

Joseph, Husband of Mary: The Measure of a Man

March 19 is the traditional remembrance day of Joseph, husband of Mary! What may God be teaching us through him? Through him, we may learn something we must all learn, humility. Just maybe the “Josephs” of this world are the image of God in their daily grind, in their calluses and sweat, in the heroic execution of their sacrificial duties as husband and foster-father.

God chooses them specifically for their masculinity to do this, because they image His interest in the roles of husband and father and the profound importance He places on them, so that simply being a man is a particular gift with a particular authority.

Joseph's fatherly authority was fixed from the moment the angel directed him to name the baby. As "name-givers", ancient fathers declared the legality of their fatherhood, and through speaking the name Joseph also became a prophet, proclaiming Jesus' mission as ... Savior.

It must have humbled Mary to be a receiver of Joseph's humility lesson, as she and Jesus would be the ones for whom he would sacrifice so completely and so often. But together in mutual respect, Joseph's holy manliness and Mary's delicate femininity, God showed the world where he wishes children to live and grow up, and the conditions under which they can flourish.

Although it was arguably his greatest humiliation (Joseph's union with Mary despite what was publicly perceived as betrayal) Joseph protected and defended her. His love for her and his confidence in her purity and integrity, despite appearances, spoke more loudly than any recorded word ever could. This degree of loyalty takes the kind of grit only real men possess.

Surely, Jesus learned from watching Joseph how to father and shepherd, how to cut to the heart of a matter as succinctly as possible, to lead and be responsible for a group, how to be silent before God and hear Him speak. It stands to reason that Joseph taught Jesus how to *measure twice and cut once* (my father, too, was a carpenter), how to marry the joints of seemingly disparate personality pieces so that they fit and worked seamlessly, the importance of every creative detail, and that spiritual formation of true “finish craftsmanship” that cannot be hurried.

That such holiness could come from his family is a testament to the measure of the man, Joseph. Certainly, he sometimes felt marginalized in his own family, yet he was the leader of THE most famous family unit, and capable of it specifically for his manhood.

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