 4,600 parishes were still vacant, and nearly 1,800 priests ended up in jail or in exile; almost half of the monks and nuns had left Prussia, a third of the monasteries had been closed and confiscated by the government. Between 1872 and 1878, many Catholic newspapers were closed; Catholic associations were disbanded; and civil servants who were Catholic were dismissed on charges of sympathizing with the Pope. Thousands of laypeople were imprisoned for aiding priests.

The Kulturkampf made Catholics more resilient; they responded not with violence but with their voices (Grogan, 2002). The voices of Catholics were given to the newly formed Center Party. Catholic voter mobilization aimed to protect the existence of the Church. The Center Party also received support from non-Catholic minorities who felt threatened by Bismarck's centralization of power. The Center Party successfully obtained 27.9% of the vote in the 1874 federal elections and became the second-largest party in the national parliament. As a result, Bismarck struggled to form a government without the support of the Center Party. In 1886-1887, anti-Catholic laws began to soften due to Catholic resistance (Lamberti, 1986). From decades of experience fighting the Kulturkampf, German Catholics learned about democracy. Pope Leo XIII succeeded in weakening the implementation of the May Laws through negotiations. Leo XII reopened diplomatic relations with Germany in 1882. The Kulturkampf against the Catholic Church officially ended in 1886/87.

The loss of the papal state appeared as a grim situation. In reality, everything wasn't as bad as it seemed. Pope Pius IX interpreted the events within the framework of protection from Saint Joseph. He who had protected Christ himself from the evil designs of Herod still stood ready to protect the Vicar of Christ from the evil designs of the world. On December 8, 1870, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX issued the decree *Quemadmodum Deus*, declaring St. Joseph the patron and protector of the universal Church.

At that time, Pius IX wrote that the Church was experiencing "the most difficult times... besieged by enemies on all sides, and... burdened by disasters so heavy" and "asking for his intercession in these difficult times." Pope Pius IX affirmed in *Quemadmodum Deus*, "In this saddest of times, the Church itself besieged by enemies on all sides and oppressed by heavy calamities, therefore the bishops along with the faithful implore Saint Joseph to be the Protector of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius IX acknowledged that because of "the lofty dignity bestowed by God upon His most faithful servant, the Church has always greatly revered and praised Joseph Most High

after his wife, the Virgin Mother of God, and has implored his assistance in all its great needs." Pius IX used the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob sold as a slave in Egypt, to explain St. Joseph's protection. The Lord depicted His choice of Joseph in the Old Testament when He chose the first Joseph who was made by Pharaoh as the ruler of the household and guardian of the treasure. With the preservation of the Lord, through his interpretation of dreams, he found favor with Pharaoh and was given responsibility for the government of Pharaoh in Egypt and also responsible for the distribution of food. He anticipated a great famine, began to save grain, and would provide food for the entire kingdom of Pharaoh. This second Joseph is His Greatest Treasurer. To Joseph of Nazareth, Jesus and Mary were entrusted and cared for by the Lord, the Greatest Treasure of God. Because of the care of St. Joseph, Christ the Living Bread became the nourishment of souls for all people.

Clara Fey (born April 11, 1815; died May 8, 1894) along with Leocadia Startz, Wilhelmina Ista, and Aloysia Vossen were companions from Aachen, Germany, who were motivated by discussions on religious and social issues. Clara Fey's house served as a gathering place for priests and like-minded individuals. The four of them began their activities in February 1837. They rented a house where they cared for poor and orphaned children, especially girls. After acquiring an old Dominican convent and several more houses, they opened schools for underprivileged children. On February 2, 1844, they referred to themselves as the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus. The Archbishop of Cologne granted his approval in 1845. Official government permission for the use of the name as a public institution was granted in 1852. Recognition from the Holy See was given by Pius IX in 1862 and 1869, and by Leo XIII in 1881 and 1888.

Clara Fey became the first leader of this congregation. The congregation gained many new members and served many children. In twenty years, the number of houses grew to twenty-five with 450 sisters. To meet the needs of children and at the urging of bishops, they opened trade schools for girls, made wax statues, and created beautiful embroidery for liturgical purposes. Invaluable advice and assistance were provided by Bishop Laurent, Apostolic Vicar of Luxembourg, Pastor Sartorius of Aachen, and Pastor Andreas Fey, Clara's brother. They served as spiritual guides and confessor fathers for the sisters.

The need for funds for their original rescue work, as well as requests from bishops, led to other activities, such as secondary schools for girls, training for domestic workers, homes for girls in business, wax figure modeling for sculptures, and especially church embroidery. For the latter, designs were provided by Pugin based on examples from Mrs. Edgar, an English resident in Aachen, and the beautiful needlework of the sisters became famous throughout Germany and neighboring countries.

The services of the sisters were highly appreciated by the Prussian Emperor when they helped care for the sick and wounded during the Franco-Prussian War. Their services also led to the intervention of the Emperor's wife, who delayed the closure of almost all congregation houses and the expulsion of the sisters from Prussian territory during the Kulturkampf (Ross, 1995). In 1878, the mother house in Aachen was moved to Simpelveld in the Netherlands, a

few kilometers from the German-Dutch border. Bishop Laurent, who had retired, also joined them and remained their advisor until his death in 1884. The sisters were scattered as refugees and sought new places to continue their work in the Netherlands, Bavaria, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Austria. They began their work in England in 1876 to care for orphaned and abandoned children.

The congregation was able to regain most of its houses in Prussian territory after the relaxation of anti-Catholic laws in 1887. The sisters prayed specifically every 19th of the month to honor St. Joseph, as the primary protector and guardian of the Poor Child.

Discussion

In "Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice," Catherine Bell explores the complexities of ritual within cultural and religious contexts (Bell, 1992). She argues that rituals are not fixed entities but dynamic processes shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. Bell emphasizes the importance of understanding rituals as both symbolic and performative acts that create meaning and structure social reality. Drawing from anthropology and sociology, she proposes a theoretical framework that examines rituals' role in shaping identities, reinforcing social bonds, and negotiating power dynamics. Bell's work challenges simplistic interpretations of rituals and highlights their significance in understanding human experience and societal dynamics.

Concerning the matter of this article, the events of expulsion and life as refugees remind believers of the story of the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. The Babylonian exile was a moment of failure and deep difficulty for the chosen people of God. As captives in a foreign land, the Israelites found themselves faced with a choice to forsake God or to live in remembrance of His goodness, which equipped them to sing songs of joy even in their sorrow.

Despite the reforms of Vatican II, the devotion to Saint Joseph remains steadfast, illustrating the enduring significance of popular devotions. Saint Joseph's portrayal as a humble protector resonates with believers seeking intercession in family matters and work-related concerns. This devotion reflects a longing for stability and guidance in an ever-changing world, showcasing the timeless appeal of venerating saints and the ability of traditional practices to adapt to modern contexts while maintaining their spiritual potency and cultural relevance (Alvis, 2021).

The captivity of the Israelites is part of the tapestry of faith that forms the consciousness of Saint Joseph himself. In the perspective of the Gospel of Matthew, Saint Joseph had to find a way to adapt when, after the birth of Jesus, he was commanded by an angel of the Lord to flee with his family to Egypt. When violence and death threatened the child Jesus, Saint Joseph had to find a new way of life to ensure the safety of his family. Separated from the familiar or comfortable, Saint Joseph had to find a way for the Holy Family to survive. He knew their exile would not be forever - but even if it were, he surely had been assured to have Christ with them. Saint Joseph's life had purpose, primarily determined by his role as the earthly father of Christ, even amidst confusion and darkness. Meditating on scenes from the life of Christ (found in the

second chapter of Matthew) through *lectio divina* can be a spiritual comfort for current situations.

John Paul II said that today "the Church especially needs the 'power from on high' (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)" (RC 29). In the past, "the Church has praised all the solicitude of Saint Joseph amidst the dangers threatening the human family" (RC 31). Then the Pope said: "Even today, we have many reasons to pray in the same way to Saint Joseph" (RC 31). He further explained: "This protection must be invoked as necessary for the Church, not only as a defense against all dangers, but also, and indeed especially, as an impetus for its renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and for re-evangelization. 'in places where' religion and the Christian life 'previously flourished but' now are severely tested" (RC 29).

Because Saint Joseph is the protector of the Church, he is the guardian of the Eucharist and the Christian family. Therefore, we should turn to Saint Joseph today to ward off attacks on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and against the family. We must implore Saint Joseph to guard the Lord in the Eucharist and the Christian family during this perilous time as he guarded the Holy Family during King Herod's persecution of the Innocents (Matthew 2:13-18). And, John Paul II believed when he said: "all Christians will not only turn to Saint Joseph with greater fervor and implore his protection with confidence, but will also always keep before their eyes the humble and mature way of serving and 'taking part' in the plan of salvation" (RC 1).

Saint Joseph has practiced his faith, hope, and charity (Clemens, 2023). He is wise in caring for his wife and child; he shows great leadership in protecting and helping them. He is religious in all things, with gentleness and sincerity of conscience befitting the holy servants of God. He deals only with God and man. While Mary inspired him to practice these virtues perfectly, he, as a true man, understood the deep meaning of his inspiration and how it came from a heart that delves into the love of God. In protecting and defending the honor and virtue of Mary, he proves himself more worthy of her love (Williams, 2018). It is often said that true love must be built on sacrifice and a spirit of selflessness. In his own way, Saint Joseph will extend his protection to families, workers, husbands, virgins, and those approaching their death.

CONCLUSION

Devotion to Saint Joseph is an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the witness and intercession of Saint Joseph can bear the most fruit and be most effective at this point in history for each person. Saint Joseph becomes a protector, keeping everyone safe by showing them the way. Saint Joseph's testimony of his own cooperation with God is a model needed by Catholics today. At a time when the coronavirus is spreading worldwide, Saint Joseph is here to watch over everyone. Consistently and generously, Saint Joseph lived his life for others. But he did so freely, with a heart aflame with pure love. His testimony reminds us that humans are not the rulers of the universe - a difficult lesson to learn during this crisis. Everyone is invited to surrender to the will of God and to give themselves to others. Everyone is invited to embrace the cross and help others carry their crosses. This is what it means to be just, and what it means

to live like Saint Joseph. As the protector of the universal Church, Saint Joseph inspires and prays for all believers who strive to pursue the life of virtue upheld by Saint Joseph.

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