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“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him” (Mt 1 : 24). Discreet, Effective Service

The paper prepared to commemorate the jubilee of rev. prof. Józef Kozyra will be dedicated to his patron – Saint Joseph, focusing on his discreet and effective service and devotion to Jesus and His Mother Mary. The Gospels mention Joseph relatively rarely. They never quote any of his words, but they talk about his works, fulfilling God’s will, overcoming his own fears and his constant presence by Mary’s side in order to take care of her and her child and, with no pompous words but by his everyday actions, express his feelings of love.

Saint Matthew indicates that Joseph, Mary’s husband, was a righteous man (Mt 1 : 19) and a devout Israelite. The Jubilarian wrote a great commentary on the Letter of James. The inspired author clearly defines the rules of life and behaviour of the disciple of Christ, who is a part of God’s people, by Saint Paul referred to as the Israel of God (Gal 6 : 16). This paper aims at presenting all the ways in which Joseph fulfilled the requirements presented in James’ Letter.

1. Saint Joseph followed all God’s commands

The Gospel according to Matthew talks about all the difficulties that Joseph had to face when he discovered that his beloved, whom he was officially betrothed to and was supposed to take into his home in a few

months time, was found with child: “Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus” (Mt 1 : 18–25).

Joseph became betrothed to Mary as a young man, he was probably between 18 and 24 years old.¹ In art he is often depicted as an old man, following the apocrypha, which in this way attempted to emphasise the more probable, as it seemed, virginity of Mary, which an older, more experienced man with fewer temptations to overcome helped her guard.²

The young husband struggled inside. He was a righteous man (δίκαιος – Mt 1 : 19), he respected the law of Israel given by God to the Chosen People, however, he did not want to expose his wife to shame, and that is why he decided to divorce her quietly, with no trial.³ In the opinion of

¹ Cf. J. Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium, Teil 1: Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–13*, 58, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1986, p. 17 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 1). On the subject of different stages of the process of getting married in Palestine in the time of Christ cf. R. Bartnicki, *Będą dwoje jednym ciałem. Małżeństwo w świetle Nowego Testamentu*, Warszawa 2007, p. 14–23.

² Cf. *Protoewangelia Jakuba*, IX, 2, [in:] *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, pod red. M. Starowieyskiego, Lublin 1986², p. 191f.

³ Cf. P. Włodyga, *Józef, mąż sprawiedliwy*, [w:] *Diligis me? Pasce. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Biskupowi Sandomierskiemu Wacławowi Józefowi Świerzawskiemu na pięćdziesięciolecie świeceń kapłańskich 1949–1999*, red. S. Czerwik, M. Mierzwa, Sandomierz

many people he himself might have seemed to be an inconsiderate man, who had relations with a woman betrothed to him before taking her into his house, and later abandoned her when she was with child.

God, seeing his righteousness and his internal struggle, instructed him in his dream what he should do. He appointed him to be the caretaker of His Incarnate Son and His Mother. Joseph did exactly what the angel of the Lord had commanded him (Mt 1:24f.), he resigned from relations with his wife, which had to be a huge sacrifice for him. However, being a young, righteous and responsible man, he was able to control himself and with his devout life he fulfilled his mission discreetly and with love.⁴

The Evangelist mentions Mary's virginity before Joseph took her to his house and before the birth of Jesus. However, he does not say if the two had normal marriage relations after that, the Greek expression used does not explain that clearly. Joseph, as a legal guardian of the child, is supposed to give him the name announced in Isa 7:14, meaning the constant presence of God among people.⁵

1999, vol. 1, p. 297–309; M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 71 (1978) vol. 109 no. 1 (414), p. 26–29.

⁴ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, wstęp, przekł. z oryginału, komentarz oprac. J. Homerski, Poznań-Warszawa 1979, p. 76–84 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 3.1); *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., koment. A. Paciorek, Częstochowa 2005, p. 91–98 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 1); D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1991, p. 34–40 (Sacra Pagina Series, 1); J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 15–22; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ. Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes. Exégèse et sémiotique, historicité et théologie*, Paris 1982, p. 319–323; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło. W kręgu teologii Ewangelii dziecięstwa Jezusa*, Częstochowa 2001, p. 28–49; M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, op. cit., p. 23–26. 29–31. A French thinker J. Guitton had a number of beautiful comments concerning Saint Joseph and his life with Mary. He talked about his image of the couple, the virtues that in his opinion Joseph possessed and which, as a result, earned him the title of a ‘righteous man’ (cf. J. Guitton, *The Virgin Mary*, New York 1952).

⁵ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 73f., 76–84; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 85f., 91–103; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 10f. 16–33; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 29f., 34–40;

Giving a name to Jesus was an important duty for Joseph, which he fulfilled as he had been commanded by God. Joseph acts as a legal father of the child, the son of David, the son of Abraham, through whom all the inheritance rights and privileges of the family of David are conveyed, he introduces Jesus to God's First Covenant People.⁶ Saint Matthew describes the event with the following words: "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him (ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα) Jesus" (Mt 1:25; Lk 2:21 mentions circumcision and giving a name, without indicating who did it; he uses passive voice – "he was named Jesus, the name given him" – ἐκλήθη τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ).

During the Annunciation Mary is presented in Lk 1:27 as "a virgin (παρθένος) betrothed (ἐμνηστευμένη) to a man named Joseph." It is a description of a normal situation of the first stage of marriage in Israel, the betrothal, obliging to fidelity during the time preceding the moment of bringing the bride to the house of the bridegroom (cf. Mt 25:1–13), after which their regular married life was to begin. Mary's words during the Annunciation: "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Lk 1:34) are understandable (and necessary), if she had decided, despite the common custom of the times and against the common social practice, to preserve her virginity even in marriage.

Many contemporary authors claim that both Mary and Joseph had a normal relationship in mind when they decided to marry: Joseph had hoped for offspring, Mary never took a vow of chastity. According to Wolniewicz, the claim that Mary initiated Joseph into her decision of keeping virginity and persuaded him to participate in her plan is unsubstantiated. He claims that it was God who appointed her to be the Mother of his only Son and, therefore, let her preserve virginity.⁷

A. Jankowski, *Blżej Bogarodzicy. Studia z mariologii biblijnej*, Kraków 2004, p. 41–45 (Myśl Teologiczna, 43).

⁶ Cf. M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, op. cit., p. 22f. 30f.

⁷ Cf. ibidem, p. 26. S. Harežga thinks that Mary's problem does not suggest having taken the vow of chastity, he claims that it proves her perpetual virginity (*post factum* – he refers to the work of J. Mc Hugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, Doubleday Books 1975) preserved thanks to the intervention of God through the works of the Holy Spirit; cf. *Małżeństwo Maryi i Józefa*, „Salvatoris Mater” 11 (2009) no. 3 (43), p. 15.

If we keep in mind the fact that Mary herself was immaculately conceived, she was the favoured one (κεχαριτωμένη – Lk 1:28), free from the effect of sin⁸, could see things more clearly and suffered no weakness of will (cf. Rom 7:14–25), it is easier to assume that through her virginity she wanted to devote herself to God completely, and most probably Joseph accepted this situation, so different from the normal unity of partners marriage offers to the betrothed. If Mary had intended to lead a standard married life, her observation that she “has no relations with a man” would not have been an obstacle of any kind, as she would have started having them after the second stage of her marriage (being brought to the home of the bridegroom – Joseph). Jesus would have been conceived as a child of two human parents. Jankowski suggests that this particular question implies some other decision made by Mary, a kind of commitment only known to God.⁹

Matthew enumerates further instructions given to Joseph in his dream and describes the events after the visit of the magi from the east: “When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.’ Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod” (Mt 2:13–15). Joseph did what he had been commanded to do. He provided Jesus and His Mother with safe environment and conditions to live and grow up in. The Gospels do not mention any details of the life of the Holy Family in Egypt. They probably resided among modest Israelites, making the work of their hands their source of income.¹⁰

When the dangers in the Holy Land passed, the return became possible: “When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in

⁸ Cf. A. Jankowski, *Bliżej Bogarodzicy*, op. cit., p. 46–49.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 92–95; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 120–122; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 44; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., 47–51; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 328; J. Łach, *Dzieci się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 71–76.

a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.' He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean*" (Mt 2: 19–23).¹¹

Joseph's active obedience in faith is an example of what James will later write about the faith shown in works: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. [...] Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called 'the friend of God.' See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (Jas 2: 14–17. 20–26).¹² Joseph, with his works, proves to be one the witnesses and executors of the Old Testament faith.

¹¹ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 97–100; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 124–126; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 45f.; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 54–57; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 330–333; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 79–82.

¹² Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., koment. J. Kozyra, Częstochowa 2011, p. 152–172 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 16); *Die Jakobusbrief*, Auslegung von F. Mussner, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1975³, p. 127–151 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar

2. By the side of the handmaid of the Lord and her Son

Saint Joseph is always mentioned in connection with Mary, Mother of Jesus, whom he was legally married to. That is why we encounter his name in the genealogy of Christ (Mt 1:1–16). Another version in Lk 3:23–38 can be the genealogy of Mary, if she was the inheriting daughter and her rights were passed on to Joseph as the rights of the son of her father, who, according to Lk 3:23f., could have been Heli, the son of Matthat.¹³

In the Infancy Narrative Joseph is present by Mary’s side. Luke gives most detailed descriptions of this situation, e.g. when he talks about the trip to Nazareth connected with the decree concerning the census: “And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Lk 2:4–7). Joseph took his wife with him, very near her delivery date, and did what he could to provide her with the best possible conditions, since there was no room for them even in the inn, which was an enclosure with no provisions where a traveler could drive his cattle into for the night or rest in. He took her to an outside cave, which was normally used as a stable, and tried his best to make her feel comfortable there.¹⁴

zum Neuen Testament, 13.1); *Listy Katolickie. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, oprac. F. Gryglewicz, Poznań 1959, p. 87–96 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 11); L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, New York 1995, p. 237–252 (Anchor Bible, 37A).

¹³ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., komentarz oprac. F. Gryglewicz, Poznań-Warszawa 1974, p. 126 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 3.3); H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1: *Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–9, 50*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1969, p. 199f. (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 3); J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, Dallas 1989, p. 171 (Word Biblical Commentary, 35A).

¹⁴ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 102–104; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 99–106; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, op. cit., p. 103–106;

The shepherds around whom the glory of the Lord shone were informed by the angel that a saviour has been born for them who is Messiah and Lord (cf. Lk 2, 10–12): “So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger” (Lk 2:16). The Child was surrounded with His closest relatives and their love – Joseph was taking care of his wife and her newborn Baby Jesus.¹⁵

The Holy Family tried to follow the law of the Lord devoutly. Saint Luke mentions the eight days after which, according to the law in Lev 12:3, the flesh of the boy’s foreskin should be circumcised. He also describes the Presentation of Jesus at the temple, connected with the ritual purification of His Mother on day forty after giving birth to a boy (cf. Lev 12:1–8) and the Consecration of Jesus as a first-born that opens the womb (Lk 2:22–24; Ex 13:2, 12, 15; cf. Lev 5:7; 12:8). Luke does not indicate the person who named the Child (Lk 2:21), which can indirectly emphasise the special role of Mary in the process, similarly to Elizabeth’s role when giving the name to John the Baptist. All the activities connected with going to the temple are also performed by ‘them’ – Mary and Joseph. The pericope begins with the following words: “When the days were completed for their purification” (Lk 2:22), which resulted from the fact that the subject of the main sentence was plural (“they took him”), although the process of purification concerned the Mother only. However, the consecration of Jesus is not mentioned directly, which by some is interpreted as proof that Jesus belonged to God all the time and became blood Sacrifice for Him thirty-odd years later. They made ‘the sacrifice of the poor’: “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (Lk 2:24), which is consistent with

Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., komentarz F. Mickiewicz, Częstochowa 2011, p. 160–166 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 3); *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, introduction, translation, and notes by J. A. Fitzmyer, Garden City, New York 1981, p. 393–395, 399–407 (Anchor Bible, 28).

¹⁵ Cf. *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 173f.; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 116; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9*: 20, op. cit., p. 109; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 397, 412.

the circumstances of Christ’s birth, when “there was no room for them in the inn” (Lk 2:7).¹⁶

Luke shortly describes the life of the Holy Family that followed: “When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:39f.).

Saint Luke is the only one who describes the last known event from Jesus’ life before his public activity: staying behind in the temple in Jerusalem and finding Him (Lk 2:41–50). The Holy Family lived according to the custom: each year they went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. As the author of the entry for the Biblical Dictionary notices, this fact partly indicates that Mary did not have other children, as some Protestants claim. If she had had to take care of a few (half a dozen, as this author suggests) small children, she would not have been able to participate in the feast.¹⁷

In Jerusalem the Mother and her husband were saddened by the disappearance of their Son, but also by His reaction when they finally found Him after a few days, which showed that for Him other things were more important than the family bonds. Mary is the only one who addresses Jesus: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (Lk 2:48). She mentions Joseph first not only because of the patriarchal structure of her family, but also as a loving and caring wife. Mary did not understand everything immediately and needed time to become ready to participate in her Son’s Sacrifice. Luke finishes the Infancy Narrative with the following words: “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man” (Lk 2, 51f.). Jesus was obedient to

¹⁶ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 108f.; *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 179–196; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 82. 119–122; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, op. cit., p. 110. 117f.; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 419–421. 423–426; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 239–246; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 165–169.

¹⁷ J. Blinzler, *Herrenbrüder*, [in:] *Bibel-Lexikon*, red. H. Haag, Leipzig 1970, 721.

his family and Mary considered everything she had participated in, in order to be able to experience her unity with God and participation in the mission of her Son, and later share it with his disciples.¹⁸

Apart from the fragments of the Gospel in which Joseph is mentioned straightforwardly, there are many others which present him as a person indirectly, talking about the life of the Holy Family which for Jesus was an important stage that prepared Him for His future mission, and the huge educational role Joseph had in the process, legally acting as Jesus' father.¹⁹

The supportive role of Joseph by the side of Mary and Her Son can be compared to the mission of the Advocate that Jesus mentions talking to His disciples: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14 : 16f.).²⁰ In the First Covenant the Spirit of God gave the chosen ones the power to act for the sake of the People of the Lord²¹, in the New Covenant Joseph,

¹⁸ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 113–115; idem, *Dwunastoletni Jezus (Łk 2, 41–52)*, [w:] *Studium Scripturae anima theologiae. Prace ofiarowane Księdzu Profesorowi Stanisławowi Grzybkowi*, red. J. Chmiel, T. Matras, Kraków 1990, p. 80–93; *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 197–205; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 131–140; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9 : 20*, op. cit., p. 123. 128–135; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 432. 434–448; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 256–265; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 179–181.

¹⁹ Cf. Brat Efraim, *Józef, ojciec na nowe tysiąclecie*, tłum. J. Rozkrut, Kraków 1998; P. Ostański, *Ukryte życie Jezusa Chrystusa Jego misteria w świetle apokryfów, Talmudu, świadectw buddyjskich i Pisma Świętego*, [in:] *Więcej szczęścia jest w dawaniu niżeli w braniu. Księga pamiątkowa dla Księdza Profesora Waldemara Chrostowskiego w 60. Rocznicę urodzin*, red. B. Strzałkowska, Warszawa 2011, vol. 3, p. 1146–1164, and 1157–1164 (*Ad Multos Annos*, 15).

²⁰ About the constant presence of the Holy Spirit as the basis of some of His functions and works towards the disciples, the Church and the whole world I wrote in the article: *Przywołany – Posłany – Obecny. Bogactwo misji Ducha Parakleta obecnego wśród uczniów Jezusa na podstawie J 14–16*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 60 (2007) no. 1, p. 17–28.

²¹ Cf. e.g. Gen 41:38; Ex 3:3; 35:31; Num 27:18; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6. 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10: 6. 10; 11: 6; 16: 13; 2 Chr 15: 1; 20: 14; 24: 20; Isa 11: 2; 42: 1;

overlooked and guided by God, took care of the Incarnate Son of God and His Mother, preparing Him for His future mission.

The Gospels do not mention Joseph during the period of public activity of Jesus. He was probably dead. Having fulfilled his task, he joined God in His heavenly grace, together with Jesus, whom he had been legally a father for, and Mary, whom he had taken care of as his wife.

3. Silence, discreetness

The Gospels never quote Joseph's words. In silence he did everything he had been commanded to do and when he spoke, he spoke with the words of a simple, righteous man, which expressed his noble feelings and intentions in such a straightforward manner, that there was no need to write them down. Inner balance, consistency and silence help us avoid the sins of the tongue, which James focuses on in the Letter explained and commented on by the Jubilarian: “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (Jas 1 : 26f.).

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you realize that we will be judged more strictly, for we all fall short in many respects. If anyone does not fall short in speech, he is a perfect man, able to bridle his whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide their whole bodies. It is the same with ships: even though they are so large and driven by fierce winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot's inclination wishes. In the same way the tongue is a small member and yet has great pretensions. Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is also a fire. It exists among our members as a world of malice, defiling the whole body and setting the entire course of our lives on fire, itself set on fire by Gehenna. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no human being can tame

the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This need not be so, my brothers. Does a spring gush forth from the same opening both pure and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a grapevine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh. Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom” (Jas 3 : 1–13).²²

Saint Joseph can be the patron saint of everyone who tries to fulfil God’s will in a discreet and persistent manner (cf. Jas 1 : 3f.)²³ and who aims at working on controlling their tongues. He combines discreetness, temperance and acts of love that are mentioned in Jas 1 : 27; 3 : 13: taking care of the ones who need it, in his case his immediate family – the Child who had no other father on earth, and the works done with the gentleness attributed to wisdom. Through his actions Joseph presents himself as a righteous man, not only by following the Law of Moses, but also by living a life of love and fairness.

Encouraging us to pray for the sick, the author of the Letter teaches us how great the value of the prayer of such a man is: “pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land” (Jas 5 : 16–18).²⁴

²² Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 178–190. 192f.; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 110–114. 159–170; *Listy Katolickie*, op. cit., p. 74–77. 96–106; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 210–214. 253–270.

²³ The inspired author talks about the correlation between the trial of one’s faith and the perseverance (ὑπομονήν) that it brings. Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 71f.; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 65–67; *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 54; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 178. More on the subject of perseverance in Stanisław Pisarek’s: *Cierpliwa wytrwałość. „Hypomonē” „Hypoménein” w Nowym Testamencie*, Katowice 1992. The author talks about the patient perseverance in the Letter of James on pp. 207–229, he mentions 1 : 3f. on pp. 215–218.

²⁴ Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 290–296; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 226–230; *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 137–139; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 335–337.

The prayer of the righteous Joseph is of great value, which is why we commend our Jubilarian to his spiritual care, as well as everyone else who aims at leading the life of righteousness, following Joseph’s example of how to be discreet and persistently devout and, as the Letter of James teaches us, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath and be doers of the word and not hearers only (cf. Jas 1 : 19. 22).

Kraków

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Summary

“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him” (Mt 1 : 24). Discreet, Effective Service

Saint Joseph was a righteous man. He respected the Law of Israel. The decision to divorce Mary after she was found with child was not an easy one, although he knew he was not the child’s father. Instructed by the angel of the Lord, he took her to his home, gave a name to her child as his legal guardian (Mt 1 : 18–25), took care of his wife and her child, organised their trip to Egypt (Mt 2 : 13–15), then their return to Palestine and life in Nazareth (Mt 2 : 19–23; cf. Lk 2 : 39–52). His active obedience to God is the fulfilment of all the things Saint James will later describe as faith shown by the works of the faithful (Jas 2 : 14–17. 20–26). Joseph is put among those who bear witness to the faith of the Old Testament. The Gospels give no account of his exact words, although he fulfilled everything that he had been commanded. Saint Joseph can be a patron of everyone who tries to fulfil God’s will in a discreet and effective manner, with perseverance produced by faith (cf. Jas 1 : 3f.). With his works and life he shows how to bridle your tongue (cf. Jas 1 : 26f.; 3 : 1–13) and take care of the ones that need it the most (cf. Jas 1 : 27; 3 : 13), discreetly fulfilling your duties.

Keywords

Saint Joseph, justice, humility, obedience, service, perseverance, silence, discreetness

More on the subject of silence and moderation in speech in one of my works: „*W ciszy i ufności leży wasza siła*” (Iz 30, 15). *Nauka Biblii o milczeniu i powściągliwości*, Kraków 2006.

Streszczenie

„Zbudziwszy się ze snu, Józef uczynił tak, jak mu polecił anioł Pański” (Mt 1, 24). Dyskretna, skuteczna służba

Św. Józef był człowiekiem sprawiedliwym, szanował Prawo Izraela. Przeżywał wewnętrzne rozterki, gdy dowiedział się, że jego Oblubienica oczekuje Dziecka, którego nie był ojcem. Pouczony przez anioła, przyjął Ją do siebie, nadał imię Jej Dziecku jako Jego prawny ojciec (Mt 1, 18–25), opiekował się Małżonką i Dzieckiem, zorganizował podróż do Egiptu (Mt 2, 13–15), potem powrót do Palestyny i życie w Nazarecie (Mt 2, 19–23; por. Łk 2, 39–52). Jego czynne posłuszeństwo płynące z wiary jest wypełnieniem tego, co później napisze o wierze ukazującej się przez czyny św. Jakub (Jk 2, 14–17. 20–26). Św. Józef staje w szeregu świadków i wykonawców wiary Starego Testamentu. Ewangelie nie podają żadnego jego słowa. W milczeniu wypełniał wszystko, co do niego należało. List św. Jakuba wskazuje na niebezpieczeństwa płynące ze złego używania języka (Jk 1, 26n; 3, 1–13). Św. Józef może być patronem wszystkich, którzy starają się dyskretnie, wytrwale wśród przeciwności (por. Jk 1, 3n) i skutecznie pełnić wolę Bożą oraz pracować nad opanowaniem swego języka. Łączy dyskretność, wstrzemięźliwość w mowie z czynami miłości, o których mówi Jk 1, 27; 3, 13, opiekę nad potrzebującymi, w tym wypadku nad swymi Najbliższymi, nad Dzieckiem, które nie miało naturalnego ziemskiego ojca, oraz uczynki spełniane z łagodnością właściwą mądrości. Modlitwa takiego człowieka posiada wielką moc, zgodnie ze słowami Jk 5, 16–18. Naśladujmy dyskretność i wytrwałość św. Józefa, starajmy się jak on być bardziej chętni do słuchania, a mniej skłonni do mówienia i wprowadzać w czyn usłyszane słowo Boże (por. Jk 1, 19. 22).

Słowa kluczowe

Św. Józef, sprawiedliwość, pokora, posłuszeństwo, służba, wytrwałość, milczenie, dyskretność