

March 20

ON SAINT JOACHIM

157.1 ⁵⁸⁶ First Point

Together with the Church let us admire the honor God paid to Saint Joachim by having chosen him to be the father of the Most Blessed Virgin and to prepare the way for the mystery of the Incarnation. He was fittingly named Joachim, which means preparation for the Lord. With the Church let us recognize that God's choice of this saint was for him a most extraordinary favor. With Saint Epiphanius let us acknowledge that all people are greatly indebted to this holy patriarch for giving to the world the most excellent of all gifts, the purest and most exalted of all creatures, the Most Blessed Virgin, mother of Jesus Christ.

Let us honor this saint as one who contributed to the forming of the Church, to whom the Church owes what she is, since he fathered the Most Blessed Virgin, mother of him from whom the Church was born. Consider, moreover, that if we are children of the Church and members of Jesus Christ,⁵⁸⁷ it was Saint Joachim who procured this benefit for us.

God has given you no less an honor than he gave Saint Joachim by placing you in the work you have, since he has destined you to be the spiritual fathers of the children whom you instruct. If this saint was chosen to be the father of the Most Blessed Virgin, you have been destined by God to produce children for Jesus Christ, and even to produce and engender Jesus Christ himself in their hearts.⁵⁸⁸ Can you say that you have fully embraced God's designs on you in this ministry?

157.2 Second Point

What won for Saint Joachim the favor of being the father of the Most Blessed Virgin were his constant fasts and prayers. For this saint, seeing that his wife, Saint Anne, was sterile, devoted himself so assiduously to fasting and prayer that he in some sort forced heaven to grant Saint Anne the gift of fecundity, which both of them ardently desired. This is why Saint Epiphanius called the Most Blessed Virgin the child of fasting and prayer.

We cannot sufficiently admire the marvellous results produced by prayer and by the privation of sensual pleasures, since they contributed so much to the coming of Jesus Christ on earth, and to the birth of the Most Blessed Virgin, his mother. Nor can we go too far in making use of these two remedies against the sorrows and the temptations which sometimes overwhelm us in this life.

By these two means God will grant us all the graces we need; this is why you are obliged in the work that you do to have recourse to them as often as possible, especially when you have something to beg from God for those who are in your care. You should be their intercessors with God to obtain for them by your prayers the piety which you cannot procure for them by all the care you take to teach them, for it belongs to God alone to give true wisdom,⁵⁸⁹ which is the Christian spirit.

157.3 Third Point

Saint Joachim was fully aware of this special grace God had given him to be the father of the Most Blessed Virgin. As soon as she was old enough to live in the temple, he willingly deprived himself of her presence and offered her to God as one who had come from him and belonged to him. He spent the rest of his life separated from her, although he loved her very tenderly.

Then, having consecrated to God the daughter God had given him, he considered that he no longer needed his wealth beyond what was required to live frugally, and wishing to live a poor life, he offered to God the greater part of his possessions, devoting a share of this to the upkeep of the temple and the rest to feeding the poor and pilgrims.

In this way Saint Joachim teaches you to be detached from the love of creatures and to do all you can that those whom God has entrusted to you may be fit to be presented to him, not showing affection for them except to lead them to his holy love and to fill them with his Spirit. In the future, therefore, show no partiality for any of them, admiring only their piety, without paying attention to anything in them that is agreeable or attractive in their appearance.

In De La Salle's time the feast of Saint Joachim, father of the Most Blessed Virgin, was celebrated on this day between the feast of Saint Joseph and the feast of the Annunciation. The Eastern Rite celebrated the feast many centuries before it became a part of the Roman Liturgy in the 16th century. It was moved to August 16 by Pope Pius X when he revised the calendar of feasts in 1913 - 1914, but it was joined to the Feast of Saint Anne on July 26 in the reform of the liturgy after Vatican II. The details of Saint Joachim's life, cited by De La Salle in the third point of his meditation, are known only through the apocryphal Gospel of Saint James.

586 The edition of 1882, from which the official numbers of the meditations are taken, transferred this meditation from March 20, when it was celebrated in the time of De La Salle, to August 16; hence the reason it is out of order in the present enumeration.

587 1 Cor 6:15
588 Gal 4:19
589 Prv 2:6