

ANTON ADAM

THE RELATIONSHIP OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE FATHER OF THE REDEEMER

A b s t r a c t. The New Testament figure of St. Joseph comes to the fore in direct connection with his relationship with Mary, who is called to the service of motherhood, so that by divine action she may become the mother of the Redeemer. The title of St. John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* indicates the mission of St. Joseph in the life of Jesus Christ as his protector. It is true that St. Joseph, Mary's husband performs this role in certain situations. Joseph takes an attitude to a situation that affects him. For this reason, St. John Paul II does not focus only on the very service of the protector, but focuses on the relationship from which the protector's service itself derives. This relationship is fatherhood, which corresponds to Joseph's legitimate relationship with Mary. Mary herself defines Joseph's relationship with Jesus as that of a father: „your father and I have been anxiously searching for you“ (Luke 2:48). It follows from the very marriage of Mary and Joseph, which unites them, that they both have the title of parent. John Paul II emphasizes this fact and formulates from it the relationship of fatherhood to Jesus. He revealed Joseph in the mystery of Christ with an emphasis on the biblical basis. The presented text reflects the new dimension of Joseph's relationship with Christ, which is fulfilled by participating in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, together with Mary.

Keywords: John Paul II; Joseph; father; Mary; foster; mystery.

The theological reflection of the Pope of Slavic origin, St. John Paul II, concentrates attention on the figure of St. Joseph not only as the foster parent of the Lord, who helps the all-round growth of the child Jesus, but also points to all the contexts of the life of the Nazarene family, of which both the child of God and the mother, Mary, are a part. Pope John Paul II interprets the truths relating to the person of St. Joseph through an anthropological reality, the dominant aspect of which is human dignity. It is known that St. John Paul II had a direct and open relationship with people that we

Fr. Prof. ThDr. ANTON ADAM, PhD — Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology of Cyril and Methodius, Department of Systematic Theology; correspondence address: Banská 28, 976 32 Baďín, Slovakia; e-mail: tonciadam@gmail.com; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7996-8361>.

can call paternal. For this reason, it appeals to individuals as well as to entire communities, because in every person it finds a person who has his dignity due to his or her origin in God's plan. St. Joseph testifies that to accept God's will presupposes identification with the purpose for which God chooses someone willing to be his collaborator. In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope John Paul II says: „Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being—in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people (perhaps still only that of his clan or tribe), and in the sphere of the whole of mankind—this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption.”¹ The Church „shows the world that an authentic union, social and external, results from a union of minds and hearts, namely from that faith and charity by which her own unity is unbreakably rooted in the Holy Spirit. For the force which the Church can inject into the modern society of man consists in that faith and charity put into vital practice, not in any external dominion exercised by merely human means.”²

The theme of St. Joseph's fatherhood as the fulfillment of the relationship with Jesus is well known in the theological literature, although not explicitly preferred. It is certain that Pope St. John Paul II, with his interest in the Protector of the Redeemer, inspired many to further theological research and deepening knowledge not only of Joseph's mission itself, but especially of the way in which that mission was realized. Among the authors who deal with the topic of Joseph's relationship with Jesus, let us mention some: Wojciech Hanc,³ Roland Gauthier,⁴ Janusz Bujak,⁵ Józef Bilczewski,⁶ and Marek Chmielewski.⁷

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 14.

² Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 42.

³ Wojciech Hanc, „Święty Józef wobec tajemnicy Wcielenia”, *Salvatoris Mater* 2 (2000), no. 2: 25–45, and „Józefologia współczesna na tle odbytych kongresów”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 78 (1986), t. 107: 210–211.

⁴ Roland Gauthier, „Święty Józef w historii zbawienia. Rys biblijno-teologiczny”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 71 (1978), t. 90, z. 1: 40–43.

⁵ Janusz Bujak, „*Idźcie do Józefa*” (*Rdz 41,55*). *Nauczanie papieży o św. Józefie. Od bł. Piusa IX do Franciszka* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 2021).

⁶ Józef Bilczewski, *Święty Józef Patron Kościoła Powszechnego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Miles, 2021).

⁷ Marek Chmielewski, *Duchowość według Jana Pawła II. Studium na podstawie encyklik i adhortacji* (Lublin: Polskie Stowarzyszenie Teologów Duchowości, 2013), 21 – 34.

A new study on the current topic of Joseph's relationship with Jesus is presented by Anastasiya Podlyuk.⁸

1. THE DIGNITY OF ST. JOSEPH IN FOLLOWING GOD'S PURPOSES

The true dignity of the human person lies in the deep knowledge of oneself, which makes one more and more open to accepting the truth about one's eschatological goal. The Church carries out her vocation in a community of believers and, in emphasizing the dignity of the human person, transcends her boundaries and appeals to every human being. God invites everyone; however, not everyone responds positively. God comes in the fullness of love, and the acceptance of the communion of his love remains with each individual. The personality of St. Joseph excels precisely in this free following of God's invitation to walk on a path that will be of many problems, but God will be with him to fulfill the mission of service to his wife Mary and the child Jesus. The Holy Father John Paul II speaks of St. Joseph from this very point of view, which is characterized by an openness to accept the unknown, but at the same time to identify with the mystery of which it is a part. In the Apostolic Exhortation of *Redemptoris Custos*, John Paul II highlights Joseph's attitude, who when he accepted Mary as his wife showed, just as she did, his readiness to accept the mission that God demands of him.⁹

On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 1989, St. John Paul II published the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (Protector of the Redeemer), in which he introduced the person of St. Joseph and his mission in the life of Christ and the Church. The very name of the exhortation is based on the Gospel text of Matthew's Gospel: Called to be the protector of the Redeemer, "Joseph did as the Lord had commanded him and took unto him his wife" (Matt. 1:24). The exhortation is dedicated to the whole Church, because when Joseph takes loving care of Mary and willingly devotes himself to Jesus' upbringing, he also guards and protects the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church and of which the Virgin Mary is a model and embodiment. John Paul II points to the respect for St. Joseph, which has lasted for centuries and the exhortation itself is published

⁸ Anastasiya Podlyuk, "Joseph – splendor personae. Studium na przykładzie dramatu *Cień Józefa*. Apokryf współczesny Pawła Kamzy," MA Diss., KUL 2021 (ms at Biblioteka of KUL).

⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 3.

on the occasion of the centenary of the Encyclical Letter *Quamquam Pluries* of Pope Leo XIII (August 15, 1889). The purpose of the document is to present reflections on the person whom God has entrusted with the care of his most precious treasures.¹⁰ John Paul II expresses the desire that all may grow in respect for the patron saint of the universal Church and in love for the Savior, whom he served in a truly exemplary manner. Pope Francis has also pointed several times to St. Joseph as the patron of the Catholic Church.¹¹ A Christian is always called to rediscover and strengthen his identity as a person of devotional faith. The attitude of Mary's husband and the legal father of the Lord Jesus is a good and timely example. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, John Paul II points out this: „I am convinced that by reflection upon the way that Mary's spouse shared in the divine mystery, the Church—on the road towards the future with all of humanity—will be enabled to discover ever anew her own identity within this redemptive plan, which is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation.”¹²

Pope Benedict XVI pointed to St. Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary and the protector of Jesus Christ, in his speech before the Angelus prayer on December 18, 2005. He recalled the Advent liturgy, which invites us to reflect on the figures of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who intensively experienced the period until the birth of Jesus. The Pope recalls the text of Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:27), and the fact that Mary is “engaged to a man of the house of David named Joseph.” He also recalls the words of the Gospel of Matthew, which points to the presence of the angel of the Lord, who said to Joseph, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to accept Mary, your wife, for what is done in her is of the Holy Spirit.” Joseph plays an important role in relation to Jesus, especially from a legal point of view. He is a model of a “righteous” man (Matt. 1:19), who, in perfect harmony with his wife, accepts the Son of God, who has become a man, and watches over His growing up as a human being. In this context, Pope Benedict said: “For this reason, in the days leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ, it is beneficial to talk spiritually with St. Joseph to help us live this great mystery of faith more fully.”¹³

¹⁰ Cf. Congregation for Worship, *Quemadmodum Deus* (08.12.1870), Pii IX P. M. Acta, pars I, vol. V, p. 282; Pius IX., *Inclitum patriarcham* (07.07.1871), Pii IX P. M. Acta, pars I, vol. V, 331–335.

¹¹ Cf. Janusz Bujak, “Św. Józef – patron Kościoła powszechnego w wybranych dokumentach Stolicy Apostolskiej,” *Rocznik Skrzatuski* 9 (2021): 55, accessed 17.11.2021 http://www.rocznikskrzatuski.pl/archiwum_pliki/rs2021/03_janusz_bujak.pdf.

¹² John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 1.

¹³ Benedict XVI, “Saint Joseph — husband of the Virgin Mary and protector of Jesus Christ.”

Pope Benedict XVI points to the words of St. Ambrosius, who says that St. Joseph in spite of all his doubts, acts “as the angel of the Lord has commanded him,” and he is sure that he is doing righteous things. St. Joseph testifies to Mary’s virginity, to his free work for God, and he is the guardian of the earthly life of the Messiah. We worship the lawful father¹⁴ because in it a new man is formed who looks to the future with confidence and courage, not pursuing his own plans, but entirely trusting in the infinite mercy of the One who affirms the prophecies and opens the time of salvation.”¹⁵

St. Joseph does not act according to his knowledge and personal ambitions, but entrusts himself entirely to God. In this way he develops a life of inner freedom which leads him to a humble acceptance of God’s way. Submission to God’s purpose is fully in union with the faith by which Mary accepted the proclamation of the angel. According to the Holy Father Francis, Joseph’s faith is closely connected with life – it is not the faith of a formal affiliation with a certain religious group, but a real way of experiencing the inner content of this affiliation with the faith of the chosen nation. In his homily on the feast of St. Joseph on March 19, 2020 in the Cathedral of St. Martha, Pope Francis emphasized: “Joseph is a man of faith: for this reason he was righteous.” Not only because he believed, but because he lived this faith. A “righteous” man. He was chosen to educate the one who was a true man, but who was also God. It would require a God-man to raise such a man: but there was no such man. The Lord chose a “righteous” man of faith. A man capable of being a man and also of being able to speak to God, to enter into the mystery of God. And such was Joseph’s life—to live his profession, his human life, and penetrate the mysteries. A man capable of speaking with the mystery, of talking with the mystery of God. He wasn’t a dreamer. He fathomed the mystery. With the same naturalness with which he ran his craft, with the precision of that craft: he was able to machine wood at an angle to the millimeter exactly, he knew how to do it; he could grind it, grind it to the millimeter exactly. He was precise. But he was also able to penetrate a secret that he could not control himself.”¹⁶ The

(Speech before the Angelus payer, 18.12. 2005), trans. from Polish, Narodowe Sanktuarium Św. Józefa w Kaliszu, accessed 28.06. 2021, <https://www.swietyjosef.kalisz.pl/BibliotekaSwJozefa/103.html>.

¹⁴ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, article 532.

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, “He entrusted all the priests under the protection of St. Joseph.” (Speech before the Angelus payer, 19. 12. 2011), trans. from Polish, Narodowe Sanktuarium Św. Józefa w Kaliszu, accessed 28.06.2021, <https://www.swietyjosef.kalisz.pl/BibliotekaSwJozefa/140.html>.

¹⁶ Francis, “St. Joseph – a man able to perceive the mystery of God.” (Homily of the Holy Father at the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 2020 in the House of St. Marta), Vatican News,

person of Jesus' foster parent represents a person who is able to perceive the mystery of God. From the beginning, Joseph's faith meets the faith of the Virgin Mary. Saint John Paul II said: "Although it is true that Joseph did not respond to the angel's proclamation in the same way as Mary, he did as the Lord's angel commanded him and accepted his wife. What he has done is the purest obedience to faith." (cf. Rom. 1:5; 2 Cor. 10:5–6).¹⁷ The way Joseph makes decisions and then acts points to the personal acceptance of the mission entrusted to his wife, Mary and ultimately, by decision of faith, he becomes a participant in God's work.¹⁸ Pope Francis said: „In every situation of his life, Joseph was able to say his ‘fiat’ as Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.”¹⁹

2. FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S WAY IS BEYOND ANY DOUBT OF JOSEPH'S MISSION

St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the lawful father of Jesus, recognized and accepted God's will; he overcame his doubt and, in the common faith he shared with Mary, opened his heart to God and became a collaborator in God's way of sharing in the mystery of Mary. Saint John Paul II says: "Joseph ... took his wife; but he knew her not, until she had borne a son" (Matt. 1:24–25). These words indicate another kind of closeness in marriage. The deep spiritual closeness arising from marital union and the interpersonal contact between man and woman have their definitive origin in the Spirit, the Giver of Life (cf. John 6:63). Joseph, in obedience to the Spirit, found in the Spirit the source of love, the conjugal love which he experienced as a man. And this love proved to be greater than this 'just man' could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart."²⁰ Jesus' earthly father, at first hesitant and uncertain of his situation, recognizes his fatherly vocation and becomes committed to his mission, which he pursues with great courage.²¹

Joseph, as part of the Nazareth family, is involved in events that affect

accessed 2.09.2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/sk/papez-frantisek/omsa-svata-marta/2020-03/ranna-homilia-sv-jozef-clovek-schopny-vnimat-bozie-tajomstvo.html>.

¹⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 4.

¹⁸ Cf. Anton Adam, "Osobnosť svätého Jozefa ako patróna Katolíckej cirkvi v kontexte apoštolického listu *Patris corde* pápeža Františka", *Duchovný pastier* č. 3. r. 102 (2021): 118.

¹⁹ Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, 3.

²⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 19.

²¹ Cf. Podlyuk, "Joseph – splendor personae. Studium," 34–35.

Mary and Jesus' life. Thus, they become specific to Joseph himself, who fully demonstrates the need and requirement to take the position of protector of the treasures entrusted to him. John Paul II represents St. Joseph as the steward of God's mystery in the extraordinary events associated with both Jesus and Mary.

Pope John Paul II highlights the *paternal service* that follows from the legal basis of Joseph's marriage to Mary. The Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* states: „It was to assure fatherly protection for Jesus that God chose Joseph to be Mary's spouse. It follows that Joseph's fatherhood — a relationship that places him as close as possible to Christ, to whom every election and predestination is ordered (cf. Rom. 8:28–29) — comes to pass through marriage to Mary, that is, through the family.”²² We consider it important to point out that the union between the Virgin Mother of God and Joseph was an authentic marriage, because both expressed their intention to enter into a marriage, even though they freely subjected their marital cohabitation to God's purpose²³; they wanted to experience marital cohabitation in the constant acceptance of God's will.

Joseph, as Mary's husband, is portrayed by evangelists Matthew and Luke. In the context of Mary's motherhood, they emphasize her virgin conception by the action of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; 2:4–5). With the adoption of Mary and her son into his house, Joseph becomes an important participant in Jesus' mission. At the same time, Joseph receives Mary in the fullness of her mystery, and he, like Mary, demonstrates his readiness to fulfill God's will. The Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* states: „In response to what is clearly the plan of God, with the passing of days and weeks Mary's “pregnancy” is visible to the people and to Joseph; she appears before them as one who must give birth and carry within herself the mystery of motherhood.”²⁴ Although Joseph is appropriated the role of protector, he is not deprived of paternity in the legal sense of the word. To be a father is the mission and task that God entrusts to him in his providence, that he will fulfill it fully in relation to the Nazarene family. The fulfillment of this mission was also reflected in the possibility of giving the child a name. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph in a dream: “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call

²² John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 7.

²³ Cf. Hanc, “Święty Józef wobec tajemnicy Wcielenia,” 33.

²⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 2.

his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20–21). John Paul II says: „In the words of the ‘annunciation’ by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife’s indescribable vocation; he also heard once again the truth about his own vocation. This ‘just’ man, who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the Chosen People, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband’s love, was once again called by God to this love.”²⁵

The same Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II states: „At the circumcision Joseph names the child ‘Jesus.’ This is the only name in which there is salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). Its significance had been revealed to Joseph at the moment of his ‘annunciation’: ‘You shall call the child Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’ (cf. Matt. 1:21). In conferring the name, Joseph declares his own legal fatherhood over Jesus, and in speaking the name he proclaims the child’s mission as Savior.”²⁶

Joseph’s family belonged to the poor, as indicated by the fragment of the Gospel in the event of the presentation of Jesus in the temple (cf. Luke 2:24). The social status of the individual or family is not essential in God’s purposes; the way of life and responsible behavior is important. Because Joseph is a righteous man, God entrusts him with the care of the most precious and noble in this world—his only-begotten, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is Joseph who is entrusted by God with the concern of protecting Jesus’ “private” life as he enters the community of the human family.

In the situation when the parents find their lost child Jesus in the temple, in this incomprehensible situation, his lawful father once again gives a good example of his humble approach in silence and acceptance of his son’s explanation (cf. Luke 2:48–50). Joseph lives every day as a manifestation of faith and accepts the mystery that accompanies him and in which he has a personal presence. His obedience is boundless to such an extent that God loved him. The Son of God, by his submission to God’s will, expressed in the words, “... I always do what pleases him,”²⁷ demonstrates faith and obedience, as taught by his earthly father and what was the experience of the family community.”²⁸

God shows trust in man, who gradually strives to identify with his mission to be the steward of God’s mystery. This is what the Holy Father

²⁵ Ibid., 19.

²⁶ Ibid., 12.

²⁷ “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” (John 8:29).

²⁸ Cf. Román Llamas Martínez, *Józef słuchający. Ewangelie o św. Józefie*, trans. Dariusz Wandzioch (Poznań: Flos Carmeli, 2014), p. 212.

John Paul II considers in the second part of the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*. In this context, he also recalls the encyclical Mother of the Redeemer, in which the idea of the mystery that Mary encounters also resonates and needs to be addressed.

“Now, at the Visitation, when Elizabeth’s greeting bears witness to that culminating moment, Mary’s faith acquires a new consciousness and a new expression. That which remained hidden in the depths of the “obedience of faith” at the Annunciation can now be said to spring forth like a clear and life-giving flame of the spirit. The words used by Mary on the threshold of Elizabeth’s house are an inspired profession of her faith, in which her response to the revealed word is expressed with the religious and poetical exultation of her whole being towards God.”²⁹ Mary’s faith meets the faith of St. Joseph. John Paul II says: “If Elizabeth said of the Redeemer’s Mother, ‘blessed is she who believed,’ in a certain sense this blessedness can be referred to Joseph as well, since he responded positively to the word of God when it was communicated to him at the decisive moment. ... One can say that what Joseph did united him in an altogether special way to the faith of Mary. He accepted as truth coming from God the very thing that she had already accepted at the Annunciation. The Council teaches: ‘The obedience of faith’ must be given to God as he reveals himself. By this obedience of faith man freely commits himself entirely to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,’ and willingly assenting to the revelation given by him.’³⁰ ... Therefore he became a unique guardian of the mystery ‘hidden for ages in God’ (Eph. 3:9), as did Mary, in that decisive moment which St. Paul calls ‘the fullness of time,’ when ‘God sent forth his Son, born of woman...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons’ (Gal. 4:4–5).”³¹

3. JOSEPH’S FATHERHOOD— A FULFILLED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

The fullness of Joseph’s role as father is in the service of the person and mission of Jesus Christ. Pope Paul VI says that the paternity of St. Joseph is specifically expressed in the fact that he “made his life a ministry, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation, and a redemptive mission attached to it;

²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, 36.

³⁰ Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 5.

³¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 4–5.

that he used his legal authority over the Holy Family in such a way that he gave himself completely, his life and his work; that he transformed his natural vocation for family love into supernatural self-sacrifice, sacrifice of his heart and all his abilities for love in the service of the Messiah who grew in his house.”³² Joseph, as the father of Jesus, is assigned the mission of paternal care over the Mystical Body of Christ. Just as he once cared for the growth and development of the Child, for his advancement in wisdom and grace, so today he is called to help the growth of the Church, to assist in its development in the wisdom and grace of Jesus Christ, which is always present in its members.³³

St. Joseph’s mission and ministry are also fulfilled IN THE CENSUS, as described by the evangelists. John Paul II he says: “This registration clearly shows that Jesus belongs to the human race as a man among men, a citizen of this world, subject to laws and civil institutions, but also ‘savior of the world.’”³⁴

The ministry of fatherhood is also fulfilled AT THE BIRTH OF THE SON OF GOD. St. Joseph has the privilege of witnessing this event. Saint John Paul II also in this context recalls the words of the Gospel of St. Luke: “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6–7). When the shepherds came to the place of Jesus’ birth, St. Joseph later witnessed the event when the sages from the east paid homage to the newborn Jesus (cf. Matt. 2:11).

The first religious duty in which the father’s place was irreplaceable was THE CIRCUMCISION of a male child. Joseph is present at this ceremony (cf. Luke 2:21), during which he exercised his fatherhood.

Forty days after the birth of Jesus Christ, his parents come TO THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM to fulfill the precepts of the law of Moses, as it is written: “Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:23–24).

A significant event in which God’s providence turned to Joseph took place after the sages left, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee

³² Paul VI, “Speech, (March 19, 1966),” *Insegnamenti*, IV (1966): 110

³³ Cf. Gauthier, “Święty Józef w historii zbawienia,” 42.

³⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 9.

into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matt 2:13). Joseph in paternal care listens to the angels’ impulse: “He arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matt. 2:14–15; cf. Hos. 11:1).

Minimal attention in the New Testament writings is given to the period of Jesus’ hidden life. The only event is mentioned by St. Luke, when he describes the course of Jesus’ journey with his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the Easter holidays, when he reached the age of twelve. Together with Mary and Joseph, Jesus attended the holidays as a young pilgrim. St. Luke the Evangelist states: “And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it” (Luke 2:43). After one day of travel, they noticed his absence and began looking for him “among relatives and acquaintances.” “After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46–47). And Mary asked him: “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Luke 2:48). However, Jesus answered them that “they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.” He said: “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49–50).

Joseph, of whom Mary had just used the words “your father,” heard this answer. That, after all, is what all the people thought: in the Gospel according to St. Luke Jesus is referred to as the “son of Joseph” (Luke 3:23). THE REPLY OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE to his “legal father” reminded him once again of what he had heard on that night twelve years earlier: “Joseph ... do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” From that time onwards he knew that he was a guardian of the mystery of God, and it was precisely this mystery that the twelve-year-old Jesus reminded him of: “I must be in my Father’s house.”³⁵

When Mary said to the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple, “Your father and I... have been looking for you,” this is no conventional phrase: Mary’s words to Jesus “show the complete reality of the Incarnation present in the mystery of the Family of Nazareth. From the beginning, Joseph accepted with the ‘obedience of faith’ his human fatherhood over Jesus. And

³⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 15.

thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover ever more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood.”³⁶

The approach of this righteous man, this caring father, in the light of the truth of the Gospel message, seems to be a responsible attitude to all that is in any way part of the Nazarene family. John Paul II talks about Joseph’s work, which expresses love. Jesus grew up in a family in Nazareth, and as he learned the craft of his lawful father, Joseph, they knew him as “the carpenter’s son.” It was and is a work, an effort, that expresses the fact of interest in someone who is loved. The Gospel pays special attention to human labor, especially manual labor. The human nature of God’s Son, in the mystery of the Incarnation, also highlights the work that has also been redeemed in a special way. John Paul II quotes the words of Pope St. Paul VI: “St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies; he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need for exceptional things — it is enough to have common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic.”³⁷

According to the characterisation of Pope St. John Paul II, St. Joseph puts inner life first. Joseph, Mary’s husband and the lawful father of Jesus, is characterized by an intense inner life in which he communicates with God. The same aura of silence that envelops everything else about Joseph also shrouds his work as a carpenter in the house of Nazareth. It is, however, a silence that reveals in a special way the inner portrait of the man. The Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph did. “Joseph was in daily contact with the mystery ‘hidden from ages past,’ and which ‘dwelt’ under his roof.”³⁸ We can say that Joseph did not talk about the events of his life, but lived in the presence of a mystery that he received internally when he took Mary as his wife, and from that moment on he united within himself by living what was entrusted to him.

St. John Paul II, whose pontificate is permeated with deep respect for the mother of Jesus, Mary, recalls the need to re-approach the person of her husband and the father from Nazareth, St. Joseph: “Our prayers and the very person of Joseph have renewed significance for the Church in our day in light of the Third Christian Millennium.”³⁹

³⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 21.

³⁷ Paul VI, “Speech, (March 19, 1966)”, *Insegnamenti*, VII (1969), p. 1268.

³⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

The person of Joseph as the protector of the child of God and the fulfillment of his fatherly relationship takes on a new dimension. Joseph is not a person idly watching the events of Mary's life, but becomes active in the process of accepting responsibility for the upbringing of the child Jesus. The study points to the presence of St. Joseph in the mystery of Christ's incarnation and earthly life, but also recalls Joseph's presence in the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ. Joseph—and Pope John Paul II pointed this out—goes beyond his time precisely because his presence near Christ does not end with earthly life, but is constantly present in the mystery of the Church—in Christ. The Church, which is missionary in nature, needs at all times protection, assistance and testimony of fidelity. St. Joseph is a worthy orator in the needs and activities of the Catholic Church today.

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STOSUNEK JANA PAWŁA II DO OJCA ODKUPICIELA

Streszczenie

Nowotestamentalna postać św. Józefa wysuwa się na pierwszy plan w bezpośrednim związku, w relacji z Maryją, wezwaną do służby macierzyństwa, aby przez działanie Boże mogła stać się Matką Odkupiciela. Tytuł adhortacji apostolskiej św. Jana Pawła II *Redemptoris custos* wskazuje na misję św. Józefa w życiu Jezusa Chrystusa jako jego opiekuna. To prawda, że w pewnych sytuacjach św. Józef, mąż Maryi tę rolę spełnia. Józef przyjmuje postawę stosownie do sytuacji, która go dotyczy. Z tego powodu św. Jan Paweł II nie skupia się tylko na samej służbie opiekuna, ale na relacji, z której owa służba protektora się wywodzi. Owa relacja to ojcostwo, co odpowiada uzasadnionej relacji Józefa z Maryją. Sama Maryja określa relację Józefa z Jezusem jako relację ojca: „Twój ojciec i ja z bólem serca szukaliśmy ciebie” (Łk 2,48). Z samego małżeństwa Maryi i Józefa, łączącego ich, wynika, że oboje mają tytuł rodziców. Jan Paweł II podkreśla ten fakt i formułuje z niego stosunek ojcostwa do Jezusa. Ujawnił Józefa w tajemnicy Chrystusa z naciskiem na podstawy biblijne. Prezentowany tekst odzwierciedla nowy wymiar relacji Józefa z Chrystusem, który urzeczywistnia się poprzez uczestnictwo w tajemnicy Wcielenia Słowa Przedwiecznego wraz z Maryją.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Paweł II; św. Józef; ojciec; Maryja; opiekun; tajemnica.