

## St. Joseph--2014

(2 Sam 7:4....16; Rom 4:13....22; Mt 1:16....24)

Here I was yesterday, March 18th, and I was clueless as to what to say in my homily today. I was reluctant to call on St. Joseph yet again. However, I can struggle fruitlessly only so long, so I called for help. I didn't have to tell him what I wanted. He began with, "I suppose you have SOME idea of where you'd like to start?" "Well, I've been thinking, you died before Jesus began His public ministry, didn't you?" "That's correct." "But in heaven you were certainly aware of all Mary was going through and would have wanted to help." "Certainly." "Weren't there times when you were able to do something for her help and comfort? I mean, I've heard of any number of saints who seem to have had daily converse with—well, you and other saints. Certainly they were not more privileged than Mary." "It's not a question of privilege or even of sanctity. The saints you speak of probably needed that extra help or it contributed to the work they were called to do. But Mary's way was the way of faith. After Gabriel's visit there were no more angels in her life. Later angelic messages in those days came to me, not to her. The only divine message she received was that of Simeon: 'You yourself a sword shall pierce.'

"But weren't there times when you just ached to be near her, just to ease the pain of all she had to go through." "Of course, and much of the time I was near her, but she was not conscious of my presence." "Was there any time in particular that you remember?" St. Joseph breathed a long

sigh. “Yes,” he said, “it was during Jesus’ passion.” I said, “Whoa! Doesn’t sound as though this would be the kind of homily I would normally give.” “That’s right. Well, that’s your problem, not mine,” and he got up to go; I know he wasn’t being callous—it was just a way of saying it wasn’t negotiable. So I said, “Please! I’m sure it will be fine.” “Besides,” he said “there have been complaints from Above”—he paused and raised his eyes heavenward —“that your St. Joseph homilies haven’t been sufficiently solemn for a solemnity. Furthermore, this is Lent”

“Well, to continue the story: Mary knew from all the disputes and confrontations with the chief priest and Pharisees, that Jesus would be arrested that evening, as in fact He was. She didn’t have any information until the morning. She learned from servants of the High Priest that He had been taken first to Annas, then to Caiphas, and finally to Pilate. She was able to join the crowd in Pilate’s courtyard and was crushed when the mob repudiated Jesus, when they chose Barabbas rather than Jesus, and finally called for His crucifixion. So Jesus was handed over to the Roman soldiers to be scourged and be made sport of. What went on in the hours the soldiers had him Mary could not know, but when He reemerged carrying His cross it was not hard to guess because of the blood which soaked through from scourging. And there was that dreadful crown of thorns on His head to torture and humiliate Him,

“In the meantime, a large crowd had gathered. You may know nothing of a lynch mentality; there isn’t much lynching in your society these days. But for some people

there is a certain cruel attraction that draws them to an execution and causes them to execrate a condemned person, even one they may know nothing about; the whole crowd jeers, throws garbage and worse at him. They cheer when the executioner's axe falls, or when the trap of one being hanged is sprung. And so it was with Jesus when He came forth carrying His cross. Poor Mary! There no way of describing the anguish in her heart when she saw such opprobrium visited on Jesus. For no reason; many there had witnessed His healings, heard His teaching, and His wonderful deeds.

“In the crowd there was one young man—a teenager, really—who took particular pleasure in pelting Jesus with stones. You might have thought he was preparing to be a major league pitcher, practicing his fast ball. For a while he was lost in the crowd, but when they arrived at Golgotha and the cross set up, there he was again. His shots were painful to Jesus and close up could be deadly. God gave me some insight into his soul; I understood that his mother had died just recently, very young and unexpectedly; he was angry and taking his anger out on Jesus. On this one special occasion of Mary's need, I begged for leave to communicate. It was given power to impress my message directly on her heart, but it had to be very brief. A Latin phrase came to my mind which seemed to suit exactly. The words I impressed on Mary's heart were “Monstra te esse matrem” “show yourself to be a mother.”

Mary approached him and said, “Why are you doing this?” He said to her, “What business is it of yours” she

looked at him and said, "I'm His mother." That made him a little shame-faced. Mary went on, "What's your name?" "None of your business!" but then, noting the kindness in her voice, he said "Jonathan." Mary went on, "Jonathan, I don't think your mother would be proud of you for what you're doing." Then his face crumbled and he said, "My mother's dead"; he could barely get the words out and then he broke down completely. Mary said, "I'm so sorry!" She put her arms around him, and when he responded with a show of gratitude, she said, "I'll be your mother."

It took a while for him to gain control of himself. But now he looked up at Jesus in a different way. He asked Mary, "Who is he?" Mary said, "Who is He? You can read the title Pilate put on the cross. He cured sick people, He raised dead people, He fed 5,000 in the desert. He taught us to love one another, He taught forgiveness, He taught us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us." "That's not what I was taught: it should be 'an eye for an eye.'" "Do you see those men in priestly robes mocking and taunting Him?" Mary asked, "That's what they taught, but His teaching was so much more beautiful than theirs that they feared to lose their authority and hated Him for it. He forgives you for what you've been doing to Him." He looked up, and Jesus nodded to him in confirmation. And just a moment later Jesus extended the forgiveness to all, saying, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." From that moment Jonathan turned his heart to Jesus. Now he saw a man standing next to Mary, whom she introduced as "John, His most beloved disciple." Jesus,

now obviously at His end said to Mary, “Woman, behold your son.” Jonathan realized He was giving her as mother to all who love and believe in Him—and so Jonathan knew she was now his mother in a new way.

Joseph now concluded, “Jonathan stayed with Mary, became a member of the Jerusalem community, cared for her and protected her. Mary told him about me, our life with Jesus, and how at the end she felt my presence and my impressing on her heart those words which led her to appeal to him, “Monstra te esse matre. “Show yourself to be a mother.” And that she has never ceased to do.