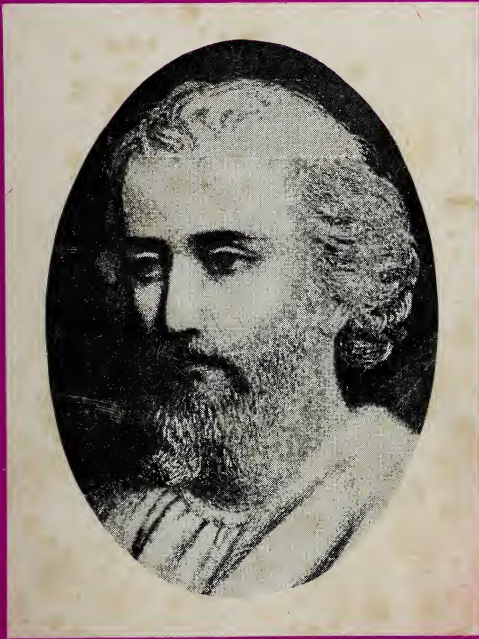


THE
STORY OF ST. JOSEPH
for Children



By
SISTER M. ELEANORE, C.S.C.

THE PAULIST PRESS
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THE STORY OF SAINT JOSEPH FOR CHILDREN

THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH

IT was a great day in the Jewish Temple of Nazareth. A husband was to be chosen for Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Ann. Because she was of the royal house of King David, her husband must also be of that house, for this was the custom of the Jews.

The sun was warm and bright on the stones that made the walks of the Temple courtyard. God had waited from all eternity to make beautiful days for the feasts of Mary, who was to be His Mother. Several men came to the Temple on this day to ask for the hand of Mary, because she was known to be good and lovely. Among them was Joseph the carpenter. His family had moved from Bethlehem to Nazareth, and when he grew up he had followed his father's trade as a carpenter.

When Mary was very young she had promised God she would never marry, but, like the Sisters, would devote herself especially to God and His service. She was surprised, therefore, when the high priest told her she was to marry. But she was obedient and the command of the high priest was the will of God



to her and so she consented to marry. She knew that God would take care of her promise always to be a virgin for love of Him.

When the suitors had all asked the high priest for the hand of the Blessed Virgin, he prayed for a sign from Heaven to know which to choose. Mary prayed very hard. Suddenly the staff that St. Joseph carried in his hand blossomed into lilies. This was a sign to Mary that he, as she, had promised God he would always be a virgin. So she was very happy.

According to the custom of the Jews, sacrifices were offered to God and many prayers were said for the newly betrothed couple. That evening a feast was given to the closest relatives. It was not a very big feast because Joseph and Mary were poor.

After the betrothal Mary went back to live

in her own home till it was time for the wedding to take place, for this was the custom of the Jews.

St. Joseph and our Lady did not know yet that she was to be the Mother of Jesus. They thought they would never have children because that had promised God to be virgins like Priests and Brothers and Sisters are. But the Lord Jesus wanted to become man and He wanted our Blessed Lady for His Mother. So God the Father made Him a human soul and God the Holy Ghost made Him a human body which was born of a Mother and grew like any baby's body, and the Lord Jesus in His own divine Person took the soul and body in union to Himself. In this way "the Word was made flesh." Jesus is called the Word of God and the flesh means He became human.

God sent the archangel Gabriel to tell our Lady that He wanted her for His Mother. At first she was afraid she could not do this because she had promised God not to have the joy of children of her own but only to be a spiritual mother to other women's children, like the Sisters who teach and care for the poor and sick and pray for sinners. But the archangel told her God wanted her for His Mother, anyway. So she said she would be His Mother.

She did not tell St. Joseph what had happened, because it was a secret between God

and her. So St. Joseph was worried and unhappy when he found out she was going to have a child, for he thought she had not kept her promise to God. Then God sent an angel to tell St. Joseph that Mary was chosen to be His Mother and that he was to take her as his wife and support and care for her and the Child, Who was to be named Jesus.

St. Joseph Is Married

So St. Joseph and our Lady celebrated their marriage happily, and then Mary went to live in the poor little home that St. Joseph had prepared for her. One part of the house was a carpenter shop in which St. Joseph worked making tools and furniture to sell to the people of the town. In those days only those who were farmers or soldiers or had state offices belonged to the upper class of society. So St. Joseph belonged to the humbler class.



ST. JOSEPH LEAVES NAZARETH

Just when it was time for our Lord to be born, the Emperor Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that the whole world should be enrolled. He wanted to know how many people he ruled. Because St. Joseph's family came from the town of Bethlehem, he and Mary had to go there to be enrolled. It seems that they decided to move there.

St. Joseph had to buy an ox to carry their few household goods and their clothes and food for the journey. He also had to buy an ass for Mary to ride upon. An ox is a big strong animal, somewhat like a cow, that in former times was used to pull loads and to plow. The pioneers of America used oxen to pull their covered wagons when they traveled to the west of our country. An ass is a strong little animal that looks like a mule. Both are gentle and patient and both have big soft eyes.

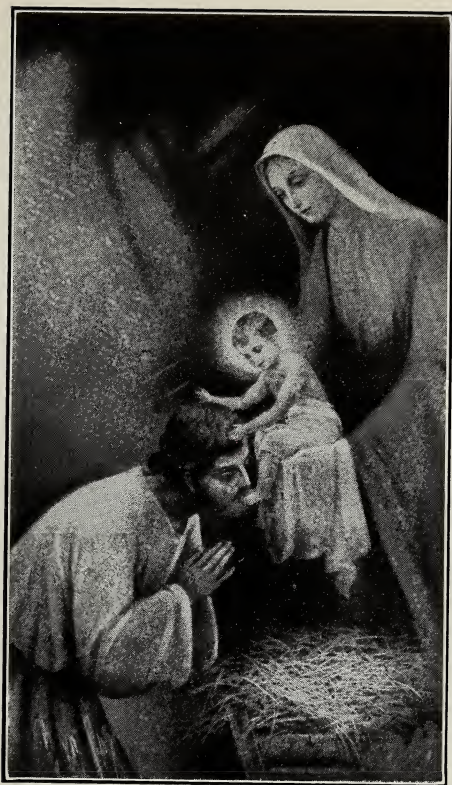
This ox and ass St. Joseph bought were to be present in the stable when the Saviour was born. You have seen little images of them in the Christmas crib.

St. Joseph and our Lady set out with some of their relatives and friends who also were going to Bethlehem. It was in December and so the fields were bare and the wind was cold. They arrived in the town in the late afternoon and the snow was falling. They went to the inn to get shelter for the night, but found that all the rooms were taken. St. Joseph felt very sad because of this. He went to several places asking for shelter, but every room in the town was taken. Finally the innkeeper told him he could find a rude shelter in an old stable at the edge of town.

St. Joseph at Bethlehem

St. Joseph and our Lady went to this old stable. On the way St. Joseph got some clean straw with which to make a bed for our Lady. He fed the ox and the ass. After he and Mary had eaten their supper they lay down to sleep. Soon there was no sound except when the ox or the ass moved in the straw.

Suddenly St. Joseph was awakened by the sound of lovely singing and a glorious light that filled the poor little stable. Then what



St. Joseph adores the Child, Jesus.

do you think he saw? Wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger was the most beautiful Baby in all the world. Beside the manger Mary knelt in adoration. Jesus the Light of the world had been born. St. Joseph fell on his knees and wept for joy. Then Mary let him hold the sleeping Child.



Soon there came the sound of voices and of running feet. St. Joseph went to open the door of the stable. At the door were some shepherds. They all talked at once. Then one of them who seemed to be the leader said to St. Joseph:

“We were keeping the night watches over our flocks. And behold an angel stood by us, and the brightness of God shone round about us; and we feared with a great fear. And the angel said to us: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day, is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and say-

ing Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. So we said to one another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us. We have sought the Child. Is He here?"

While the shepherd asked, "Is He here?" St. Joseph stepped aside and motioned them all to enter. When they saw the Babe with His Mother they were very happy and they knelt to pray. They were the first, after our Lady and St. Joseph, to see the great God become a helpless Babe for love of us all.

St. Joseph Provides a Home

When it was morning St. Joseph set out to find a house in which his little family could live. When he had found a vacant one in a poor section of the town he prepared it as best he could. Then he brought the Babe and Mary, and soon, though they had very few things, our Lady made it into a home.

When the Child was eight days old St. Joseph named Him according to the Jewish custom. He named Him Jesus, as the angel had told him to do. Jesus means Saviour.

Some time later wise men from the eastern countries came to adore Jesus. They had seen a new star in the sky, and as they thought it might mean the Saviour was born, they fol-



*St. Joseph welcomes the wise men
from the East.*

lowed it till it came and stood above the house where the Holy Family lived. These wise men were of noble birth, and so they had many attendants with them. On their way to visit Jesus they stopped to pay their respects to King Herod. He was afraid the new-born King might get some of his power, and so he

decided to kill Him. So he asked the wise men to come back to tell him where the Child was, saying he also wished to adore Him. This was a terrible lie.

When the wise men came into the poor house of the Holy Family, they knelt to adore the Babe. Then, as He smiled at them, they gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts were valuable, and St. Joseph was glad to get them because he was so poor and it was hard to get enough from his trade as carpenter to support his family.

The wise men did not go back to Herod, for an angel told them in sleep that Herod wanted to kill our Lord. They went home another way. Herod was very angry. So he decided to kill all the boy children under two years of age. God knew this was going to happen, and so He sent an angel to awaken St. Joseph from sleep one night to tell him about it.





IN THE LAND OF EGYPT

St. Joseph went right away to tell our Lady they must leave Bethlehem and seek a place outside the realm of Herod. She got ready to go and dressed our Lord for the journey while St. Joseph packed the few things they could take with them on the ox. Then our Lady with the little Lord Jesus in her arms got on the poor gray ass. St. Joseph led the ox, and they started on the long journey into the land of Egypt.

They went along a road that was much used in those days. Traders went over it with their goods, and also Jewish families from Palestine who were escaping from the cruelty of the Romans. St. Joseph and our Lady were much afraid the soldiers would catch them before they reached the River of Egypt, seventy miles away. At last, how-

ever, they were across the river and safe from Herod, who had no power in that land.

We do not know exactly where St. Joseph found a home in Egypt. Probably it was in Heliopolis, a city near Cairo, because there was a Jewish settlement there. Perhaps you have seen the beautiful picture of the great sphinx in the desert with Mary and her Babe asleep on its huge forepaw while St. Joseph keeps guard over them. This could easily have happened during their journey into Egypt. Travel was very slow in those days, especially when people were, like St. Joseph, so poor that they had to walk from place to place.

The Holy Family stayed in Egypt about two years. Then the cruel King Herod died. One night an angel of the Lord came to St. Joseph while he was asleep and told him to arise and to take the Child and His Mother



and go into the land of Israel. St. Joseph did this. Again they packed up their few things, and taking the little Jesus, now almost four years old, set out on the journey.

St. Joseph intended to go back to Bethlehem to live. When he came close to the land of Israel he heard that Herod's son Archelaus was now the king. He was afraid this king would want to kill Jesus as his father had wanted to. He prayed for light to know what to do. That night while he lay asleep on the roadside an angel came to him. The angel said that God wanted him to live in Nazareth in the country of Galilee. That is why our Lord is called a Nazarene and the carpenter's Son of Nazareth.

The Gospel tells us that St. Joseph was a just man. Our Lady never sinned at all. And Jesus is holiness itself. So you can imagine how happy the little family of Nazareth must have been. But a great sorrow was always in their hearts. They knew that Jesus had to suffer and die for our sins. When St. Joseph went to deliver tools and furniture he had made, Jesus would sometimes go with him. When they got home, St. Joseph would wash the dust of the street from his feet and then would take off the sandals from our Lord's little feet and wash them. He would



St. Joseph teaches Jesus his trade.

kiss them tenderly and think how they would one day be pierced with terrible nails.

Sometimes in the evenings when they sat in the dooryard our Lady would twine the long dark curls of Jesus about her fingers and think how one day a crown of cruel thorns would make the blood from His sacred head



*St. Joseph, Foster Father of the
Son of God, pray for us.*

flow through them. When she bathed His little body she would think how one awful night wicked soldiers would beat it with leaded whips till the flesh was torn to ribbons and His bones were showing.

Sometimes when St. Joseph came home in the evenings Jesus would run to meet him with outstretched arms. In the setting sun

His shadow would look like a cross, and then His parents would think of the day when He would hang on a cross for our sins. When He would ask for a drink and St. Joseph would hold the gourd of water to His mouth, he would think he heard Jesus say, as He did when He was hanging on the cross, "I thirst."

Sometimes St. Joseph would be so sad while they were working in the carpenter shop that Jesus would have to comfort him. He would put His little arms about St. Joseph's neck and tell him that it was not his fault. You see, St. Joseph did not commit any big sins for he was a just man. He needed to be saved from original sin as we all do, but that sin was his through Adam's fault and not through his own. It is believed that St. Joseph was cleansed from original sin while he was very young, perhaps even before he was born, as St. John the Baptist was. God could do this by using the merits of our Lord's passion before it actually took place.

St. Joseph was very pious, and he kept holy all the sacred feasts of the Jews. He went to Jerusalem every year at the solemn feast of the Pasch, which commemorated the time when the children of the Israelites were not killed by the angels who killed the children of the Egyptians, to make them let the

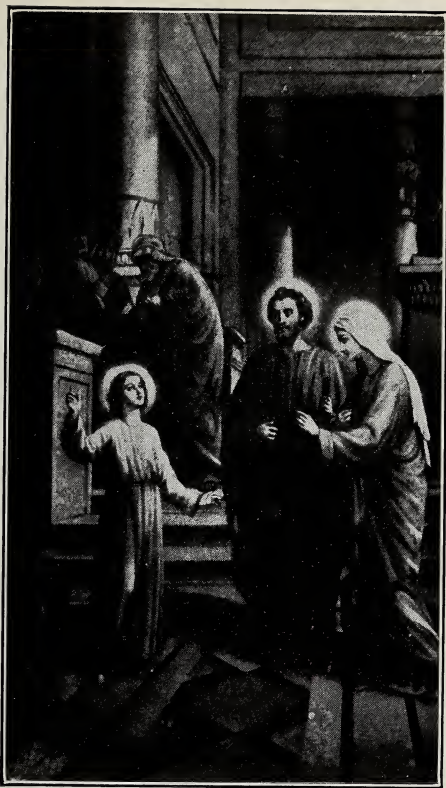
chosen people go back to their own land. He probably went to the other two solemn feasts of the Jews in the Temple at Jerusalem. Our Lady and Jesus probably went with him to these festivals.

When Jewish boys were twelve years old they put on the robe of manhood. Before this time their fathers taught them the Scriptures and the Jewish laws and customs and also the other things you learn in school. They did not have schools like ours. So St. Joseph taught Jesus all these things.

ST. JOSEPH SEEKS JESUS

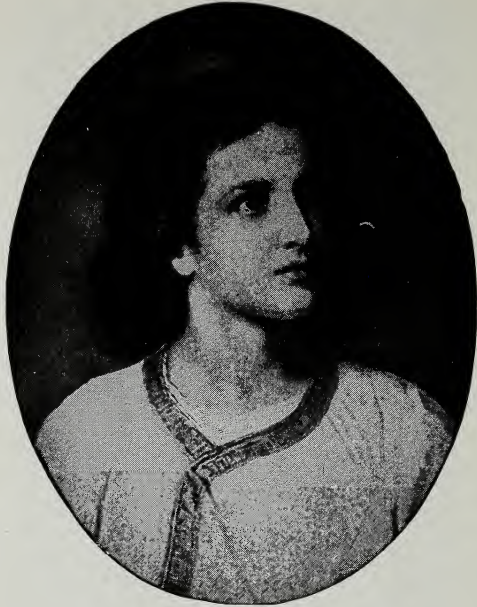
When Jesus was twelve years old the Holy Family went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch. After the festival was over, they set out for home. Jesus, however, stayed behind after the people with whom His parents were, had gone. They did not worry at first, for they supposed He was somewhere else in the company. When night was come, however, He did not join them as they had expected. So they sought Him throughout the company.

When they could not find Him they returned to Jerusalem. They were very sad. Any father and mother would be sad over losing a child. But St. Joseph and our Lady knew their Child was God. Just think how



*St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin find
Jesus in the temple.*

they felt. Perhaps it seemed cruel for our Lord to stay behind without telling them, but He is God and God does not always explain things to us. He wants us to trust Him always to do what is best and right for us. Besides, our dear Lord had some work to do for His Heavenly Father.



For three long unhappy days St. Joseph and our Lady went about the streets of Jerusalem searching for Jesus. They asked everyone they met and inquired at every house. At last they went to the Temple to see whether He might be there. He had been there most of the time. When they found Him He was sitting in the midst of the doctors of the law, hearing them and asking them questions. The doctors were amazed at His wisdom, for they thought that He was only a carpenter's son.

Jesus had much more learning than St. Joseph had taught Him. He had all human

knowledge as well as all divine knowledge. He learned as other children do because He wanted to know exactly how we live and also that He might give us an example. But He did not need to learn in this way. So you can see why the doctors were so surprised that a boy of twelve knew more than they did after all their years of study.

Just imagine how happy His parents were to find Him again. Our Lady asked Him why He had left them without telling them. He said that He had to do this work for His Heavenly Father. Because St. Joseph and our Lady wanted only the will of God in all things and because they knew what a wonderful privilege they had in being allowed to have our Lord at all, they were satisfied with this answer.

Then Jesus went home with them and lived in perfect obedience to them till He was thirty years old, when He began His public life. St. Joseph taught Jesus his trade as a carpenter. He also taught Him more of the Scriptures and the Jewish laws and customs.

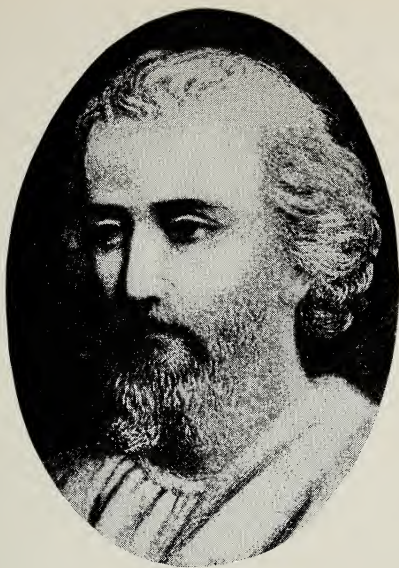
Sometime before Jesus was old enough to begin His public life St. Joseph died. When he was dying Jesus held him in His arms, and Mary knelt beside him. Though he was sad to leave them, he gladly did God's will.

Joseph the Saint

God always wants His special friends to have great confidence in Him. One way in which to make them show their confidence is to try their faith very often. So God often tried St. Joseph's faith, as this story shows you.

God also wants His special friends not only to do good acts but to be good in themselves. St. Joseph not only kept all the commandments; he was good all the way through. He kept himself free even from little faults.

God also wants His special friends to be very humble. St. Joseph is so humble that his whole life is hidden in that of Jesus. We know less about him than about almost any other great man in history. He wanted it this way, for all he wanted to be or do was just as the protector of Jesus and Mary. He had no thoughts or ambitions outside them. He was satisfied even to die before our Lord began His public life and worked miracles and established His Church. St. Joseph asked nothing whatever for himself. Yet, having Jesus and Mary, he had more than any one else in all the world.



PRAYERS TO ST. JOSEPH

Dear St. Joseph, obtain for us grace to lead an innocent life; and may our life ever be shielded by thy protection. Amen.

St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray for us who have placed ourselves under thy protection, now and at the hour of death. Amen.

Remember, O most chaste spouse of Mary, O my amiable patron, St. Joseph, that it has never been known that any one asked thy protection and thy help without receiving them. I come to thee and give myself to thy care.

Do not despise my prayers, O foster father of my Redeemer, but listen to them in thy kindness and answer them. Amen.

Great St. Joseph, who didst die in the arms of Jesus and Mary, I ask thee now to help me at the moment of my death, even if then I should not be able to ask thee. Amen.

Dear St. Joseph, help me to live always as thou didst in the presence of Jesus and Mary, so that I may never offend their pure eyes with sin of any kind. Amen.

Dear St. Joseph, through the care thou didst take of Jesus and Mary, I ask thee to take care of me and my family all our lives. Amen.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

(For October Devotions)

To thee, O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our affliction, and having implored the help of thy thrice holy Spouse, we now, with hearts filled with confidence, earnestly beg thee also to take us under thy protection. By that charity, wherewith thou wert united to the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, and by that fatherly love, with which thou didst cherish the Child Jesus, we beseech thee and we humbly pray that thou wilt look down with gracious eyes upon that inheritance

which Jesus Christ purchased by His Blood, and wilt succor us in our need by thy power and strength.

Defend, O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen offspring of Jesus Christ. Keep from us, O most loving Father, all blight of error and corruption. Aid us from on high, most valiant defender, in this conflict with the powers of darkness, and even as of old, thou didst rescue the Child Jesus from the peril of His life, so now defend God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity. Shield us ever under thy patronage, that, imitating thy example and strengthened by thy help, we may live a holy life, die a happy death, and attain everlasting bliss in Heaven. Amen.

LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary,
 St. Joseph,
 Illustrious son of David,
 Light of the patriarchs,
 Spouse of the Mother of God,
 Pure guardian of the Virgin,
 Foster Father of the Son of God,
 Zealous defender of Christ,
 St. Joseph, most just,
 St. Joseph, most chaste,
 St. Joseph, most prudent,
 St. Joseph, most brave,
 St. Joseph, most obedient,
 St. Joseph, most faithful,
 Protector of Holy Church,
 Terror of demons,
 Patron of the dying,
 Hope of the sick,
 Comfort of the sorrowing,
 Safeguard of families,
 Guardian of virgins,
 Glory of the family life,
 Model of workmen,
 Lover of poverty,
 Mirror of patience,
 Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of
 the world, *spare us, O Lord.*
 Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the
 world, *graciously hear us, O Lord.*

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us.*

V. He made him lord over His household.

R. And ruler of all His possessions.

LET US PRAY

O Lord, Who in Thine unspeakable providence wast pleased to choose blessed Joseph for Thy most holy Mother's spouse, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may become worthy to have him for our intercessor in Heaven whom we venerate as our protector on earth. Amen.

HYMNS TO ST. JOSEPH

Dear Guardian of Mary

Dear Guardian of Mary, dear nurse of her
Child,

Life's ways are full weary, the desert is wild,
Bleak sands are all round us, no home can we
see;

Sweet Spouse of our Lady, we lean upon thee.

For thou to the pilgrim art father and guide,
And Jesus and Mary felt safe at thy side;
O glorious Patron, secure shall I be,
Sweet Spouse of our Lady, if thou art with
me!

God chose thee for Jesus and Mary, wilt thou
Forgive a poor exile for choosing thee now?
There's no saint in Heaven, St. Joseph, like
thee,
Sweet Spouse of our Lady, do thou plead for
me.

When the treasures of God were unsheltered
on earth,
Safe keeping was found for them both in thy
worth;
O Father of Jesus, be father to me,
Sweet Spouse of our Lady, and I will love thee.

Great St. Joseph

Great Saint Joseph, son of David,
Foster father of our Lord,
Spouse of Mary, ever virgin,
Keeping o'er them watch and ward.
In the stable thou didst guard them
With a father's loving care;
Thou by God's command didst save them
From the cruel Herod's snare.

Three long days in grief and anguish,
With His Mother sweet and mild,
Mary Virgin, didst thou wander
Seeking the beloved Child.
In the Temple thou didst find Him:
Oh, what joy then filled thy heart!
In thy sorrows, in thy gladness,
Grant us, Joseph, to have part.

Clasped in Jesus' arms and Mary's,
When death gently came at last,
Thy pure spirit sweetly sighing
From its earthly dwelling passed.
Dear Saint Joseph, by that passing,
May our death be like to thine;
And with Jesus, Mary, Joseph,
May our souls forever shine.

