

Homily of September 13, 2010, Saint Joseph.

Personal testimony:

Mary lived in a patriarchal society. The role of women was, in general, mere subordination to men. However, there were ideas and religious practices that softened this discriminatory situation. On the other hand, women's personal gifts and the way of being of the husband, could give a more human aspect to these asymmetric relations. What happened in the home of Mary and Joseph? What characteristics did their relationship have? What united them?

We would like to have an explicit and detailed information on how the life in that house was, but the data are too scarce. We can, however, point out several things taking into account the particular context in which they lived: they were Hebrews of the time of Judaism, living in the Lower Galilee region, its environment was rural, they belonged to modest or poor families .

The husband, in that society, was the supreme authority of the house and the guarantor of the safety of the family, women were valued because of their reproductive role and their contribution to the economy of the family. It seems that Joseph's job was something related to the construction, which means he knew how to work with stone and wood. Saint Justin, a converted Jew of the second century, says that St Joseph used to make "yokes and plows."

We concentrate now on the interpersonal relationship of this couple: Joseph and Mary. They were engaged (the rite of betrothal had already taken place), but they were still not living together, in the same home; the living together would take place after the rite of marriage, a year later. However, there was already a firm and strong commitment between them. Joseph suffered a profound crisis when he learnt of the pregnancy of Maria. It seemed that this was going to destroy this early union. We do not know if he felt betrayed. There are exegetes who think that Joseph had the premonition that this was something of God and then he thought that he should leave Mary.

He did not act with spite or anger, and did not want to hurt Mary. Later, he came to know that God had intervened in Mary's pregnancy and that he, Joseph, also had a mission in all that; he did not rebel, and accepted his mission unselfishly. God's invitation, God's mission for him, was difficult and implied a change of his plans and a lot of abnegation, but Joseph did not resist, he did not rebel, because he did not live for himself. He was always seeking the will of God (Mt 1,19). Here we find a decisive factor that unites Mary and Joseph: both live the obedience of faith. This obedience urged them to broaden their horizons and to consent to a plan that gives a new direction to their lives. Mary ends her dialogue WITH THE ANGEL when she says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it Done unto me according to your word" and Joseph, seconding the words of the angel, accepts Mary, gives the child the name of Jesus and so, Jesus will belong to the lineage of David.

The unions based on human love have a good foundation, but this love is exposed to unforeseen crisis . **There are excellent guarantees to overcome these crisis when people seek God's will** . At first glance, it seems that God disrupts the plans and it seems to separate these two people who love each other; but actually, it leads to a new form of union. If God appears at first as a factor which divides what human being had joined, in reality He is

helping those two people to walk together, in reality this God will be union point of these two wills. The search for God's will can bring surprises, it can perhaps perhaps force to redefine roles, but certainly it helps to strengthen the union between the man and the woman. We can be sure that God makes our union stronger.

**New shock:**

Years later, the "child Jesus" remains in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph did not fall into an easy temptation in their married life: to accused one another of the problem that has come. Joseph and Mary search together and suffer together: "Son," Mary says to Jesus, "why have you treated us like that? Your father and I were anguished looking for you. " Both, Husband and wife live an intense communion of sentiments, a shared anxiety thinking of the fate of the child. To Feel the same: that also unites each other.

There is, in short, a new reason to be united: the exercise of authority shared by each other. After finding Jesus in the temple, they went to Nazareth, and Jesus remained under their authority. " Until he became an adult, he lived under one authority. To live under under one same authority makes the person grow. Only the one who knows how to obey, will know how to command. And, as we have seen, both Mary and Joseph knew how to obey.

In short, there is a special union between Joseph and Mary after their marriage, after their acceptance of the will of God, after sharing the same sentiments, and after sharing the same authority. We all can experience and live these things, in one sense or another, in one or another degree. This is the teaching and encouragement that this enviable form of relationship of this unusual couple offers us. It is an invitation to imitate them.