

Looking Closer - St. Joseph, The Nativity, Simple Beauty

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Hi there. I'm Kate Capato, a sacred art painter, dancer and speaker based in Philadelphia. And I'm so excited to have you join us for this Advent retreat today. We're going to dive into the life of St Joseph, and experience his radiation of beauty. Before we do that, please join me in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. Come Holy Spirit, fill us with your love. Fill us with your grace. Anything that is not of you, Lord, we reject in the name of Jesus. Anything that might be troubling us, Lord, we place at the foot of the Cross, and we ask that you take care of it. In the name of Jesus, we surrender it to you. As we enter into the life of St Joseph, Lord, we ask that we learn all that you will for us to learn today. We thank you for this time together. As we pray, all glory be to the Father, Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen. Praise to the Lord.

Art and Mission

Okay, so, as I mentioned, I'm a sacred art painter, dancer, and speaker. I did not always know I wanted to do this. It was a long journey. I did mission work for years, and art was on the side. I never knew that they could come together. It wasn't until one year that I was traveling with a dance company, performing in Italy, where I came across a school that taught sacred art, and I felt this fire be ignited inside of me. And I learned that the way the Lord was calling me more fully, because I always knew that I wanted to help people know the Lord more, and that I loved doing art. I just didn't know how they worked together. And when I came across that school, I realized where God was beckoning me. I didn't go to that school right away. It took me about a couple, three or so years after that, and He called me there.

And I thought I was going to do one summer, you know, and then it turned into the full two-year program. And there I learned how to create visual homilies. I learned about beauty. I read books from Dietrich von Hildebrand on aesthetics, and studied "Theology of the Body", all these things where the Lord was pouring into me more fully my call, and I like to call it as a missionary of beauty, if you will, My husband, so I recently got married a couple years ago, and my husband now joins me in this mission. He's a musician, and we'll travel around, speaking about truth, goodness and beauty. I bring my art. He plays music. A lot of times it's in conjunction with adoration. We create these atmospheres where people can encounter the Lord through beauty. And let me tell you, the Holy Spirit is on fire, because beauty has a power, a power that is especially needed in our church today, to pierce through all the garbage and go right to our hearts.

So I'm excited to be on this mission, and to continually see where the Lord leads. And today, we're going to dive into the life of Joseph, and how he is somebody who radiates beauty. And sometimes we hear "beauty" and we think it's only a feminine quality, or has not much to do with us, or, if you're a man, it has not much to do with you, at least. But the thing is, it's important for all of us. Beauty is essential for all of us, because beauty brings us before the face of God. Dietrich von Hildebrand speaks about how beauty brings us before the face of God. God is true beauty. Anything in this world that's authentic beauty brings us right before Him. And that's really powerful to think about, and it just screams its value of why we need to prioritize it. So what does Joseph have to do with that? Well, we're going to dive into that.

The Greatest Male Saint

St Josemaria Escriva shares with us the greatest male saint to ever live was not a pope, not a priest, not a bishop. He was a worker, a husband, and a father. Joseph was a worker, husband, and father, and he's the greatest male saint to ever live. Aside from Christ, who's God himself, he is a powerful example for us that we can all relate to. His simplicity of life is something attainable through grace, and the way that he lived so virtuous is something that we are called to do as well.

So when my husband and I got married a couple of years ago, we went on a retreat with a exorcist that comes here often. His name is Father Blount. You might be familiar with his name. He has beautiful gifts from the Lord, and often prays over people and shares what the Lord shares with him. And he prayed over Paul, my husband, and received an image of this book. It's called "The Life of St Joseph". And he said, "Well, the Lord wants you to read this book, so this is why I'm seeing it." And this was right before the year of St Joseph that happened recently.

And we got the book, and decided to read it together, in obedience to the Lord, and dove deep into it. And what it is, is Jesus appeared to a nun. Her name is Maria Baij, if I'm pronouncing that correctly. I'm not sure. He appeared to her and expressed a detailed account of the life of Joseph from his birth until his death. And this is approved by the Church, and it's just filled with powerful examples. I mean, look how thick that is. So we've been diving into this and learning so much from Joseph. And I want to go into some key things that we have been learning, and why it's important in this Advent season, and in life in general, for us to learn from it.

St. Joseph's Life and Humility

So Joseph's humility, we've heard about it before, but we haven't necessarily heard examples, because scripture doesn't tell us a whole lot about Joseph. One example in this book that we are given of his virtue, and particularly his humility, is Joseph, when he was 18, he actually loses his parents. Now, he comes from a wealthy family, the Davidic line. He actually had a lot of wealth, and he would've inherited that. His parents die. And what happens is servants, neighbors even some relatives apparently, come in and swoop in to steal all his inheritance and everything that he would've been given. How does Joseph respond? Well, he responds in a way that I would never have expected. He doesn't come in seeking justice for himself. He doesn't come in even

seeking justice for his family. He comes in and says, out of concern for their soul and out of concern for God, so he is not thinking of himself, this is why it's a humility, act of humility, he's thinking of them and God. He says, "No, you didn't steal this from me. I now gift it to you." It becomes a gift. Because he was concerned that they would be in sin. Mostly, he was concerned that it would offend the Lord.

I do not know if I would be able to do that. I don't think that I could. Lord, I ask for the grace to be able to do that, like Joseph. There are many other examples of how he embraced poverty after this. And he served as a carpenter, as we know, and would often give people items for free, or half off, you know, all these things, whatever they can give him. And he focused his days on being with the Lord and serving the Lord. This was always Joseph's focus. And he dedicated his life to God. He would go to the temple, come and work, go back to the temple, soaked in prayer, often entering into moments of ecstasy, and just receiving from God.

He loved the Lord so much that he felt called to even vow his virginity to God. So we know that Mary and Joseph had a virginal relationship, but I didn't know that he actually vowed this to the Lord prior to even being with our lady. And it speaks about that. And when he's called to be Our Lady's spouse, he is a little concerned. Like, "Lord am I, you know, this vow that I've given you, is this going to be affected? What's going to happen here?" Well, I'm going to read you a quote from this book, where the Lord responds to that concern that he has. And he says, the Lord says to him, "I entrust you with this jewel," Our Lady, "that you may safeguard it. This pure dove will be your most loyal companion. Both of you shall maintain your virginity. It is precisely your virginity which will unite you most closely. Your individual loves will be united to one love, which shall be dedicated to me, who am the focal point of this love and the object of all your desires."

Wow. So their desire to be so united with the Lord was matched. And he's like, "Wow, this beautiful gift of a bride that I've been given, that she too desires this, and now we're going to be united on a whole different level, as virgins, and entering into that love with our Lord even more." So it's something beyond marriage, that we don't fully fathom, but it's a pure gift that they were given. And he enters into that, and serves Our Lady, and soon finds out what's to come with the Christ child, and serves him. And he's constantly humbled throughout the journey of his life. It talks about how much he suffers continually, as people ridicule him when they're traveling to Bethlehem, when they're traveling to Egypt. They're constantly saying, "Oh, you're not taking care of that woman." "You're doing this and that." They're belittling Joseph. And his response is never a self-protection. It is always thinking of how to serve Our Lady and the Lord better. It's never about himself. Never does he defend himself. And it's so powerful to read that. It's so powerful to think on that.

Radiating Beauty

And while he's entering into this humility more and more, and dedicated to the Lord, and focusing on serving and protecting and loving, he begins to radiate beauty. So we just talked about the power of beauty. Well, Joseph begins to radiate that beauty. So Our Lady articulates it.

And his response, Joseph's response, is really humbling. So it says, "Joseph made his plea interiorly to God." So Joseph, this is around the time of the Nativity. Jesus was just born, and Joseph is aching to hold the Christ child. He makes this plea known to God. He makes a little prayer. He doesn't say it out loud, because he's being humble, really. "He made his plea interiorly to God, who, being attentive to his petition, had arranged to grant his fervent wish. Joseph took the infant into his arms with great ardor and devotion, and received him on his knees from Mary's hands." Oh! On his knees. Almost like an act of adoration, right?

"Upon embracing him, his heart exalted and he became so inflamed with love that his countenance was all aglow. Mary often saw her spouse with his features thus radiant and exceedingly beautiful. God granted to Mary the great privilege of actually beholding Joseph's soul, enriched as it was with merits and adorned with graces. And she derived an inexpressible consolation. She was extremely joyful, and she thanked God for having given her so pure, so holy a spouse. She also said to Joseph, 'Oh my spouse, if you only knew how beautiful a soul is when it is adorned with virtue and enriched with graces and merits, you could certainly be amazed.'" Get this. Joseph's response isn't like, "Yeah, I know," like, "I'm living that." No. In response to her he says, "Oh my spouse, how I yearn that my soul might also be like that." He doesn't even think that it could be him. "I therefore beg you to besiege God to grant that it may eventually truly become thus arrayed." Joseph is entirely swept in the other and in the Lord that he doesn't even fathom how beautiful and radiant that he has become. And that's precisely why he radiates. That's why he glows.

Let's go back to the Old Testament for a second. In the Old Testament, do you remember the story of Moses, when he goes up to the mountain? He goes up to the mountain to talk to God, and when he comes back down, what happens to his face? It starts to glow, and people are like, "Whoa, your face is glowing." And it's powerful. Some are not able to receive it, and it's glowing so much they're like, "You need to veil your face." Moses' encounter with God literally caused him to glow. Like Joseph. Joseph, he's constantly encountering the Lord. He's literally now becoming a radiation of beauty.

Beauty Brings us the Face of God

Why is this important, and why are we talking about that this Advent season? Beauty brings us before the face of God. If we enter into this deeper relationship with the Lord, becoming radiant with beauty ourselves, we are beckoning others in to God. We are calling them in to his love even more. We become a symbol. It reminds them of the ache of what they were created for, and why life is given to them in the first place.

At Joseph, it talks about how all the people that ridiculed him saw the glow and the radiation of beauty, and they were just met with such compassion and desire for the Lord from it. And it's just beautiful to think about how we too can radiate that beauty, if we live like Joseph, if we are humble, not thinking of ourselves, but thinking of others. If we seek to serve the Lord, to protect the Lord, to praise the Lord, to honor the Lord, if that is our focus, we also will become radiant, and we will call others deeper into the love of God.

Called to Focus on Christ

And this is what we're called to do this Advent. We are called to focus on Christ, to focus on his face, to focus on loving him and allowing him to love us. And in that, to become more beautiful, to become a way that others too are drawn in to Christ.

So Jesus came into a family on purpose, father and mother and child. That union is an example, and particularly, that virginal union, is an example of the Trinitarian love, the giving, receiving, and the fruit that comes from it. It is an example of what's to come, that eternal communion with God, what you and I were created for. We are created for eternity in beauty and in love with God, never ending, just circling down. Heaven is not going to be boring, my friends. Heaven is enriched with beauty. The most beautiful encounters you've had on earth are just slivers of what heaven will be like. And the Lord is telling us this by coming into a family and showing that intimate union, and what that looks like, when you're so entwined with the other in purity that you become literally a glow.

So my friends, as we continue in this Advent season, as we get into Christmas and continue throughout the year, let us enter into humility, let us focus on the Lord, that we too may become a radiation of beauty, like Joseph, like Our Lady, and ultimately, like Christ.

Closing Prayer

In a prayer to St Joseph by Pope Pius X, he says, *"O St Joseph, virgin father of Jesus, pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us daily to the Son of God, that, armed with the weapons of Christ's grace, we may fight as we ought in life, and be crowned by him in death. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example. O Patriarch Saint Joseph, pray for us."* In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Amen.

May you be blessed in this season, and continually. Thank you so much for joining.