

There once was a tiny village blessed by God. And all the people feared the Lord. The time of the year for courtship came and the leaders and chief priests of the town said to one another, "Let us gather together the young women of marriageable age so the young men may look on them and choose the ones they find good and holy, pure and pleasing in their sight." And so it was done. The women were assembled and the men also came, traversing the roads of the village with walking sticks in their hands.

But among the women there was one most pure who did not want a man to marry. "I have dedicated myself to God alone," she said, and her parents spoke, "It is so." The leaders conferred with the chief priests of the town and decided that such a one so good and holy, so pure and pleasing must be given a special guardian to protect her in God's eyes. "But who is worthy," they asked, "to take her to his home?"

Since no human among them could decide, they turned to God and begged for a sign. So the twelve families of the town cast lots and the lot fell to the family of Judah. The high priest announced to the village, "Let all the unmarried men of Judah's clan come forward to the temple and bring their walking sticks." They came, and some of the men were tall and some were small, some were handsome and some were less so, most were young, but one was very old. He was a widower with six sons of his own.

The high priest ordered his attendant, "Gather up their walking sticks and bring them into the temple." And he did so. Then the high priest prayed that God would give them a sign through these rods, a sign by which all the people might know who should be the guardian of the young woman who was so good and holy, so pure and pleasing. And the people prayed too. Then the high priest came forth from the temple with the rods in his hand, he assembled the men of Judah before him and returned to each his rod, one by one. And the people watched and prayed, hoping that some miracle might happen, some sign might be given so they would know who was worthy among the sons of Judah. But no sign was given. The high priest grew unhappy. He gathered up the rods again and returned to the temple. Now he put on a garment with twelve bells and prayed all the louder so that God would hear his prayer. A second time he came forth from the temple, a second time he assembled the sons of Judah, a second time he returned the rods, a second time the people watched and prayed--a second time no sign was given.

"But sir," the attendant protested, "you have forgotten one of the rods." For there was one rod among them which was smaller than the rest, weaker, and more used. "Who is he who owns this rod?" asked the high priest. "It is mine," replied the old, old man. The high priest walked toward the old, old man, filled with curiosity he approached him. He took the small weak rod and presented it to its owner. And when the old man grasped the rod and planted it on the earth, the people were given the sign for which they prayed. For the top of the staff opened, the top of that staff which was so small and so weak, it opened and from it there appeared a beautiful, white dove. The dove perched on the staff where all could see and then he took wing. Towards the heavens he flew, higher and higher, and the people were blinded by the light of the sun as they struggled to watch the miraculous

bird which disappeared from their eyes.

The people shouted with wild acclamation their joy. The high priest thanked God for the sign from heaven. "But sir, but sir," the old man protested, "I am not worthy to take unto me a woman so good and holy, so pure and so pleasing." And the high priest said to the old, old man, "Perhaps you are not worthy, but surely God has called you to this task. And if you refuse and rebel against the Lord, He will punish you as surely as he punished Dathan and Abiram, for they contended with Moses in the desert and the very earth beneath their feet opened and swallowed them up."

And so the man agreed. He guarded the woman as God asked him to do. And throughout his life, he was known in that village as a humble man who feared God.

He died on the 19th of March. For generations people remembered him. They still pictured him at his walking stick, but with a flower there to recall his purity. Everyone loved him and wanted to be like him. They named him patron of workmen, of families, virgins, the sick, and the dying; the patron of prayer, the poor, of those in authority, fathers, priests, and religious; of travelers, and of those who loved his wife. His name is Joseph. Mexico, Canada, Bohemia, the Chinese missions, Belgium, and Italy have all chosen him as their special patron, so it was right that the Universal Church should do so as well.

He was a humble man from a small village who feared the Lord.

Holy Rosary

18.iii.86

Material from

NCE 7, "Joseph, St., Devotion to"

The Protevangelium, or Original Gospel of James (c. 150 A.D.), ch. IX

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (c. 400 a.d.), ch. VIII

The Gospel of the Birth of Mary, ch. V-VI