

Mundelein Seminary  
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February 24.2017  
For the Month of March- devoted to St. Joseph

Dear Stigmatine Lay Member,

On this date, in 1964 – just three months after the assassination of President John Kennedy, Fr. Reginald Garrigou–Lagrange, O.P. died at Santa Sabina Monastery in Rome [the general headquarters of the international Dominican Order]. For the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ‘Fr. Garrigou’ was a major contributor to Catholic Theology, one of international repute. To this day, he is perhaps best remembered for his work in Spiritual Theology – and his master- piece, “The Three Ages of the Spiritual Life”. In recent years, many of these voluminous contributions to theology are being re-printed. He taught at the ANGELICUM in Rome for well over a half a century – and taught a number of our American Stigmatine Professed Students near the end of his long career, in the years 1952-1958. Among his major contributions of the Church is the fact that he also served as the doctoral thesis tutor of a young priest from Poland – Fr. Wojtyla – who later became St. Pope John Paul IInd.<sup>1</sup>

In our small Stigmatine world he also directed the thesis of our late Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, in his fine theological study on the spirituality of St. Gaspar Bertoni. Fr. Nello’s fine work was entitled: “Gaspar Bertoni, A Servant of God”: A Model of Holy Abandonment”. This fine theological thesis proves that the now canonized Fr. Bertoni lived a life of a heroically strengthened theological hope in the living of Thy Will be done of the Lord’s Prayer` - throughout the long and very challenging physical and spiritual sufferings he had to endure for most of his 76 years on this earth. This fascinating study is still highly readable for anyone interested in a much deeper appreciation and reflection on St. Gaspar’s life and authentic spirit.

It is interesting to note that still today, there is interest in the re-printing of Fr. Garrigou’s theological works – perhaps originally compiled in the 1930’s. In his tract on Divine Providence, Fr. Garrigou refers to St. Joseph as a Model of Hope in the constellation of the Saints of the Church. In the theologian’s work on Christ [and His Incarnation and in His Redemption of the world], also recently re-printed - there is a final Compendium on Mariology with a few fine pages dedicated to St. Joseph.

Fr. Garrigou teaches [cf. Christ, Aeterna Press Nov. 2016, pp. 567, ff.]: “...there intervened between St. Joseph and the most Blessed Virgin Mary a marital bond...

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Wojtyla [who is nowadays St. Pope John Paul IInd] was Fr. Garrigou’s doctoral directee for his very apropos thesis on the darkness: “The Question of Faith according to St. John of the Cross”.

there is no doubt that to the most distinguished dignity whereby the Mother of God very far surpasses all creatures, it came about that nobody is greater than St. Joseph... God gave Joseph as Spouse to the Virgin... Patron of the Dying, protector of the holy Church. St. Joseph then, was predestined for an exceptional mission, as Spouse of the Mother of God, and foster-father of the Son of God. The **Guardian of the Redeemer** received a sanctity in proportion to his mission, and this sanctity increased until the very end of his life. St. Joseph was predestined to the protection of the Son of God incarnate and of His Mother... St. Joseph was considered by Fr. Garrigou as a “**Model of Holy Abandonment [Hope]**”.

In the light of all the above, it is interesting to note that one of the finest “Apostolic Exhortations” on St. Joseph was presented during the long Pontificate of St. John Paul II: on August 15, 1989 the Apostolic Constitution *Guardian of the Redeemer [Redemptoris Custos]* was promulgated. A recommendation I might personally offer is that all read this work *Redemptoris Custos*, in a very prayerful, meditative spirit during the month of March, in observance of the coming Lent. It is a wonderful contemplation on the Pope’s oblation of faith, and the commitment of life, as *Totus Tuus* – St. John Paul II’s papal motto. The document provides a powerful meditation on the Mystery of the Holy Espousals.

Our late and distinguished confrere, Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS – offers some profound philosophical and theological insights into the term “Model” and its synonyms and parallels – as an ideal that offers us much for our own lives of faith.

In Thomistic circles - cf. in this regard: Roy J. Deferrari<sup>2</sup> and his voluminous *Lexicon of St Thomas Aquinas*<sup>3</sup>, which treats of the exemplar/exemplary in several ways, as follows:

- as a Noun: it means COPY; IMAGE; PATTERN; MODEL; EXAMPLE; PARADIGM; STANDARD, etc. Thus St. Thomas presents Jesus Christ As the Example for believers [III, q. 15; a. 1; 21, a. 3]. St. Thomas notes that when we try to explain in the mysteries of Faith, most helpful to be understood, we propose better known “examples” [I-II, q. 19, a. 10 c] – for our moral lives as well: Put on the mind of Christ Jesus.
- the term used as a CAUSE and as an adjective: this presents a form to be imitated, but one that assists us (as a Cause) in the undertaking. This is an ideal that needs to be imitated, lived, in that God is also the First Exemplary Cause of all [I, q. 44, a. 3]. We are all made in His image and likeness. Furthermore,

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<sup>2</sup> By the way, our former neighbor on Quincy Street in NE Washington D.C..

<sup>3</sup> Loretto Publications: NH 2004.

the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Exemplary Cause of our own [cf. III, q. 56, a. 1 ad 3um].

For a prayerful reflection on St. Gaspar for the month of March this year, with the help from the works of our late confrere, Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS – I have presented some thoughts on this wonderful Christian ideal – in the hope that each one of us might make a further application of the Stigmatine Founder's life on our own. For this, let us pray to our Holy Patrons, the Holy Spouses Mary and Joseph, to intercede for us all for a blessed Lent.

God love you all!

Sincerely yours in St. Gaspar!

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS  
Acting Spiritual Director

Appendix:

Jesus Christ, Icon of the Invisible God; St. Gaspar Bertoni: Model of Holy Abandonment.