

### **How to be patient with members as they grow.**

Good evening and thank those who previously have given us their interventions on this figure that so many have rediscovered as important and capable of arousing the desire to imitate him.

Personally, I did not have a father close to me to be able to make a comparison with St Joseph, having lost him when I was very young, but from what I have been told, my father was also a good and just man and a carpenter.

I feel like saying thank you to St Joseph, because from the little we read about him in the Gospels, I have discovered human qualities that can be adopted both for our personal growth and for the accompaniment of the members of the cell and our oikos.

St Joseph has been called to "spiritual fatherhood", just as a leader should be for those he is helping to grow. That is, to have those attitudes of tenderness, listening, understanding but also firmness that inspire trust and confidence. Being spiritual fathers is a demanding task that involves our life and makes us responsible.

St Joseph is the man of silence, of taking a step backwards, never a protagonist.

To be able to value others, to bring out the gifts and charisms of our brothers, to help them feel loved and esteemed. These are attitudes of humility that allow us to put ourselves on the same level as our brothers, in a way that they may feel we are friends rather than teachers.

St Joseph is called by God to "get up" and "walk". It is said in the Gospel of Matthew 2:13 that after the visit of the Magi: *"After they had left, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.'"*

And then in ch.2:19-20 it says again: *"After Herod's death, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.'"*

We too are invited to action, not to get lazy, to get up and walk, not to get tired of guiding, correcting, spurring on those entrusted to us, to be patient, respecting the time of our brothers and sisters, to know how to seize favourable moments, to accept delays and uncertainties.

In his Gospel, Saint Luke writes in chapter 2, 52: *"And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people."*

Of course it was Jesus, but he too was an infant, a child, a young man and a man, like us. Where, then, did this wisdom and grace come from?

It is always said in the Gospel of Luke 2:22-24: *"And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord - observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord - and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."*

If Mary and Joseph were obedient to the law of the Lord, Joseph will have taken Jesus with him to the Synagogue. Jesus will have studied the Torah and subsequently taught it, so it is not surprising that at the beginning of his public life Luke writes: *"He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:...."* as it continues.

What do these passages suggest to us who are entrusted with the brothers of our oikos?

First of all, what obedience to the Law meant for Joseph and Mary, for us it means obedience to the teachings of the Church, to the word of the Holy Father the Pope and consequently:

- 1- The discovery of the beauty of the Word of God (prayer)
- 2- The proclamation of the Word (evangelisation)
- 3- Putting the Word into practice (charity)
- 4- Attendance at the "Temple", where by Temple we mean our Parish, our cell, the Adoration Chapel, a sacramental life, a confident abandonment to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

1. The discovery of the beauty of the Word of God involves a journey that will never end, but for the brothers entrusted to us, patience is needed for a gradual and simple approach, starting with the Gospels.

Personally, I also use images which arouse surprise but which also allow an explanation of the gesture, the look, the characters. I also try to find a suitable psalm that we can then transform into a prayer.

2. The thing that is most important to me is to be able to grasp the thought of Jesus in the Gospel passage we are meditating on. What is Jesus saying to us? What is personal about the gesture he makes?

It is important to be patient, because the human heart is a mystery and only love is capable of softening it. In this way, joy and the desire to communicate it facilitate the process.

3. Another very important attitude is "charity" in all senses, from the spiritual to the material.

I remember that when faced with the expansion of his Church in China, Fr Ignatius told us that many brothers had come closer and converted as a result of concrete and selfless acts of charity.

Sometimes it is important to be patient in the proclamation of the Word, preferring to listen, to give concrete help to resolve a difficult situation whatever it may be and within the limits of our possibilities.

4. Bringing a brother to church also requires patience. It is not always appropriate to do this at an early stage.

Personally, I prefer to start by explaining the Eucharistic celebration moment by moment, beginning with the sign of the Cross. I assure you that it can take a long time if we want the celebration to be understood and lived as a gift.

I think it is impossible to go to the Adoration Chapel if we do not know who we are adoring and how we should place ourselves before the Holy Eucharist.

Another important point is the "sacraments" and a "sacramental" life.

It happens that I have to prepare adults (they are my oikos) for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Many of them have not even been to church since receiving their First Communion, while others, having received Baptism, have not been accompanied by their parents, godparents or godmothers to the next steps.

It is precisely from the first sacrament received, Baptism, that we rediscover the signs that accompany it. All of them have a very precise meaning, and are present even unconsciously in everyone. I invite them to look for the photographs taken on that occasion to relive as adults the moment when they became children of God, loved in the same way as the Son.

The preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is more difficult and requires much more patience. There are many objections and we need the help of a good priest who, starting with a friendly conversation, is able to lead the brother to an encounter with God's mercy.

It takes time and it is a necessary time if we wish to have Christians who are adults in the faith.

It is truly a joy when this happens, and then the time has come for Adoration, participation in the ministries and a conscious and concrete evangelisation.

I thank St Joseph who has allowed me to reflect on this virtue of patience, and I thank each one of you for your patience in listening to me, proposing to you in closing what St Paul writes to the Romans: 5:1-5

*“So then, now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; it is through him, by faith, that we have been admitted into God's favour in which we are living, and look forward exultantly to God's glory. Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that hardship develops perseverance, and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope, and a hope which will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.”*

So be it.