



The Holy See

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW FOUNTAIN IN THE VATICAN GARDENS DEDICATED TO ST. JOSEPH

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Piazza of the Governorate
Monday, 5 July 2010*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a cause of joy to me to inaugurate this fountain in the [Vatican Gardens](#), in a natural context of rare beauty. It is a work that increases the artistic patrimony of this enchanting green space in [Vatican City](#), full of historical and artistic testimonies of various epochs. Indeed, not only the lawns, the flowers, plants and trees, but also the towers, pavilions, small temples, fountains, statues and other buildings make this garden into a fascinating *unicum*. They were for my Predecessors, and, indeed, they are for me, a vital space, a place I go to with pleasure to spend a little time in prayer and serene relaxation.

In addressing my warm greetings to each one of you, I wish to express deep gratitude for this gift which you have given me by dedicating it to St Joseph. Thank you for this delicate and courteous thought! It was a demanding enterprise which involved the collaboration of many. In the first place, I thank Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo both for the words he addressed to me and for his interesting presentation of the completed work. With him I thank Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and Bishop Giorgio Corbellini, respectively Secretary General and Vice-Secretary General of [Governorate](#). I express my deep appreciation to the [Technical Services Department](#), to the designer and to the sculptor, to the consultants and to the workers, with a special thought for Mr and Mrs Hintze and for Mr Castrignano from London, who generously financed the project, and for the Sisters of the

Monastery of St Joseph in Kyoto. I also thank the Province of Trent, the municipalities and firms of Trent, for their contribution.

This fountain is called after St Joseph, a beloved figure close to the heart of the People of God and to my heart. The six bronze panels that adorn it evoke as many episodes in his life. I wish to reflect briefly on them. The first panel represents the *Betrothal* of Joseph and Mary; it is an episode of great importance. Joseph was of the royal line of David and, by virtue of his marriage to Mary, was to confer upon the Son of the Virgin upon the Son of God the legal title of "Son of David", thus fulfilling the prophecy. The betrothal of Joseph and Mary is thus a human event but is crucial in the history of the humanity's salvation, in the fulfilment of God's promises; And so it has a supernatural connotation, which the two protagonists accept with humility and trust.

The moment of trial for St Joseph was not long in coming, a demanding trial for his faith. Before going to live with her, Mary's betrothed discovers her mysterious motherhood and was upset. The Evangelist Matthew stresses that being a just man, not wanting to repudiate her, he therefore decides to send her away secretly (cf. Mt 1:19). But in a *dream* as it is portrayed in the second panel the Angel makes him understand that what was taking place in Mary was the work of the Holy Spirit; and Joseph, trusting in God, consents and cooperates with the plan of Salvation. Certainly, the divine intervention in his life could not but trouble his heart. Entrusting oneself to God does not mean seeing everything clearly according to our own criteria, it does not mean doing what we have planned; entrusting oneself to God means emptying oneself of oneself, renouncing oneself, for only those who accept to lose themselves for God can be called "just", like St Joseph, that is, can conform their will to God's and so fulfil themselves.

The Gospel, as we know, has not preserved any words of Joseph, who carries out his work in silence. It is this style that characterizes his whole existence, both before finding himself facing the mystery of God's action in his spouse, and when aware of this mystery he stands beside Mary in the *Nativity*, represented on the third panel. On that holy night in Bethlehem, with Mary and the Child, Joseph is there, to whom the Heavenly Father entrusted the daily care of his Son on earth, that he carried out in humility and silence.

The fourth panel reproduces the dramatic scene of the *Flight into Egypt* to escape from the homicidal violence of Herod. Joseph is compelled to leave his land with his family in haste: it is another mysterious moment in his life; another trial, in which total fidelity to God's plan is asked of him.

Then, in the Gospels, Joseph appears in only one other episode, when he goes to Jerusalem and experiences the anguish of losing the Child Jesus. St Luke describes the exhausting search and his wonder at the *Finding Him in the Temple* as appears on the fifth panel, but even more his amazement at hearing the mysterious words: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2: 49). It is this two-fold question of the Son of God that

helps us understand the mystery of Joseph's Fatherhood. Reminding his own parents of the supremacy of the One he calls "my Father", Jesus asserts the primacy of the God's Will over every other will and reveals to Joseph the profound truth of his role. He too is called to be a disciple of Jesus, dedicating his life to the service of the Son of God and of the Virgin Mother, in obedience to the Heavenly Father.

The sixth panel shows the *work* of Joseph in his workshop at Nazareth. Jesus worked beside him. The Son of God is hidden from men and only Mary and Joseph jealously guard his mystery and live it every day: the Word Incarnate grows as a man in the shadow of his parents, but, at the same time, they remain, in turn, hidden in Christ, in his mystery, living out their vocation.

Dear brothers and sisters, this beautiful fountain dedicated to St Joseph is a symbolic reference to the values of simplicity and humility in doing God's Will daily, which marked the silent but precious life of the Custodian of the Redeemer. I entrust to his intercession the future of the Church and of the world. Together with the Virgin Mary, his spouse, may he always guide us on our journey, so that we may be joyful instruments of peace and salvation.

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