



**Fifth Sunday of Easter 28 April and St Joseph the Worker 1 May 2024:
Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

“Make my home in me as I make mine in you” (John 15:4)

This coming week we celebrate the Memorial of St Joseph the Worker, one of my favourite Feasts. As part of a Mission in my Parish some years ago we celebrated an early Mass on the day at 7a.m. and went on to fried bacon batches for breakfast afterwards: it was a challenge to get to Church before going off to work.

St Joseph is an inspiration in a number of ways: I notice that the new Cameroonian Catholic Men’s Association is being placed under the protection of St Joseph in its dedication which takes place in St Chad’s in July. This particular Feast was instituted by Venerable Pope Pius XII in 1955 to give workers a protector and to give a Christian sense to May 1 the Day of Workers, a day that commemorates the struggles and gains made by workers and the labour movement (in the UK it is celebrated with a holiday on the first Monday in May). The figure of St Joseph, the humble and great worker of Nazareth, points us to Christ, the Saviour. So it is affirmed that work gives man extraordinary power to participate in the creative work of God and to give it a supernatural dimension. The Solemnity of St Joseph (19 March) points more to Joseph’s role as head of the Family where the Incarnation of the Word took place; the reality of how God chose to become one of us in order to redeem the human race. In popular devotion God’s choice of the man of faith, Joseph, is celebrated, and his role in the family held up for imitation especially in his acceptance of God’s will, and his care for Mary and Joseph at the time of their exile to Egypt. The Catholic Men’s Association chose the Feast as the time for their Annual Retreat, and preparation for re-dedication. Commitment to their Catholic Faith and to the home is central in the dedication of CMA, and the words of Jesus in the Gospel for the 5th Sunday of Easter point to the challenge He places before all of us at this time in Eastertide: “make your home in me as I make mine in you”. In an interesting Reflection on this Sister Gemma Simmonds CJ in America writes of her experience as a missionary in Brazil and the excitement of Liberation Theology. When she was unexpectedly sent to Brazil where she didn’t know the language she felt ‘cut down to size’; she was shocked by the “favelas” of the City. She writes I found myself surrounded by people who made their home in Jesus because there was nowhere else; no practical alternative. This didn’t give them material things, but it gave them a sense of Hope, of dependence on God which was much more powerful than dependence on consumer goods, status and the trappings of privilege on which my own world relied. She goes on when you have nothing, you begin to experience every word or compassionate act and solidarity as a divine gift. You begin to understand the true value of everything that gives life.

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When Jesus offered His disciples the risk He took on the night before His Passion (where the 5th Sunday of Easter Gospel is located) they couldn't face it. But, when filled with the Holy Spirit after the Resurrection, they did face it and found what "home" really means. They had been pruned (as Jesus says in the Gospel of John): they lost earthly trappings, but they found life!

In the Last Supper discourse Jesus instructs His disciples about the importance of following His example of love and service, about the gifts they will receive when He sends them the Holy Spirit and about their relationship with Jesus and the world. This Sunday's Gospel is from the middle of the Last Supper discourse and focuses on His relationship to His disciples. The unity between them is the basis of their ability to continue to do the work He began: the metaphor of the vine and the branches would be familiar to His disciples; the same life that courses through the vine courses through the branches and can be seen in its fruit.

We are called this week to reflect on all we have received from Jesus through the Church and its Sacraments. All He has from the Father, he shares with us; in the same Spirit we are called to share generously what we have received.

Joseph Pollard in his commentary says we are being "challenged to love intensely". The Collect of the Mass for the Solemnity of St Joseph on 19 March has these words:

"Grant we pray, almighty God, that by St Joseph's intercession your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care."

In the Scriptures and in the Holy Eucharist we are enabled to make our home in the Risen Lord, as He makes His home anew in us. May we make it our mission through the Holy Spirit to share the fruit in love and service.

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